



open issue

Sinister Wisdom 58

Publisher: Sinister Wisdom, Inc.

Editor: Akiba Onáda-Sikwoia

Editorial Group for #58: Akiba Onáda-Sikwoia, Jacqueline Miranda, Carol Hill, Ananda Esteva, Margo Mercedes Rivera

Poetry Editor: Ekua Omosupe

Contributing Editor: Gloria Anzaldúa

Board of Directors: Gloria Anzaldúa, Haley, Julia Youngblood, Lynn Scott

Volunteer Coordinator: Susan Levinkind

Fulfillment: Cindy Mortlock

Proofreaders: Joan Annsfire, Susan Goldberg, Susan Levinkind, Carol Baker

Office Help: Hadas Weiss, Susan Levinkind

Thanks to Bobby Rothschild and Rebecca Kutlin of Tamed Technology and Susan Liroff of Spitfire Graphics

Mailing and Moving Crews: Akiba Onáda-Sikwoia, Hadas Weiss, Laura Munter-Orabona, Laura Stern, Michelle Nichols, Mady Shumofsky, Susan Levinkind, SJ Kahn, Joan Annsfire, Margo Mercedes Rivera, Julia Youngblood, Jamie Lee Evans, Lisa M. Horan, Deborah Workman, Lynn Scott, Lea E. Arellano, Hanah Martinez, Elana Dykewomon, Marlena Willis

Special thanks to: Elana Dykewomon, Susan Levinkind, Hadas Weiss

Cover art: Virginia Harris

Grants Received: Astraea, Resist, San Francisco Women's Foundation

SINISTER WISDOM, founded 1976

Former editors and publishers: Harriet Ellenberger (aka Desmoines)
and Catherine Nicholson (1976-81)
Michelle Cliff and Adrienne Rich (1981-83)
Michaele Uccella (1983-84)
Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (1983-87)
Caryatis Cardea (1991-94)
Elana Dykewomon (1987-94)

Copyright © 1998 Sinister Wisdom, Inc. All rights reserved to individual artists and authors.
ISSN: 0196-1853. Printed in the U.S. on recycled paper.

Sinister Wisdom, Inc. • PO Box 3252 • Berkeley CA 94703 • USA

A journal for lesbians

Contents

-
- 3 Akiba Onáda-Sikwoia • *Notes for a Magazine*
 6 Margo Mercedes Rivera • *Notes for a Magazine*
 8 Ekua Omosupe • *Notes for a Magazine*
 9 Upcoming Issues & Deadlines
 10 Odilia Galván Rodríguez • *Tezcatlipoca*
 11 PHKimura • *after a storm*
 14 Meg Jochild • *Listening to Sonya*
 16 PHKimura • *Sixteen Minutes*
 19 Elizabeth Clare • *Bedrock*
 23 Holley Daschbach • *Fishsticks and No Hitting*
 25 Barbara M. Burrows • *Tomorrow*
 26 tiana arruda • *Coisa do Passado*
 28 Abimbola Folisade Adama • *Sarah*
 36 Barbara Lynne Brush • *The Sky-Writers*
 37 Juanita Chavez • *La Evil Woman*
 42 Margo Mercedes Rivera • *Marlene*
 44 Darlene Grainger • *Can I Play?*
 45 Elizabeth Ribet • *grrl-story*
 48 M.C. Ball • *Photograph: 1990*
 49 M.C. Ball • *Garden Britomart*
 50 Liz Morrison • *90 Miles an Hour*
 54 Mandy Precious • *No Weak Swimmers Beyond This Point*
 55 Margaret Robison • *One Small Step*
 64 Ekua Omosupe • *Audre Lorde*
 66 Natasha T. Champney • *Needle Work*
 67 Patricia Fontaine • *Entering My Days*
 68 Janell Moon • *Life's Pearls*
 69 ananda esteva • *this is what i'd tell her if we were frineds not
 just lovers*
 71 Jean H. Thoresen • *Butch Trade*
 73 sharon bridgforth • *bull-jean & tha wo'mn*

- 80 anda d elle • *ode to a woman wearing cleats*
81 Jacqueline Miranda • *Somewhere from Home*
82 Jacqueline Miranda • *A Desperate Act*
83 Margo Mercedes Rivera • *Four Directions*
84 Maria Cecília Santos • *Academic Convers(at)ion*
86 Carletta Bullock • *Liberations*
89 Raye Lynn • *For the Strong Woman, Nien Cheng*
91 Kimberly Aceves-Denyer • *Don't Tell Me You Understand*
92 Skye Alexander • *In Memory Of K. R.*
94 Marcia Rose • *From Rachel's Mother*
96 Marcia Rose • *Vigil*
98 tova • *lost and found*
100 Raye Lynn • *Shadowing*
101 Odilia Galván Rodriguez • *Ponies*
103 Janell Moon • *Strawberry Markings*
105 Holley Daschbach • *Snowed In*
106 Meg Jochild • *For J. E. S.*
108 Laverne Williams • *Unconquerable*
109 Elizabeth Clare • *The Terrorist God*
110 Susan Stinson • *Following*
111 Niobé Ngozi • *Gender Variant and Available*
114 Contributors' Notes
120 Books Received
124 Ads

§

ART

- cover Virginia Harris
18 ananda esteva • *Untitled*
56 Cathy Cade • *Beijing Images*
76 ananda esteva • *El Otro Lado de la Jota Chola*
88 Virginia Harris • *One Nation Under God*

Notes for a Magazine

As I sit here pen to paper, I can hardly remember details which led me to ask for the editorship of SW. I know for sure it was never my intention to take the journey alone. Initially, there were three of us but by the time the big day arrived I was alone. It never dawned on me to take back my commitment — I merely took on the challenge as I have so many times in my life. I had no idea what was in store for me — how many fears and insecurities I would have to face in taking over a 20 year old institution.

The temptation to compare my publishing skills to those of Elana were always great — especially since I had little experience in publishing. (I hope it wasn't too boring for you Elana). I'd been counting on the expertise of one of my partners. Nevertheless, together with my *incredible* Board of Directors, the ever present support of Lynn Scott, old and new SW volunteers along with the big vision I held we took SW forward. That was December 1994; now three years later the hands have changed again.

I struggle not to feel bad/guilty because I only managed to publish two and half issues within the past three years. Numerous financial obstacles from the onset hampered my ability to utilize all my energy towards publishing the journal. Grant-writer, fund-raiser, administrator, editor and *etc.* — too many hats for one dyke to wear. By July 1996 I was exhausted and equally frustrated by our financial status.

After the Healing issue, which was so major, for a number of reasons — mostly because the body of work was so intense, I found it hard to bounce back solo mio and thus find the energy to continue devoting all my time to SW. My private personal and spiritual life began to demand attention — leading me onto paths that required much more focus on myself.

In October of 1996, I moved to Virginia. Here it became increasingly difficult to focus on SW. There was no established community to support the publication and I found it impos-

sible to generate the inspiration I needed to develop one. I also needed time to work and make money — much more than SW could pay me. Even with all the marketing and fundraising we'd done we were unable to pull SW out of her financial slump. One day I woke up realizing I was totally burnt out. At which time, I began to dance with the inner conflict of responsibility versus my inability to act or acknowledge it was time to find someone else to take the publication. It was painful. My guilt was so big. I kept telling myself if I tried hard enough I could manifest that old inspiration again but it never came. Finally, I realized I had to let go otherwise SW could die and the readers, writers and subscribers, the publication and all her volunteer family deserved more — including me.

By April Margo had definitely agreed to take on the editorship. I was relieved thus I began to work on completing this issue with a deadline of July 8. However all parties involved were not able to complete their tasks so I left for a one and a half month trip and when I returned we learned that my companion, Chak, had a recurrence of cancer. Perhaps it was some sort of irony that after issue #57 *On Healing*, I should be thrown into the biggest healing experience of my life.

Still determined to complete this issue, instantly I became primary care-taker to Chak and our 16 year old daughter. Needless to say, I couldn't do it all.

For the past six months I've found myself constantly scrutinizing my belief systems as I've witnessed Chak's battle between life and death, a battle somewhat familiar to me — the last time was with my chosen brother Marlon Riggs who died of AIDS four years ago — prior to that it was my mother. There are uncanny parallels between Chak's cancer and my mother's, who died April 4, 1980 of the same type of cancer. She was 55. I turned 55 in January. I've had major fears to face as I move closer to crossing my mother's death line. Obviously this whole thing was set in motion long ago.

Although it's been scary beyond belief, today, I believe Chak is winning. At the time of her diagnosis she decided to take the road less-traveled — without the use of conventional

therapy. She decided to heal her pain in order to expel the cancer. I've fully supported her decision and believed in her ability to heal herself. I have taken that path several times in my own life, even so I could not have imagined what this would be like for any of us. Only through the prayers and help of so many could we have done this.

This story brings me to the end of my journey as editor of *SW*, an adventure and honor I would never trade. Even as I know letting go is long overdue there is a part of me that misses the inspiration and fulfillment I received working with the writings of so many incredible wimmin. I will forever be grateful to all of you who lent your time and tireless efforts to support me through my vision especially the Board of Directors and the editors. To all of you who have stayed with *Sinister Wisdom* throughout her years and to those of you who are new and who have come back thank you for your patience with me and my process. Lastly, I thank Margo for being willing to step into *Sinister Wisdom* at this time.

— Akiba Onáda-Sikwoia

Notes for a Magazine _____

A Vision for the Future

As the new editor of *Sinister Wisdom*, I am very excited to be part of the oldest surviving lesbian journal. Great writing by many lesbians has graced the pages of *SW*. I hope to feature the best writing and art of our diverse communities. It is my wish for *Sinister Wisdom* to continue, to survive and thrive.

As with most community projects, *Sinister Wisdom* struggles financially. The move of *Sinister Wisdom* to Virginia and back has been difficult and is still not over. With the generous help of Susan, Laura, Michelle, and Dolphin, we were able to fill two trucks and one van with all of the boxes that were in a storage center in Berkeley. Most of *Sinister Wisdom's* important papers, current issues, and equipment are still in Virginia and we need funds with which to ship it all back.

Luckily I have an old Mac (bought with funds from Serpent Source) which will be adequate to produce the journal and process correspondence. I also have space in my basement for an office so *SW* does not have to pay rent. Still, we need money for a phone line, a desk, filing cabinets, tables, and other items that would not be cost effective to ship back from VA.

Our wish list

includes: ergonomic office chairs (I am currently using a folding chair and folding table), a nice desk, heavy-duty metal shelving, a scanner, a fax machine, a high speed modem, a laser printer, upright lamps, a tabletop copy machine, a zip drive, and stamps.

In terms of volunteers, we need a grant writer, big time. We always need local folks to help with mailing parties and other duties. I still need help with web page design — I want to see *SW* on the Internet! I hope that *SW* has had meaning in your life and there is some way you will find to help her live well.

My background

is that I grew up in a small racially mixed working class town. My father is a mestizo immigrant from Perú and my dearly departed mother was an Ashkenazi (European) Jew. I identify as both and

am light-skinned with colored features. Look for a future mixed race issue.

I had my first taste of creative writing in summer school when I was in sixth grade. I mostly took the class because I had a little crush on the teacher, Mrs. Barloga. I ended up enjoying her assignments which usually consisted of writing stories about pictures from old *National Geographics*. Six years ago I landed in a writing workshop taught by Merle Woo in the Asian American Studies department. Even then I was the only out gay person in a class of a dozen where I knew there were five other lesbians and gay men. The piece I read at our public reading was about lesbian sex, much to the horror of many parents.

I spent years working in or around books — in bookstores, in libraries in between my work as a cook and a baker, and food service manager. I have always loved reading ever since a nice librarian bent the rules so I could have my own library card. I suppose I've always loved breaking the rules.

More currently I have been involved with, *FaTGIRL: the zine for fat dykes and the women who want them*. I took part in the editorial board for this issue of *SW* and was very excited to learn that Akiba was interested in passing on the journal.

For the past two and a half years I was in the lesbians of color writing group held at the Women's Building in San Francisco taught by the talented and gifted writer and playwright Ms. Elizabeth F. Summers. In this group that I was truly fed. The first writing workshop was on erotica and Elizabeth took us to the edge, making us come up with forty ways to say "down there." Velvet lined cherry box, her sweet girl junk, her business, her stuff, the crashing waves of her ocean — did we go! I came home from these classes so excited — in so many ways — writing with other lesbians of color, where everything, FOR ONCE, did not have to be explained.

I hope that you will encourage *Sinister Wisdom's* revival and that you will find comfort and community in her pages. Please feel free to contact me with your ideas and visions for *Sinister Wisdom* — I have my own and I would like to hear about yours.

—Margo Mercedes Rivera

Notes for a Magazine

From the Poetry Editor

I am delighted with every new batch of poems that come across my desk for *Sinister Wisdom* and with each publication I beam with pride because of what we have been able to accomplish. It is no small feat in the face of the barriers and institutions that work with precision, synchronization, and persistence to grind us down, shut us up, make us conform to silences, torture, betrayal erasure, and death. We are writing, speaking, marching, publishing, fighting for our lives! And we must choose our battles carefully, for concentration of energy can render more strength, sharper vision, more clarity of thought, and allow for more direct action. Daily we sound the war cries against misogyny, genocide, poisoned water and food, racism, sexism, homophobia, AIDS, hunger, homelessness, and more, without enough relief in our suffering, yet we survive against the odds. We survive because we have to and because we know our survival depends on us — all of us.

I am a Black lesbian, mother, grandmother, teacher, poet, lover, businesswoman, who is committed to healing, loving, teaching, working, for myself and others on behalf of wholeness, survival, and visibility. It is and honor for me to be the poetry editor for *Sinister Wisdom*. I dedicate my poem in this issue to Audre Lorde and to all the women who have given me my voice. Thank you!

Ekua Omosupe

Upcoming issues

#59 SEXUALITY, LOVE, & ROMANCE — What does this mean to us as lesbians, as queer women? What are our attractions? Who do we do it with and why? Can we experience our sexuality the way we want? How do disabilities impact our sexuality? Do we love the same people we have sex with? What is romance? How do our fantasies differ from our realities? Where does "lesbian bed death" fall into the discussion? Monogamy, non-monogamy, omnogamy, celibacy, affairs, tricks... Butch, fem, andro, switch, top, bottom, femmybutch, stone, rollover, FTM, MTF, bi...where are you? What is the cultural context for your sexuality? Do you smear her body with mermelada de mango, warm peach cobbler, wasabi, or Fox's U-bet chocolate syrup? Hot erotica welcome.
DEADLINE April 30, 1998.

#60 MIXED RACE HERITAGE — Mutt, mongrel, half-breed, hapa, zebra, mixed up, blend, multi or bi-racial, other... How does being a member of more than one racial group (African, Asian Pacific, Native/Indigenous/Indian, European American) impact our lives. Note that Latinas and Chicanas are usually already some mix of Native and European and sometimes African. Where do you fit in? Everywhere, nowhere... What labels do you use, do you get asked to pick and do you? Do you have the option of choosing? Is your identity the same as your appearance? Do you pass? If you have siblings do they identify ethnically the same as you do?
DEADLINE August 30, 1998.

#61 WOMEN IN PRISON — This issue will feature writings and art by women in prison and who have been in prison. Stories, rants, poetry, fiction, interviews, dialogues, class and cultural analysis, history, politics and more! A more complete blurb for this issue will be put out by the editorial group.
DEADLINE December 31, 1998.

Odilia Galván Rodríguez

Tezcatlipoca

s/he of the smoking mirror

We are six all of us
silver and white haired
women smoking finger sized
cigars from the Republica Dominicana
they used to come from Cuba
those delicious aromatic leaves
twisted tight by hand

an offering
light mine again sister

we smoke in silence
watching

tobacco clouds mingle
with thick rich perfume rising
incense mixtures like us different
cultures religions lives
we've lived many
like our ancestors

who are born our children
we see them in shiny eyes
made water from swirling
smoke tears stream into smiles
the teeth are thrown down
we read the sounds
singing
takes us where we are told go
to what must be prayed for
ti pada

ti pada

ti pada

pada pada pada

ti

PHKimura

after a storm

I.

We have come after a storm
to sift through the clutter of long green seaweed
we search for the slippery red ogo
dinner tonight

The Ewa waves pull my feet
into the cooling ebb of salt water and sand
and the Leeward winds carry
the air, heavy with heat
and dust
away
to Moloka'i, Lana'i, and Kaho'olawe
across the sea

You sit under a cluster of palm trees
at the edge of the high-tide mark
An unlit cigar angled out of your mouth,
your San Francisco Giants cap
pulled low over your eyes
The small transistor radio chants a baseball game
somewhere far, past the Big Island

You cannot see the ocean anymore
or the small crabs that flit under foot
or mama and us kids bent like the turtles
pulling through nests of wet seaweed
Big red spider-veins burst
and crawl across the back of your eyes
blocking out all light
But you can feel the wind
sweep past you,

carrying away each day
away
across the Pacific

The sky blossoms in purple and red
as the sun slips to darkness
west to Kaua'i
the stars send their memories
light
a thousand years old
to fall around you
dipping at the horizon
to skim above the black water
that foams softly
at your feet

II.

You lay still and grey
a cotton sheet
wet with well water
covers you
Mama hands each of us
a small linen handkerchief
from the black pocketbook in her lap

Auwe

There are no sounds
that round my mouth
the world is dry and empty
except for these small squares of linen
and the shroud that covers you
washed by foaming water from the small bamboo cup
the Buddhist priest has given us
to hold

III.

I stare at the edge of the Mill River
black water bisected by the wake
of a small beaver

hurrying to slip below
these grey floats of ice
Fog curls
beneath this old iron bridge
while the snow melts off and drips
back to the water

I am far
from my childhood
six thousand miles
and a life away
I think of you each day
a slow movement
of living fragments
framed by memory

I cannot see you anymore
or the small crabs that flit under foot
or the Ewa waves that draw the dust and heat
away
here in my New England

But I can feel the wind
sweep past me
carrying away each day
until it returns home
across the Pacific
like the light of stars
a thousand years old
each day
a remembrance for tomorrow

Meg Jochild

Listening to Sonya

We reminded ourselves
each other, in meetings
and speeches
how far the enemy could go
had gone
we did not often say the word camps
stopped just shy of it
but it hung there like a footnote
irresistible

In quiet talks with best friends
it came sliding out like bile
We'd warn *It could happen here*

It has taken me this long
to understand
what we wanted to say:
It happened

We wanted to absorb it
like the belief that follows
unbearable loss

We wanted to beseech one another
*Please make it not true, oh god,
make it never have happened*

We wanted to look at those
black-and-white flickering faces
and know they all lived,
met death decades later
in a clean, quiet room
with love close at hand
We wanted to announce
we do not accept

a world where this occurred,
we wanted another choice

It is only now, in our after-40 reckoning, we admit
we make no sense of it
we are helpless, we cannot even
mourn them all
We are stuck here
nowhere else to go
It will not happen again
It already happened
and has not stopped

PHKimura

sixteen minutes

07:59.08.06.45

in sixteen minutes
a beautiful bright clear light
will fill your eyes
sparks will fly and shimmer
all around you

in sixteen minutes
the floor will slip
beneath your feet
your toes will feel
the sudden coolness of the earth

in sixteen minutes
a wonderful wind
will rush through you
sweeping by bits and pieces of sky

so you fix
your bun of thick white hair
and gaze again
at this old picture
three young children under a mango tree
children left behind
long ago

in sixteen minutes
you will turn in the street
and look in a shop window
you will see a bolt of soft cotton
red flowers and bright yellow bees
just right
for a little girl

and you will think about the grandchildren
you hope someday to meet

in sixteen minutes
near the center of town
the overcast will clear
for just a second
you will feel the air
turn hot, electric,
buzzing
shearing off your skin
in sixteen minutes



Ananda Esteva

Elizabeth Clare

Bedrock

Night after night I finger each thin cable
of story, the prediction Mama tells:

*first-born preemie
you lived too long
in a glass box*

Twist them together, the details to which
no one will dance: eat a hundred sleeping pills

blue as eggshell, drink a fifth, let
the bottles float away. I lay down to wait.

Words folded one on top
of another, page against page.

November 15, Lincoln Memorial. Tonight we have finished
3,700 miles. I can already feel the reality of walking L.A. to
Vegas, Denver to Omaha, Chicago to Cleveland, Harrisburg to
Harlem, Philly to D.C., begin to slip. Our last rally, we circle the
reflecting pool. In the dark our bodies become simple outlines,
each a candle. The small flames waver on the black surface. I
don't want to stop.

I sleep with you under my pillow,
walk with you under my tongue.

You have broken my teeth, bruised
my gums. My small gray stone.

•••

For years I've struggled to find words, lines, stanzas to tell you
about torture. A language you might believe. Metaphors to
wrap around the terror, elision to break my words open to grief,
a meter to catch the momentum of rage, juxtapositions to reflect

the fractures. A language I might be able to speak. Today Adrienne said, "Don't make it pretty."

•••

River knee hip shoulder deep.
I fell away, a sack of stones.

April 11, Nevada Test Site. News of a test just detonated came over the shortwave an hour ago. I've been sitting at the barbed wire fence ever since, watching the desert, Tonapah Mountains to my back, creosote in full bloom. I keep expecting to feel the shock waves. Tom sits upwind of me, smoking his pipe. I can't stop crying. All of a sudden he's gone, rolled under the fence to walk a few illegal steps. I almost join him.

*you would scoot yourself
into a corner jam your head
against the glass and scream.*

I woke up, not dead, river wet, still
waiting: simply walked home so drunk

I'll never remember. Late afternoon, water striders
take to the shadows, their legs dimple the surface.

April 17, fifteen miles east of Vegas. I dream of a woman who shaves her head bald, carves ghost-like petroglyphs into her skull. She and I are lovers. We walk to ground zero. Wait for the bombs to be tested under our feet. Camp in their craters. I wake up to the desert sun filling my tent.

*one day as i stood at the door
watching you the ward nurse
came by said i always know
which ones will live*

Tension and grip, the living balanced
against the dead — boulder hopping
in the North Cascades: back leg
reaches, front leg bends, body weight
follows — balance lives in the space between
muscle and earth. This would be a lie.

July 6, Strategic Air Command, Nebraska. I watch counter-demonstrators burn a Soviet flag. Flames gnaw through the red background, up and over the yellow sickle. They call us commie dykes. We laugh and shrug.

The woman who flickers has lost her body. They wrapped me in warm towels, poured charcoal down my stomach, asked questions, too many to count.

*i couldn't take my eyes
off you head covered
with peach fuzz the ward nurse
said your baby she'll live she's a fighter*

I live on a road, north fork
speaks of bone marrow, south

cobbled with unmarked graves. They both
lead to the river where at dusk

the swallows gather, swoop and glide.
Not balance but war.

•••

I know you have heard of Pinochet, P.W. Botha, Samoza, Hitler, listened to stories of human rights violations, torture by dictators and military juntas. But what of these others? My grandfather the gravedigger knew how to use electrodes, taped them to the soles of my feet, palms of my hands, small of my back. My grandmother led me to and from that basement room. My father made the sacrifices, measured the blood, held me down. The neighbor man joined us all to Satan. In the margin of an earlier draft, I explained to Su, "I've cut the lines about torture. I can't find the right mix of hallucination and horror."

•••

First day on the psych ward, I washed
my hair tugging at the mats,

vomit flecked eggshell blue.
I am the girl.

*a week later the doctor pulled
the tubes from your nose
unplugged the iv let me hold you*

October 17, Allentown, Pennsylvania. I walk the last three miles into camp with a man just off work, suit jacket flung over one shoulder, black leather shoes clicking the pavement. He asks the usual questions about the Walk, then we talk disarmament, the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, the Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing, the budget for SDI. We disagree, choose not to argue, don't talk about Hiroshima, Chernobyl, the Bikini atolls, the Downwinders.

The girl they turned to a bird.
Shrinks feed me anti-psychotics.

•••

Will you listen? Call me crazy? Walk away? Talk about false memory syndrome? Listen. Women I love have hung from crosses; watched their first-born children bleed to death; fed the fires; waited on the altar, feet and hands bound; waited for the men, the snakes, for Satan to come; listened as the caged babies sang themselves to sleep. You can choose to ignore this torture of blood, rape, and death. I envy and hate that choice. Or you can come walk the distance.

•••

Each thin cable and soon I will have
a rope, strong and thick, to anchor here
in the bedrock, stretch high across
the river, beginnings of a bridge.

Holley Daschbach

Fishsticks and No Hitting

I used to see sometimes,
before the salad even,
his hammy hands reach out and snag
her by the shirt front and
pluck her from her seat like a wishbone,
charm bracelet singing, ponytail bobbing.
After that point, I pulled my focus in close.
Inspected the silver, straightened my napkin,
filled Mom's water glass one more time.
I pictured myself shrinking to dust
and sliding into the cut glass butter dish
to wait out the buffet and blow.
Jangling words scrambled my brain
and pushed hunger right out.
Hot roast beef and mounds of mashed potatoes
cooled quickly on my plate
as volume and motion took over.

Often, we didn't make it to dessert.
One or two of us would have,
long before that course, slipped
from the table, reaching
furtively for the peanut butter jar
and a loaf of wonder.

Many desserts and dinners later
we shrank by one.
A rocky bumpy exit that left us
spinning and clutching at nothing.
"We'll have to tighten our belts,
do without for a bit," Mom murmured.
"It won't be easy, I know."

And it's true some of the spang
and crisp was gone with the storm,
but I think back, and I know
Mom was wrong.
When we went from seven to six
we didn't lose anything we needed.
Dinners opened up like poppies.
Faces bloomed around the table,
a chipped blue milk pitcher at its center.
Dinners were changed but rich.
We had more,
more than enough.
We had fishsticks and no hitting.

Barbara M. Burrows

Tomorrow

Denial mine for so long
you have hidden my life away
it has lain on a dirty floor
covered by thick webs of fear
musty odors smells of an ancient room
untouched by light
fill my nostrils

I reach now to save my life
extract it from a well dug grave
scour it clean of old lies
tear away the doubt
allow rebirth rip off its coverings
see again the life put away
or given away willingly
unwillingly no matter now

Time has passed I have seen through cracks
light clicking on off
motion pictures pass silently slowly
my soul covered in batting
spirit heavy with fear

I search now for what was lost
A lover somewhere amidst those years
A passion which could have been
Eyes seared shut tears sealed in
creep into a chalk white mask void of breathing

I no longer sleep in silence
decaying under a transparent covering
seeming to be alive
Yesterday gone buried in lost dreams
I fight for my today my tomorrow
I tighten my grasp take back what is mine

tiana arruda

Coisa do Passado

I am already a thing of the past
 coisa do passado
 born in eighteen ninety five
 I passed
 from nineteenth to twentieth century
 watched the first aviation flights
neglecting myself I raised brothers, sisters
 daughters & grandchildren

ja sou uma coisa do passado a thing of the past
 inconsequential now
 betrayed by my eyes
unable to read or embroider
 out dated & senile
unsuitable for conversation
 I exasperate everyone
 with my fading memory

i am already a thing of the past
 coisa do passado
 vanished generation
 old thing *coisa velha* a relic
solitary matriarch of thin silver hair
 thickening glasses
 tired of living
with no desire to die

I passed through all
 all passes through me
 all dies perishes
 all except the moon
full moon glowing in my window

companheira of ninety seven years

silent serene

moon of the past

lua nova amiga fiel

new moon faithful friend

moon of my skies

de minas gerais

your pale radiance

no longer

o luar do sertao

the moonlight of my childhood

lua bonita lua de sao jorge

illuminating green forests

of the past

your brightness

obscured now

painting solitude with silver beams

I Maria once was new

crescent even quite full

now I am old

a thing of the past

coisa do passado

withering

like the waning moon

awaiting my time

to pass into darkness

Note: *minas gerais* — state of brazil

luar do sertao — moonlight in remote interior or backwoods

lua bonita, lua de sao jorge — beautiful moon, moon of saint george

Abimbola Folisade Adama

Sarah

California was never this cold in December. And of course, snow in San Francisco was downright incredible, but there they were, these impossibilities racing through my mind trying to warn me something strange was shaping up. I didn't make the connection until weeks later, long after she'd left and my life had returned to...well, never normal again, but something akin to it. She left me that goddess statue on the mantel. Sits next to the one I made for her. That's how I know she was here. Anyway, this is the way I remember it:

She was at the door asking for some kinda help. I couldn't make out what she was saying, but I could tell she wasn't doing well. Too many long sighs.

I opened the door. I shouldn't have, but those eyes were pleading. I could see a faint glimmer in them. Not much. Looked like the main switch was weak, but the transformer was cranking out power — temporarily. Used to be a school maintenance engineer so I notice power outages right away. She got my attention. I opened my kitchen door. Letting a stranger into my home, my retreat from the world I'd been escaping all these months, was not normal behavior for me. I trusted those eyes. Wasn't like letting a man in. You know what I mean?

She must've been standing on a box. Wasn't nearly as tall as I'd thought. Little thing. Maybe 5'2." Next to my 5'11" she was a shrimp. I always liked tall women, women who could look right into my eyes and tell me, "Fuck off, Gloria," or "Come in," or whatever they needed to say, but do it with conviction, with power. I always like those kinda women.

Her eyes closed for a moment when she stepped inside. She stood like a statue savoring the warmth, I guess. She was so little I felt protective. Suggested she sit down, have some tea, watch television. Was her car down? What did she need?

When she spoke I felt warm all over, as if someone had just given me one of those hugs only certain women can give. The kind

that makes you feel safe, appreciated — warm. Her voice was big. Bigger than I would have guessed. Filled me and the *whole* room right up. It was sorta deep. Like music, some kinda hymn. Made me feel a little different about her. Anyway, she said she was cold, saw my light and was glad to be inside. Yeah, I thought that was what she was feeling.

"Why don't you sit in the living room by the fireplace? I'll make us some tea." I was going to tell her to take off her shoes, because that's the way I treat my home, but she just stepped right out of them. Looked like newspaper was wrapped around her feet. She wore those little plastic shoes kids wear in the summer. Hard times, I guess. Then again, people dress funny out here. California's not like my part of the country. People are a lot more practical and business-like in Pennsylvania. Course, that's why I left.

When I saw her feet, I thought about all the times I massaged my mother's feet and how she always called them ugly. They weren't ugly, just needed more attention than she gave them. I guessed that was the problem with ... what was her name? Immediately, she told me, as if I'd asked her out loud. Maybe I had. I was beginning to feel almost high, not drunk, but sorta mellow. *Sarah*. That was her name. My cousin's name too, but my cousin was a big woman, taller than me and weighed about 250 lbs. This little woman was under 100.

I led her into the living room which was when I noticed how she walked. Like she had something on her head, maybe a glass bowl — something she didn't dare drop. I'd never seen anybody walk like that, especially not no little woman. I guess I was staring or something because she told me she used to be tall, but it became such a nuisance dealing with the envy she decided to be short. I nodded in agreement and was in the kitchen before the full impact of her words hit me. What a sense of humor. Little people need humor. They must have a hard time. I mean, getting anyone's attention in stores or anywhere, and reaching things. I made some sassafras tea for us then went back to the living room.

Sarah was stretched out on the floor by the fireplace. Asleep. I cleared my throat. I rattled the cups. I called her name — gently. She breathed deeper, didn't move, then slipped a notch into snoring. I stood there, not sure what to do. I must've decided to lie down next to her, I guess. I mean, that's what happened. Didn't

plan it but next morning there we were.

I looked around the living room, trying to remember the last time I had slept on the floor. It was the first time, since my kidneys started acting up, I didn't get up two or three times to pee then, while I was up, check the locks, read, cry or any of the dumb things you do when you know you've gotten older than your dreams and you're sorta getting used to it. I mean, I had done all kinds of exciting things, challenging things in my time but really, what was the point of it? I finally got tired, like they say, of being tired and ain't recovered yet.

I came out here to rest my nerves for a month or two after the doctor made all her predictions. First one thing then another came up, and I ain't thought about going back to work or nowhere else. Been sitting around mostly, thinking about how long life is when you ain't doing nothing that thrills you, deep down where it counts. You know, like some kinda reason for getting up every day. You know what I mean? A lot of people don't. I call it spinning webs, going round in circles, trying to make sense out of what's become no sense at all.

Changes sure can trip you up. Anyway, I turned and looked at Sarah; I saw her pitiful little feet sticking out from under the blanket I didn't remember getting. I guess I must've cause how else could it have gotten there? They didn't look like anybody had ever taken care of them. Those feet. All thick skinned and rough looking. I was about to reach for them when she asked if I would massage them. So I did. I thought, how long it had been since I'd touched anybody. I remembered how much my mama enjoyed my massaging her feet. It was sorta funny how much pleasure I was getting out of massaging the feet of a stranger. I looked at Sarah and those eyes told me it was all right. I kept having flashes of my mama. I thought I felt her sitting there with her feet in my lap the way she used to do. Only now she was trying to tell me something but I couldn't make it out.

Sarah and I sat on the sofa but I guess I forgot she was there, cause my mother kept coming up trying to tell me something. It seemed so important. I was thinking how sorry I was I had missed her funeral but I couldn't bear the pain of telling her goodbye. I forgot about Sarah till she touched my hands and told me it was all right.

I wondered where Sarah lived. I didn't ask her but all of a

sudden she said she was a free spirit. I waited for more but that's all she said. I remembered some of those old clothes I had found in the attic when I moved in so I looked through the boxes for something her size. Some of the stuff was a little baggy but clean. Sarah said she didn't mind. I decided Sarah probably was homeless.

I showed her to the bathroom and told her to shower if she wanted to. While I waited downstairs, I could hear her swishing around and singing off key but she made me feel better. I didn't know why. Having someone else in the house for the first time, since I moved in six months ago, felt like maybe I still belonged to the human race. You know what I mean?

When Sarah came down, she looked so bright and shiny I could've hugged her. Instead, I told her I'd fix breakfast, soon as I showered.

By the time I got downstairs, Sarah was standing in the kitchen doorway with a plate of orange slices and bright red cherries. Now, maybe she had the orange in her pocket last night, but where'd she get those cherries? I just looked at her and she gave me that smile. Her eyes looked fully charged now, sending out all kinds of energy. "Sarah," I asked, "Where'd you get the cherries?" She smiled. Said she'd brought them with her and would I like more? The table was set with the china I keep way up on the top shelf. The stemware my mama left me ten years ago was bright and spotless like company was coming. We sat down. That's when I saw those little thin pancakes with caviar on top and I wasn't sure what inside. I looked at her and realized she didn't look so short today. "Sarah, I asked, "How come you..." She put her finger to her mouth and told me to eat before it got cold. I wanted to insist but how could a grown, intelligent woman ask somebody she didn't know too well if she had gotten taller since last night? When I looked at Sarah I saw how powerful her eyes were. The whites were clear, like children's eyes. Her pupils dark and full of feelings. I couldn't see to the bottom of them. When I'd stare too long, she'd look down at her plate or close them. That's the way Sarah was. Sorta did things her way. Kinda strange and hard to explain. You know what I mean?

Next day, she showed up around bed time. I let her in again. This time I watched her more closely cause she was pulling off some stuff I didn't understand and I planned on asking her about it...plus, where did she go during the day?

Sarah wore beat-up shoes and an old coat but once she took those things off, seemed like she shook off her misery. She had a lot of class. She was a fine woman. Sorta not so little anymore, but maybe I was mistaken before. Anyway, I asked her what kind of work she did. She told me she lived to make little things with her hands, and to just sit and spin webs. Now, you know, I asked her to repeat that one. But she wouldn't. She looked me straight in my eye like I should've known. I turned my head so she wouldn't see how wide open my mouth was and how scared my eyes were because, well ... who was this woman anyhow? When I turned back she was calling me from the living room. I felt so strange but deep down I knew, when I heard her voice, that whoever, whatever, everything was all right.

I'm not sure when Sarah moved in. I was going to give her a key when I noticed she had no pockets — anyway, she didn't seem to need it.

I started telling her everything. Things I hadn't even told myself jumped up outta my mouth and Sarah seemed to understand even when I didn't. I told her how I used to love making things with my hands. But who could make a living doing that? I told her how I was thinking about those things when the doctor told me I had to get involved in life again. Start drinking more water, eating less salt — get out, exercise something other than my mouth. I thought about making little icons, you know, like the little goddess statues and amulets people seemed to love. While I was thinking about it everything hit the fan, so to speak. Then I lost interest in thinking about anything except maybe living. I knew I needed to go back to work pretty soon, cause my benefits were running out, but I didn't seem to be moving in that direction.

One time Sarah asked me if I'd ever been on a horse. I said, "Yeah, I used to ride a long time ago." "For a while I dreamed about becoming a rancher or a farmer but ..." *She must've had that hat behind her back when she came in. The straw hat she popped on her head!* She started prancing around the house like a pony. I tried catching her and when she wanted me to, I did. I was sorta breathless cause I hadn't been exercising 'cept a bit in the garden. I don't know why I chased her, but I know why I caught her. Big woman like me gotta be careful how I hold people, especially little women. I mean, one time I held a woman so tight she couldn't breathe and she got some kinda angry at me. Since then, I'm real

careful. Now, Sarah's lips shouldn't have been no higher than my shoulder, maybe my neck, instead they were on my lips. I must've automatically bent my head down — must've cause I hadn't thought about kissing her, but wherever the idea came from, it was a good one. Her lips melted right into mine, so soft and her little hands sent some kinda warm energy right to that arthritis I'd gotten working in those old schools. Warmed me up like some kinda heating lamp. Wasn't passion, exactly. Tell the truth, I don't know what it was but it felt so good I had to lie down.

Sarah must've been a magician or something cause every time I turned around she was bringing stuff into the room I hadn't had in the house. She was one of them women don't carry no bag. She was what my mama called traveling light. Mama said women like her were always ready to go in several different directions at once. 'Cept Sarah wasn't like that — exactly. But she did some surprising things.

When I asked if she had a last name. She said not any more. I wasn't sure what she meant by that, but I figured she was probably thinking about slavery so I let it go.

On my birthday, I'd been thinking it would be nice if somebody special brought me flowers, from the florist not the super-market — expensive flowers! Then took me out in a limousine, bought me a new outfit. You know, I was tripping like that. Dozed off thinking about it when I heard a light tap on the door. I was like a mama and her baby — you know, don't matter how sleep mama might be, if her baby's breathing changes, she wakes right up. I bolted upright and said, "Come in," before I was fully awake. Then I realized there was no way for anyone to come through a locked door, but when I opened my eyes, there she was. I probably stuttered a little. I know it scared me. "How'd you get in?" I asked. She said the door was open. I guess it was cause I hadn't given her a key.

I'd never noticed how bosomy she was. Now, how could that be? How could she have hidden all of that? Even her hair was dread locked today. Must be a wig, I thought, or extensions or ... She pointed to a box at the bedroom door I must have overlooked. Too busy looking at her, I guess. She asked if she should bring it to me? I said, "Yes," and bent down to pick up my glasses. When I looked up the package was right in front of me. I swear I never saw Sarah move. "Sarah," I began ... She told me to open the box. Inside was a dress she and I looked at once, in the newspaper.

Sorta tailored but not too much. Just right for a big woman my age, 55 going on 90. Expensive was written all over it. Course you could see quality in everything about Sarah. Even when she was a little run down and had newspapers wrapped around her feet she had on satin drawers. I could smell orchids, my favorite flower. Then she told me to look out the window but I was too scared to move.

When Sarah made her little goddess statue I made one too. Turned out we were making them for each other. I had a lot of clay, fabric, ribbon and things from before. I hadn't touched any of it in almost a year. We sat at the kitchen table side by side, playing. Imagination running all over us — shaping, painting, decorating. We hardly said anything. What was there to say? I didn't think about eating until way after lunch time. I didn't mention it to Sarah cause you know she might've snapped her fingers and had lunch for two hanging in mid-air.

One day Sarah came in with a fistful of money from selling our little goddesses at the flea market. I just sat down and cried. I had images of us going into all the stores in San Francisco, art galleries, workshops plus traveling back east doing conferences on creativity. I had to get Sarah some shoes.

That night was strange. First night we slept in the bed. She always fell asleep on the floor and I wound up next to her, but that night she got in the bed and called me. Course I'd follow that voice anywhere — big and musical — warm and holy kinda voice. She was asleep by the time I got there. I slept easily for awhile then something happened. I couldn't tell when it began but I know I lifted up outta my sleep, not no whole lot, sorta like a dream state, only I'm not sure what it was. Anyhow, I felt like the woman I used to be — back a couple of years ago. My mind, body, attitude, dreams, everything felt young. It was as if the changes hadn't happened. I couldn't quite put my hands on what was going on, but I knew I felt light. Yeah, light. Like I could jump, skip and run if I had to. It was brief, I guess. Who's to say? But for a moment, everything seemed possible. It felt as though it was on me to make up my mind. What I wanted to do? I didn't know but the question seemed so important. I turned my head without opening my eyes towards Sarah. She seemed to be asleep. I turned back and the question came up again. It was growing bigger and bigger. It looked as if it was going to run me over. I tried to run from it. The

more I ran the bigger it got.

Finally, I fell down dead. I didn't hear the question anymore. My eyes popped open. Sarah was looking at me and I asked, "Sarah?" I didn't know what else to say. She told me to go back to sleep. When I did, I got that feeling again of everything being all right. I was laughing, the way I used to laugh — when I was feeling better, when life was different. I was floating along, so right on the money, when I felt soft lips kissing my arm. Really kissing, not just running across, but licking and nibbling — kinda cat like, all over my shoulders kissing my skin. Then a hand reached across my chest, where those big juicy titties used to be. Lips blew gently on my skin. Another hand reached up and rubbed my chest. Lips kissed the scars while a soft face rubbed against my chest and everywhere. Didn't seem to matter. My whole chest felt warm, healthy and all right. You know what I mean?

I felt so loved I couldn't stop crying. The kisses didn't stop. They landed all over me — my neck, face, chest, in my hair. And the hands stroking me were so loving, so ... I don't know. It felt like magic hands healing me of everything. The surgery, all the dying parts. I couldn't stop crying cause I knew deep down I was loved and nothing else really mattered. It was all up to me. I tried to say something, but my thighs were heating up from her thighs rubbing against them and that old triangle I had almost forgotten was coming alive. I swear I thought I was 25 or something. My face couldn't stop smiling. I felt so on fire, I couldn't move — but I was, I'm sure, moving. I was being moved and it went on and on. Finally, everything broke loose and I could see all the old dead stuff — hurts, fears, stares, sympathy, all the changes, the goddamn changes, thrown out bathing suits, stuffed bras, lost confidence, resentments, surgeon cuts and everything went flying out of me like a volcano erupting, spitting old dead rotten stuff everywhere.

Then clean, clear spring water flowed, washing me way down the river bed of a new day. I opened my eyes to look into Sarah's but ... she was gone.

She left me that goddess statue on the mantel. Sits right next to the one I made for her. That's how I know she was here.

Barbara Lynne Brush

The Sky-Writers

Sounds of women climb the mountain, cling to manzanita. Our rough hands smell of sage. This is where we find each other. Here are directions, how to recognize us:

Suspended high above the valley, we hover over bird guides. Multi-toed shadow cats dance near rodent holes. Patience colors the wetland, its reindeer-faced cows.

Out here there are no wrong numbers. Two hawks spiral upward, freefall. Synchrony. Everything courtship, continuity. A splinter in the hand, sunburned shoulder & suddenly tenderness

is compulsory, given. With woodsmoke & the moon rising, we tell stories, invent new constellations; I lie back to the wash of river, say, *I could live my whole life listening to that sound.*

Juanita Chavez

La Evil Woman

In the eighth grade I wanted to be a chola. The girls from La Colonia were so beautiful. Most of them had the full bodies of women, faces painted with dark makeup, and long feathered hair always combed and perfectly in place. Their clothes were spotless and pressed with sharp creases. Not a scuff of dust touched their black canvas winos.

They were tough and got more respect than the teachers. When they walked down the halls the other students cleared their path. But what I envied most about the clique from La Colonia was that they were tight with Sylvia Rodriguez, or as they called her, La Evil Woman.

On the yard she sat like a queen surrounded by her court; some girls trying hard to be as cool as her, others bouncing around like chihuahuas trying to get her attention. She didn't talk much unless there was going to be a fight. Then she took charge of the situation. Boys wouldn't even mess with her because she could kick anyone's ass.

During breaks she and her friends would hang in the bathroom smoking cigarettes. Before leaving for class, they would step up to the mirror, smooth on almost black lipstick and thicken their eyeliner.

I had her in a P.E. class in the 7th grade. One time, in the locker room, a group of white girls started messing with me. They tossed some spit wads in my hair and started saying I had piojos, only they said "cooties." Sylvia and three of her homegirls stepped out from behind the lockers. They didn't even say anything before Janet Wilson started apologizing, "We were just playing around... It was just a joke." I quietly gathered my things and left. The next day I heard around school that some white girls got jumped by La Evil Woman.

In class she sat in the back. She did what she wanted, not the assignments. Most of the teachers seemed afraid of her. She didn't pay them any attention. She wouldn't even flinch at Mrs. Snyder's barking coral-red lips. She'd just sit there with that hard look, take the detention slip, crumple it up, and toss it

under a desk. The class would laugh.

With the teachers I had a different reputation, "sweet little Maria that never causes any trouble, and really bright too." It wasn't because I tried. I followed the rules because I didn't want any attention called to myself. I usually sat in the front of the class. When there was a test everyone in the back would beg me to come sit by them. But I was too shy to make many friends. Mostly I just sat by myself at lunch reading.

It wasn't so much that I wanted to be more like the cholas from La Colonia or like Sylvia. I just wanted her to notice me. I wanted to be near her. I wanted to be one of the select few in her circle, to know that no one could touch me because I was under her protection.

I started purposely coming to class a few minutes late. Mrs. Snyder spoke kindly, "Now Maria, this is not like you. You're tardy for the third day in a row. You know that I'm going to have to give you a detention." I wanted to gather up all the strength in me, stare her down, and say, in my meanest voice, "So, write me up!" Instead, I said nothing. I was trembling inside, I felt my face get hot. I looked down and was about to cry but then she handed me the pink slip. I felt suddenly better.

After school I went to the library for my first detention ever. Sylvia came in a few minutes later and sat across the table from me. I tried to pretend like I was reading but I couldn't help looking at her. For a while she just sat there daydreaming. Then she picked up a magazine from the table and started flipping through it stopping to look at pictures, she ripped out a page, an ad with a lady in a lacy bra, folded it up, and put it in her pocket. She pulled out a pencil and started drawing on the desk. It was a while before the detention monitor came up and whispered something. She acted like she didn't even see the person, put her pencil away and went back to dreaming.

After getting a few detentions I stopped coming to class late and just started showing up at the library after school. I guess Sylvia had a life time sentence. One Friday she came in, late as usual, and sat down next to me. I was so nervous that I kept my eyes buried in my book. I didn't expect her question and wasn't sure she was talking to me.

"Is that all you do is read?"

"Sometimes," I squeaked.

"What do you read about?"

"Different things," I answered.

She could tell I was nervous, so she started speaking softer,

"What's that book about?"

"Ghosts and haunted houses," I said, relaxing.

"You believe in all that?"

I was worried she'd think I was dumb. "No, not really. I just like reading about them."

"Me neither," she smiled, "my grandma believes in that stuff. She tells me all kinds of stories; about la Lechusa, the white owl, who comes to steal the souls of newborn babies, and the good looking guy who turns into a devil with a rooster's foot and kills girls who go out dancing when their mom told them not to. She swears they're true but I don't believe it. Are the ones in that book true?"

"They're supposed to be but they don't sound real to me. There's this one about an old lady who gets haunted by her dead cat." I went on to tell her the story but before I finished the bell rang.

"Later," she said, before she stood up and walked out.

I sat there for a few minutes while the big bubble inside me tried to push my lips into a smile. That night she was in my dream. We were little kids and we were playing with dolls in the playhouse that I used to have in my Abuela's back yard. The dream stayed with me all weekend. I was excited to go back to school on Monday.

She began sitting by me from then on. She'd ask me what I was reading and every day I'd tell her a different story. Sometimes I'd spend hours looking for the perfect book because I knew she liked stories about UFOs and Indians.

She walked me home a couple of times. Then, pretty soon it was every day. Most of the time I did all the talking and she would just ask questions. When she did speak she told me about her dad whom she didn't know, her mom's new husband whom she hated, but mostly about her brother, Gato, who had been locked up since she was ten.

"Quien es esa muchacha?" my mom would ask.

"She's just a friend from school."

"No quiero que te metas con esas muchachas pandilleras."

"She's not in a gang, mom."

Once while we were walking and talking I felt her hand brush against mine. The little hairs rose all over my body. She pulled her hand away quickly, started walking really fast and looking straight ahead. She stopped talking and barely said good bye before taking off.

Mostly our friendship was private, but during school — in class and in the halls — Sylvia would always give me a little half smile and without words raise her head back to say, "What's up?" In the bathroom, if other girls were in line before me or her friends were sitting in the stalls she'd say, "Let her go." They obeyed and

I felt protected.

One day I asked her where she lived. "In La Colonia," she said, "on the south side, by the fairgrounds." The next week she took me there. No one was home. The house was dark and cool. It was cluttered with too many things. It smelled like the little dog that was running back and forth, barking at me. She went into the kitchen to get sodas and chips then took me down the hall. Her room was darker than the rest of the house but not as crowded. There was just a bed, a dresser with a tape player on top, and some drawings on the wall. One was of a chola with long swirling hair, a mole, and a big Mexican sombrero. One was of a shiny antique lowrider, the other an Indian chief. It reminded me of my older brother's room, except it was clean. She went over to the stereo and turned it on; a high whiny voice singing Angel Baby.

"You like oldies?"

"Sure," I said.

"Go ahead and sit on the bed," she offered, "I wanna show you something." She took a rolled poster size paper off the dresser and unrolled it. "I drew this of you."

The drawing looked kind of like me but the chi-chis were too big. Underneath "La Pure Sweetness" was written in an Old English style. I was flattered and embarrassed at the same time. "Thank you," was all I could say.

"Do you smokeout?" she asked.

"I've never tried it."

"Do you want to?"

"I don't really know how to, but if you show me..."

She laughed, "It's not something hard to learn. It's just like sucking on a straw, only you light it. Some people don't even feel anything the first time."

She reached down and pulled a little plastic bag out of her sock and took out a joint. She lit it and started puffing on it till it glowed. She handed it to me. "Just breathe in," she said. I started coughing. "Here, drink some soda," she handed me a can. We passed the joint between us a few times.

"I think I got the hang of it," I said, starting to feel light.

"You toker," she teased, and poked me in the ribs. I jumped a little. "Are you ticklish?" she asked poking me again.

I smiled and a warmth spread across my skin. She started tickling me and pretty soon we were both rolling around on the bed giggling. When we slowed down we were both out of breath, she was resting on top of me one of her arms behind my shoulders and the other on my waist. Her face was near mine. We were quietly staring at each other, breathing deep and slow. I closed my

eyes and felt her lean forward and press her lips on mine.

"I never kissed anyone before," I whispered.

"Me neither," she said. And we kissed again.

She ran her hand lightly across my neck, over my shoulders and slowly down my arms. She played with my fingers, lifting each one with hers. She moved to my stomach and began smoothing her hands up and down over my blouse. I was sure she realized the mistake in her drawing. We lay there touching and holding each other until the thin border of light coming through the window left us in darkness.

A door slammed and startled us both. She jumped up and scrambled off the bed. "Get up! My mom's here," she said, "You gotta go home now. I'll see if she can give you a ride."

We didn't talk about what happened between us. But after school, the next day, she said everything I wanted to hear when she handed me a limp buttercup: one of those that grew wild in the yard. I knew that in my own special way I was part of her cliqua and in some ways even more.

She invited me over to her house a few more times before school got out for the summer. She signed my yearbook, "La Pure Sweetness, Keep that sweet smile & don't let no one get you down. You'll always have that special place in my heart. Dedication — Angel Baby, Sylvia M. Rodriguez "La Evil Woman." With an added "c/s," con safos, that meant forever.

Margo Mercedes Rivera

Marlene

I.

Marlene Torres was my best friend in kindergarten. She had long dark brown hair, a beautiful smile and deep sparkling sepia eyes. We were the two tallest girls in class and since they arranged us by height, we always sat together.

Marlene had a reputation even then because her mother dressed her as a miniature version of herself. Four-year-old Marlene wore sexy clothes—black fishnet stockings, micro-miniskirts, and clinging knit tops. Marlene's mother, whose first name I never knew, often roamed around the parking lot of the Lucky's downtown, trying to remember which guy, in which pickup truck was her ride the morning after. Her face often looked swollen and sometimes bruised and she usually walked like somethin' had made her sore between her legs.

One of my Mama's girlfriends would cluck when she saw Marlene's mother, "Oh, would you look at that." And Mama would say, "She's the mother of Margo's friend, Marlene." Mama'd drive her old car over to see if Mrs. Torres needed a ride today. Sometimes Marlene's mother would accept and climb into the back seat with me, trying to act proper and sit up straight even though her body swayed in the still air. She usually smelled good — kinda like sweat, garlic, and a touch of skunk. I liked sitting next to her and I'd sneak my hand over to pet the furry trim at the hem and sleeves of the red coat she always wore.

II.

Marlene and I slowly drifted apart over the years. By the time we were in seventh grade she ran with the cool, fast crowd. She still dressed the way she had when I first met her, but now her full breasts stretched the fabric of her tight sweaters and her high round ass pounded its own beat, held captive by her short skirts.

One day I saw Marlene walk naked across the girls' locker room. Her olivebrown skin and her plum-colored areolas made her breasts look absolutely irresistible as she came over to my locker to ask if she could borrow my comb. All I could think about was running my tongue over her abundant body. I wanted to pillow my head on the swell of her stomach and roll her soft brown nipples between my lips. It was a tremendous effort to pass Marlene the comb, her bronze hand brushing my bronze hand, and not let her see my lust.

III.

The last time I talked to Marlene was on a field trip our class took to Fisherman's Wharf. She wore snug burnt orange velour bell bottoms and a patterned peasant blouse, a thick brown belt cinching her waist. She was giddy that day on new experiences—watching the waves, smelling the boiling crabs and eating sourdough bread for the first time. At an age when most girls pretended they never ate, Marlene proudly carried her big round loaf around, giving everyone a taste. My mother had dressed me warmly and had even given me a cardigan to carry. I offered it to Marlene who was running around the beach trying to stay warm. I still have a photo of her wearing my sweater with her pants rolled up and hands thrust on her womanly hips. Marlene looks so adult in the picture, except her smile, the upper and lower tooth grin of a little kid, giving her away.

IV.

Not long after the excursion to San Francisco, Marlene stayed home from school for a few weeks. I didn't talk to her every day, but since she was in my gym class I noticed that she had been out for a good long while. One morning the school was abuzz with the news that twelve-year-old Marlene was dead. Some people said that she had died of hepatitis. No other information was given to us and I never knew what really had happened to her.

V.

Marlene's funeral was packed. Almost our entire school was there, including the teachers and other staff. Her mother was there, looking hopelessly forlorn. Her face was faded to a sickly grey and she looked frail and broken in her red coat. After I followed the trail of people to the closed box which held Marlene I hugged Mrs. Torres and patted the fake fur sleeves of her jacket one last time.

Darlene Grainger

Can I Play?

Bored —

I decided I'd do something

I hadn't done in years—

go outside and play.

I tried to remember

jump-rope games,

the rules of hide and seek,

how high do you count?

I went out to play

I hummed and skipped

down the street looking for the other kids.

They were playing hopscotch.

I showed them marbles

They stared at me

said I was too old

“go find someone your own age to play with”

they said

“They're all grown up” I cried.

Elizabeth Ribet

grrl-story

i was standing by the registration table at the National Women's Studies Association Conference (NWSA), when a woman walked up to me and said, "you look like you know what you're doing. can you show me how to find the plenary session?" it turned out she was one of the speakers. i was supposed to be working registration — but she convinced me to stay and listen to what she had to say.

she talked about these people called the "riot grrls," of whom i was one. curious, she sought them out, followed them around — studied them. but, she said, "my goodness they were just so ignorant of their history, i mean, they really seemed to have no idea of what the 2nd wave of feminism was about." now, she was writing this book *for us*, so we could learn our history, learn that this "grrl" was wrong when she said the women's movement was a white, middle class movement.

the panel was on feminist generations and only actually included one *sort of* young woman. she was really cool, and didn't seem to realize she was there to be "the young voice" in the conference — she said she didn't think of herself as really young — she was 27.

after the panel was finished, i went up to the stage shaking, because i was so angry and talked to the woman who "studies" us — we processed. next thing you know the "token" young speaker said, "come speak on this panel on Generation X and the F word" (awful title). i agreed to be a presenter along with her and another feminist in her late twenties.

brimming with rage, vulnerability and a sort of explosive grieving hope, i was the second one to speak. i had, almost, the whole audience on my side — people stopping my presentation to clap, grrls beaming at me. everywhere i looked people were getting excited ... several times i almost cried, saying over and over, "i'm so angry, i'm so angry," as i talked about us — our work, ageism and adulthood.

when i was done, i left for a workshop — i was actually *scheduled* to present in. the woman who had spoken and upset me, the one who studies us, came running out after me, throwing her arms around me, telling me what a wonderful speech i gave. i let her walk me to the building where my workshop was, her arm still wrapped around my waist, and she said, "i would be the last one to not support a young Jewish feminist" (she was a Jewish feminist too). she then proceeded to talk about supporting me and my work. to show how supportive she was — not like her friends — she talked about a friend sitting next to her, who leaned over while i was speaking, and said, "Okay, so they're angry, but can they be activists?"

i'd been walking with her arm around my waist, nodding and talking, but now the blood was rushing to my face — because oh, how goddamn frightening — *she did not comprehend* how it felt for me to hear, "so they're angry, but can they be activists?"

i spoke, in my workshop, about our work, our fear, about alienation from too many parts of the feminist movement that do not care about girls and grrls. i spoke about the ways in which we practice feminism is not recognized, because it does not look like the feminism of THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT. i spoke about female on female violence, and how it plays out against grrls.

i talked about my activism.

and somehow, my words did not get through.

can they be activists?

when my mother, the feminist, goes to a NOW meeting ... this is activism.

when my mother, the feminist, gets on the phone and tells the 911 operator, that my father did not hit me. it was just an argument. is this her activism?

when i call 911, am i an activist?

i was only 16, am i allowed to be an activist?

i can not go to a battered women's shelter, because they are not for girls, you have to be over 18. do you think they might let me be an activist anyway — since i am being battered — even though i am not a woman?

when we, a group of young lesbians, sit together and one of us talks about coming out in a local group of older women, and how she became "fresh meat," how she was frightened because they all wanted to fuck her ... so she left the group — was this their activism?

when she left the group, was this because she was not a good activist?

am i an activist when i go to a group, comprised of women professors, where i am the only student left because all the others got exhausted and bored and, therefore, stopped coming to be tokens at the meetings? am i an activist when i show the professors the petition i've worked on against sexual harassment within the university and they say, "you mean you just did this without our permission, you started a petition all on your own? this won't do at all." did they disapprove of my action because they were waiting to do better activism ... next month, after a few more meetings? the 500 signatures of students already there were not important to these women who talked about radicalizing the university.

was the problem that i do things without permission — not like a good activist?

what will they do to us if we try to be activists?

to say we are activists?

to say that what we do is activism?

they will stare right through us and say,
so they're angry, but can they be activists?

can we be activists?

M.C. Ball

Photograph: 1990

You look over your shoulder, hands
poised over piano keys, flesh and spirit
settled into middle age, ready to bridge
centuries. Twenty centuries taught

your mothers to look over their shoulders;
glances flickering across cradles,
cookstoves, little girls playing
piano, spinning dreidels,
braids gleaming, safe
for the moment. This moment's

black and gray shadow links
us, my eye your only ruthless
pursuer for the moment, across
two lives, two women, two histories.

M.C. Ball

Garden Britomart

*You who are in your enclosure
like a breastplate;
Burgeoning, you blossomed.*

— Hildegarde of Bingen

Trekking through rain in overalls, hat faded to amber, struggling with blood-rusty clay, yard-violet rhizomes, white squash-vine borers, tomato-pecking jays, behind head-topping privet you dig hard roots. Crabbed roses unwrap their desperate mouths and speak to this Southern alien patch. Decades you've planted, dug, sown. Now you sit Sundays, sip black tea laced with hard peace, hold dialectic with peeled torsos of crape myrtle arched in sensuous meditation while feathered seeds ride towards the millennium great with cargoes of clawed dreams.

Liz Morrison

90 Miles an Hour

I am driving down a road in Oklahoma. For miles, there is nothing, nothing but flat endless Oklahoma. My mother, who normally talks continuously for a twelve hour period, is snoring quietly in the passenger seat. We have been driving forever. Our next stop is Oklahoma City. I am twenty-two years old. I'm moving to California from the frozen tundra of Buffalo, New York.

My mother, who can't bear to see me grow up and leave home has decided to martyr herself once more and accompany me on the cross country trip. I know she's really taking this trip because she needs to worry about me up until the last possible moment. She worries I'll become an adult, make my own decisions and learn to cook my own meals. She also worries I'll wear patent leather shoes after Labor Day, make long distance phone calls before the rates go down and shop for groceries without coupons. There is only one stipulation to her joining me, we must make this 3,000 mile drive in four days. My mother needs to go to a wedding the following weekend back in New York. This makes me laugh to myself, never a bridesmaid never a bride, but that's another story.

I look over at my mother and notice she is deep in sleep. I am not surprised she's so tired. She's had a trucker's mentality throughout our little adventure. As we cross into different time zones, my mother seems to purposely ignore the fact that we gain an hour each time. Every morning, like a drill sergeant, she gets me out of bed at what she pretends is 4:00 am, but what I KNOW is 3:00 am. There is no point in arguing with her. She is determined to set a new record for driving cross-country in a Datsun station wagon. I slowly push down on the gas pedal bringing our speed to 90 miles an hour. I just want to get in a hot bath and wash off all the dust and tedium of Oklahoma.

My mother begins to stir. I consider slowing down a little, but then again, she wants this to be a quick trip so I continue to speed. She asks where we are. I tell her we're about an hour outside Oklahoma City. I stare at the seemingly endless road ahead of me. There is nothing around us but cattle skulls and tumbleweeds. The only music we can get on the radio is Country Western or some religious maniac who yells at us about Satan. I feel like I'm in a neurotic Jewish version of "Bonanza." We decide to pull into a truck stop and eat something. As we walk into the diner, all the men tip their cowboy hats at us. I'm not quite sure what we're supposed to do in response. I consider curtsying but that's probably not right so I just smile and follow my mother to a table. The waitress is a caricature of all the waitresses you see in movies about diners like this. She has enormous blond bouffant hair, too much makeup and calls us "y'all." We look over the menu. I don't recognize anything. I make the assumption that there is no chance for me to get a lean corned beef sandwich on rye with a seltzer. The breakfast choices look relatively safe so I order eggs, grits, biscuits and red eye gravy. I have no idea what red eye gravy is but when in Rome forget about cholesterol.

After dinner, we get back on the road and this time my mother is driving. This part has been a challenge since my mother has no idea how to drive a stick shift. We didn't discover this until we were half way through Indiana and we were switching drivers for the first time. My mother figured it would be easy ... she'd hold down the clutch and I'd shift. I'm afraid I'll need a new transmission by the time we hit New Mexico. As we get back on, to what seems to be, the only highway in Oklahoma, my mother shifts from second into fourth. I cringe but say nothing. Soon I'll be 3,000 miles away from her and none of this will matter. We pull into a motel about an hour later. It's 7:00 pm and I immediately fall asleep. I know I have a 3:00 am wake up call from my sadistic morning person of a mother. No matter how many hours of sleep I get, 3:00 am feels like 3:00 am, cold, dark and too damned early.

We begin Day 3 at high speeds. We need to cover a lot of road today. I listen to Country Western music until the lyrics

begin to depress me too much. No one ever seems happy in those songs. Someone is either cheating, lying, or someone's dog dies. No wonder Oklahoma looks like it does. My mother has been silent for an inordinate amount of time. She looks over at me and without warning, asks: "Are you a lesbian?" Now remember, I am driving 90 miles an hour and this is not the sort of thing you ask someone who is driving 90 miles an hour. I mean, couldn't she have waited until we were at a stoplight? I pull the car over to the side of the road, turn off the engine and reply "yes." We look at each other for a split second and my mother starts to cry.

I hadn't planned on this little conversation but, then again, my mother has had her finger on my pulse since the day I was born. She has always sensed any change in my life, any emotional turmoil I was grappling with. How could I not expect her to know I had been sleeping with Katherine.

"It's Katherine, isn't it?"

"Yes, I have been involved with her." Katherine was my first lover. We began seeing each other at the end of my senior year in college. She was my boyfriend's ex-girlfriend. Already I was learning the basics of dyke drama.

"So does this mean you'll always be a lesbian?" Before I can reply I think to myself, how can I even begin to answer this question? At this point, I've only been a lesbian for six months. I know I've done well on the oral exam, but what about the essay questions?

"Mom, I am moving to a city where I know absolutely no one, I have no job and no apartment. I just can't think that far ahead. Please do me a favor. Don't tell the rest of the family until I've had a chance to settle in and think things through."

My mother reluctantly agrees to my request.

When we arrive in Albuquerque, we check into our motel and I tell my mother everything. She looks at me for a moment and tells me she has always thought I was a little "different." I never liked girls' toys and I used to wear a full-dress marine uniform when I was five. When I wasn't in a uniform, I always wore some type of hat: an airplane pilot's cap, a foreign legion hat, a civil war yankee soldier's cap or a space helmet. At all

times, I was ready for a trip to the moon, or to defend my house against bad people. I honestly don't know if my wardrobe can be attributed to my lesbianism, but I had a lot more fun with my hats and uniforms than I ever could have had with Barbie and Ken.

Our trip ends and I am emotionally and physically exhausted. Although my mother and I are ready to separate, we have a very tearful goodbye at the airport. I drive away from the terminal confused and relieved. My life is about to begin in my new apartment complete with rented furniture. It is 1978 and everything in my apartment is in "earthtones." I have brown and orange shag carpeting, brown and orange furniture, brown and orange linens and even a brown phone. It's like living at a Denny's. What was I thinking?

One day my mother calls to see if I'm still eating a balanced diet and to tell me she has outed me to the entire family. I am angry but a little relieved at the same time. My father thinks the hats and uniforms are the problem, my 16 year old brother doesn't really understand and my grandmother points out that Gertrude Stein was not only a brilliant lesbian, but she was also Jewish!

So now I'm out to the family but my mother is still trying to take care of me. In her eyes, the umbilical cord stretches over four time zones. For a brief moment, I consider changing my phone number. After a few minutes I realize I am in my own apartment with my own things and my own food choices in the kitchen. I laugh to myself as I prepare cold cereal for dinner.

Mandy Precious

No Weak Swimmers Beyond This Point

The blue makes you look skinny and awkward. Your outward bound gang play a game of water polo, all limbs and hairy chests, just developed breasts, rolled into one. You don't belong.

Your best friend does. She flirts with the male helpers, touches them as much as she dares — enjoys their nearly bare bodies without giving herself away. She knows she would not be to blame if anything came of it.

She sees you, waves, then me in my black to the neck Speedo, sexless suit — my flattened tits, short hair, shaved into the neck. "Dyke!" she shouts, laughs a you'd-better-laugh-too-laugh. You do. Your eyes light up when the woman helper strides through, in her Ron Hill Tracksters.

Later, in the changing rooms you compete with eye-shadow and hair spray.

Your friend looks drop-dead, fuck-off gorgeous.

Says, "I reckon she had her hair cut like that for a bet!"

Lets her eyes rest on my badly advised Pride T-shirt, the flying pink triangles. You smile again, roll the woman helpers borrowed sports socks on to your feet, meet my eyes, grin.

Margaret Robison

One Small Step

A Motel in the White Mountains

At the picnic table outside my window
a woman sits with her back to me, facing the river.
I wait in this room with the suitcases
and unmade beds while my friend
brings our breakfast from the restaurant
that's not wheelchair accessible.
My eyes move with the water as it flows.
I watch the breeze blowing the few
tall grasses on the river bank, and stalks
of mauve wildflowers.
I want to feel the breeze on my skin too.
I want to see the woman face to face.
She is so close I can see wrinkles
in her shorts and shirt. What separates us
is the step from my door sill to the ground.
One small step. But in my wheelchair, the ground
is no more accessible than the dusty, rock-strewn moon
that astronauts first set foot on so many years ago.
"That's one small step for man," Neil Armstrong said.
"One giant leap for mankind — his
booted footprint on the moon — perhaps forever. I
only wanted to push my wheelchair from the motel
room
to the ground outside my door.



*Over 300 lesbians and their allies
march at the NGO Forum near Beijing, 1995*

Cathy Cade

Beijing Images

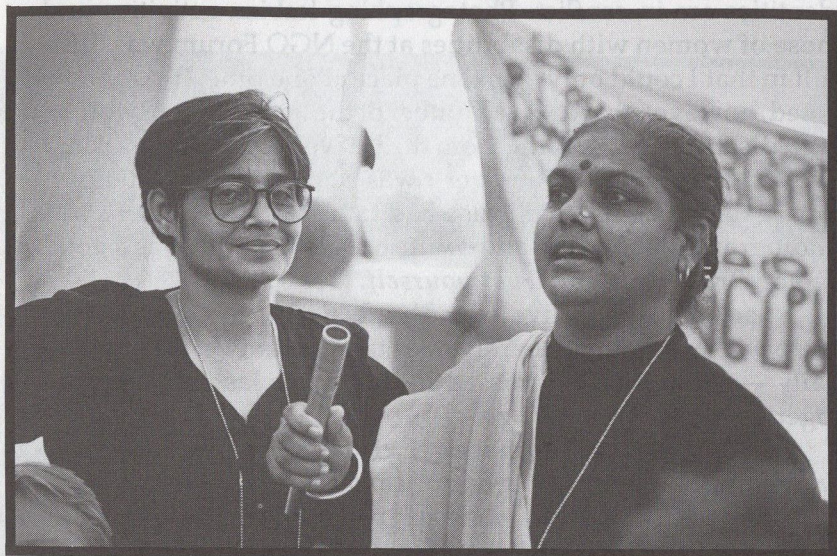
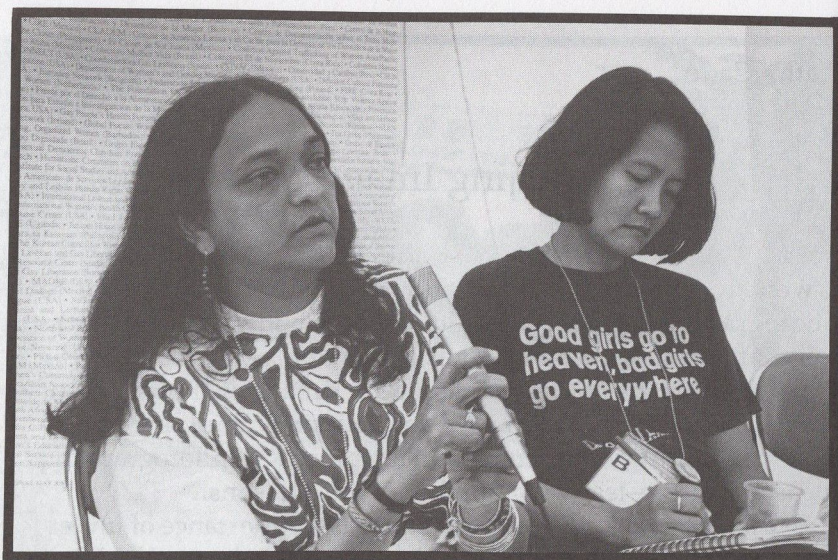
I went to the Beijing International Women's conference to photograph what I knew would include an international gathering of lesbians. I also went as a part of my day job with the Wheeled Mobility Center, for I had a dream of thousands of women from all over the world seeing women building appropriate technology wheelchairs. In the process of photographing I learned and re-learned a number of life's lessons.

Lesbians of color have alerted us to the importance of understanding our multiple identities. As a lesbian and a mother, I find the concept of multiple identities very useful, especially when my identities are in conflict. Photographing lesbian activities and those of women with disabilities at the NGO Forum was difficult in that I could only be in one place at one time. It should be noted, however, that a large number of the leadership of women with disabilities attending from the US were out lesbians. I had to learn to trust that wherever I was photographing at a particular time was just fine. I also had to trust that whether I was photographing in black-and-white or color or both was a good choice. *Trust yourself. Trust yourself.*

I had to learn to live with the fact that, for a variety of reasons, I was going to barely miss taking many great shots — daily — more than I'd missed in the whole last 10 years put together. *Let it go. Let it go.*

To take pressure off myself, I visualized a large group of women from many countries documenting this event. *All you have to do is your part.* I long for, pray for, someone to make a photography book of the work of many woman photographers at the Beijing conference.

It is taking the passage of time, six months, a year, and more to be able to evaluate and show these photographs. *It is not too late. There is plenty of time.*



At the lesbian tent, Abbey Kesera (Sri Lanka),
Tang (Thailand), Maya Sharma and Shanti (India),
speak about South Asian lesbians.



*Lesbians from Belgrade, Britain
and Dyke TV-New York.*



Norma Burton and daughter (US), lesbian mother and Christian Minister.



*Wheelchair building workshop at the disability tent.
Patrona Sandoval (Nicaragua) shows Jan Siong (US)
the first front wheel plate she has made for a wheel-chair.*



Dancing with wheelchairs I



At the Great Wall of China

Ekua Omosupe

Audre Lorde

I will miss your physical body,
though I have never seen you in person.
Just knowing that you were somewhere sharing
the lull of
humming bees on lazy
summer afternoons,
or watching sunsets and moon risings
with me
was comfort.

Your strong voice
will no longer be raised
in auditoriums to eager ears
but your words
continue to ring loud and pregnant
in lecture halls, at dinner, among friends
and enemies alike.

I miss you.

You always tottered on precipices
thin as wire,
threatening to slice you
into pieces,
wanting to cut your tongue,
shut you up,
but you stood fast
and learned to balance your weight,
carry some of mine.

You knew
I needed your help.
You told me to break my silences,
confront my perpetrators,

to look at my beautiful self
and feel who I am
You said, "I feel, therefore I am."
Audre, I am raw,
Alive, and wanting.

You told me that *Poetry is Not a Luxury*
that my poems are stories that must be told,
testimonies to the living,
songs for those who are already dead,
weapons on the front lines,
necessary as daily bread.

You taught me
not to be quiet,
to expel my rage
not to betray myself
for I would not survive,
was not meant to.

You taught me to trust myself,
Risk loving who I am.

This is frightening,
Yet, in my vulnerability I am strengthened to
Face "eye to eye" myself and fear
that would make my tongue mute and my pen silent
in this struggle against dehumanization, erasure.

Even in your death,
You speak truth.

You did your work.
Black woman, poet, teacher, mother, lesbian,
and invited me to do mine.

I will follow your example,
take the baton
and pass it on.

Natasha T. Champney

Needle Work

I've died more than nine times,
and a cat doesn't know the
meaning of
being reincarnated on a daily basis.
My body is a pin cushion,
full of needles, thorns.
Each pin represents a hope destroyed and reborn
and I'm the sewing master, give me a needle and thread,
and I'll redesign this dress of
flesh and heart by day and night.
The same pattern is dull, I think,
and the skin needs holes to
breathe deeper.

Patricia Fontaine

Entering My Days

I no longer look for mule deer
 or pat my pockets for keys
 to the van I rented in Salt Lake,
 or find this steering wheel too small
 for that Western spread of my hands.
 My skin absorbs the color here
 of a snow that seems precocious
 for November in Vermont,
 relinquishing the tawny hue
 of all the southwest slickrock
 I clambered up and shimmied down
 all the length of October.

I begin to remember who I was
 before the trip to Utah,
 before this summer's surgery.
 The season of diminishing light
 brings me images of a year ago
 as I do the work I couldn't do in June:
 chucking wood, raking leaves,
 holding the pose of the warrior
 in morning yoga until
 my absent breast whimpers
 and tugs at the apron
 of my chest.

When I peel my sticky shirt
 in that familiar alley
 between the bed and window
 I meet my loss of whole,
 and suffer again the asymmetry,
 the round fall of right and
 the canyon wall of left,
 hands coming up to catch
 today's bitter tears, the change ache
 entering my days.

Janell Moon

Life's Pearls

This isn't the first time I've been lonely.
I know what it's like to walk the silence,
the body's search to rise above the gnarled
legs of quarrel. Soon night will find me
prowling the house on padded feet, I'll dance
me ragged until the dawn breaks,
the orient color of life clutching me
by the ear again.

ananda esteva

*this is what i'd tell her if we were friends
not just lovers*

i only like girls who look like girls-she says
 and im watching her
 like for the first time
 i examine her ring
 her broad shouldered letterman jacket
 her gelled up crew cut
 i listen
 to the teenage-boy sound in her voice like she swallows her
 words b-fore they come out
 -but dont you like yourself-i ask
 secretly wishing to slice thru her thick skin dig out her insides
 i wanna know!
 -well yeah-she says-
 and thats all i can get out of her
 sometimes i call her *mi hombrecito* my little man just to make her
 smirk
 ill do anything to raise a reaction!
 shes so quiet
 stoic
 like a man
 like an *Indio llena de soledad*
 and i wanna know does she love herself and
 i wanna tell her shes beautiful
 but i bet no one ever called her that before and
 if they did/would she believe them
 im starting to wonder what the hell people think beauty is
 anyway/
 but its not tom boy
 not jock
 not a buzz cut with a low croaking voice to match

i dont know her world

once as the sun was rising and she looked at me sweaty
weary

i got a flash of her future
a time when she believes in herself/believes in her ability to
draw

in that flash i saw light pour in around her
n caress the walls of her studio

sprawling with drawings and murals
and she smiles at me lightly

she feels complete

then i sank back to the moment

i was naked and she in her tank top in my bed

i cd see and feel her womanhood that morning

after we killed each other with our fingers and tongues and
teeth

aye como me matas! round after round/

i cant get enough

its those times when she tells me bout her family in san diego
and her love she left there

those times when her thick skin falls to her side and

she dares express herself

i live for those moments

she only likes girls

who look like girls but

does she like herself

i look at her

and shes a mystery/a genderfuck/

forever silent

mi hombrecito/my little man

i wanna tell her shes beautiful

but i dont dare

Jean H. Thoresen

Butch Trade

I open the doors,
 Bring the flowers,
 Make love to women
 First, only then allowing
 My pleasure.
 Courtly bows rise up through my body
 From my black booted toes,
 Tools of my butch trade.

I light cigarettes one-handed,
 Silver Zippo
 Snapped to attention,
 Tool of my butch trade.
 Short slick dark hair
 combed to a D.A. with a
 small black rubber comb,
 Tool of my butch trade.

Small leather wallet
 Tucked smoothly in the
 Back pocket of my jeans
 Gratify femme whims at a
 Moment's notice, all
 Suave and soignee,
 More where that came from,
 Tool of my butch trade.

Slim creased black pants,
 Stiff starched shirt,
 Blindingly white,
 Setting for the
 Silk foulard four-in-hand
 Tie that proclaims
 Identity,
 Tool of my butch trade.

I hold your jacket while
You slip sinuously into it,
Leaning back against me,
Head turning to
Brush my fingers with
Your lips, warm, yielding,
Femme promises to my
Butch trade.

sharon bridgforth

"bull-jean & that wo'mn"

(an excerpt from "lovve/rituals and rage")

Cleandra marie la beau
 say she lik the way i
 tickle her spot/say
 folk keepa fiddln round but cain't seem ta
 find it/lik i
 can she
 take my hand place it on her heart/say
 thats
 my spot
 bull-jean/and since you touch it
 so sweet
 i'm gonn let you see what else
 of mine you can find ta tickle ...

oh/i'm s in lovve till
 i'm sick/jes
 hurt
 all ova
 body
 ache
 mind
 sore
 heart
 hurt/jes
 hurt

it all began when i looked in the eyes of THAT WO'MN.
 na/i's a wo'mn
 whats loved many wy'mn's.
 me/they call bull-dog-jean i say
 thats cause i works lik somekinda
 ole dog trying ta git a bone or two/they

say it's cause i be sniffn after wy'mns
down-low/beggn and thangs

whatever.

one day

i was sittn in my yard
talen tales and drankn wid my pal low when
i thought i heard a rustln

i didn't look up cause the dogs was jes
layn-round-not-sayn-a-thang
usually they barks at everythang
cluding me

so i jes kepa-drankn and talen/till
i heard a voice

"hello"

well i lik-ta fell ova in the petunias
sounded lik heaben ta me

i looked round and lawdy-mercy what i have ta do that fo
na/i know you done heard this befo
but i'm here to testify: DON'T MESS WID
THEM FULL-GROWN/FULL-FLEDGE/SHO-NUFF-
HOT-BUTT WY'MNS!

they'll drop a spell
on you quicker'n you can say
please.

chile

i looked up and SHE caught me
wid her eyes i ain't got loose yet.

fo the longest i didn't even
see the rest of her

so lost in them eyes/deep
clear/flicker'n brown/Spirit-talkn eyes

take me na lawd i said

fo one moment in them eyes and i done
lived full-in-yo-glory.

cain't recall much was said right away
too busy staring in them eyes.

fo the longest i didn't even see the rest of her.

then i saw lips/full and quick to smile
loose me lawd/git me out of her spell,
i said mouth watering/i thought,
bet she sho know how to do some
good loving/lips so fine and all.

fo the longest i didn't even see the rest of her

then i looked on down and saw
nipples lunging/hips ready ta roll
sweet glory in the morning
i done seen an angel
in the form of flesh

thats when i gave up the ghost
jes said

here,

fo i know'd SHE the kinda wo'mn
make you want ta give it up/say
baby

take me

take all i got

take all i'll ever git

tell me

what you want gal

here

i'll give it jes ta see you
smile.

fate were before me
giving me a big brown "hello."

and sho-nuff

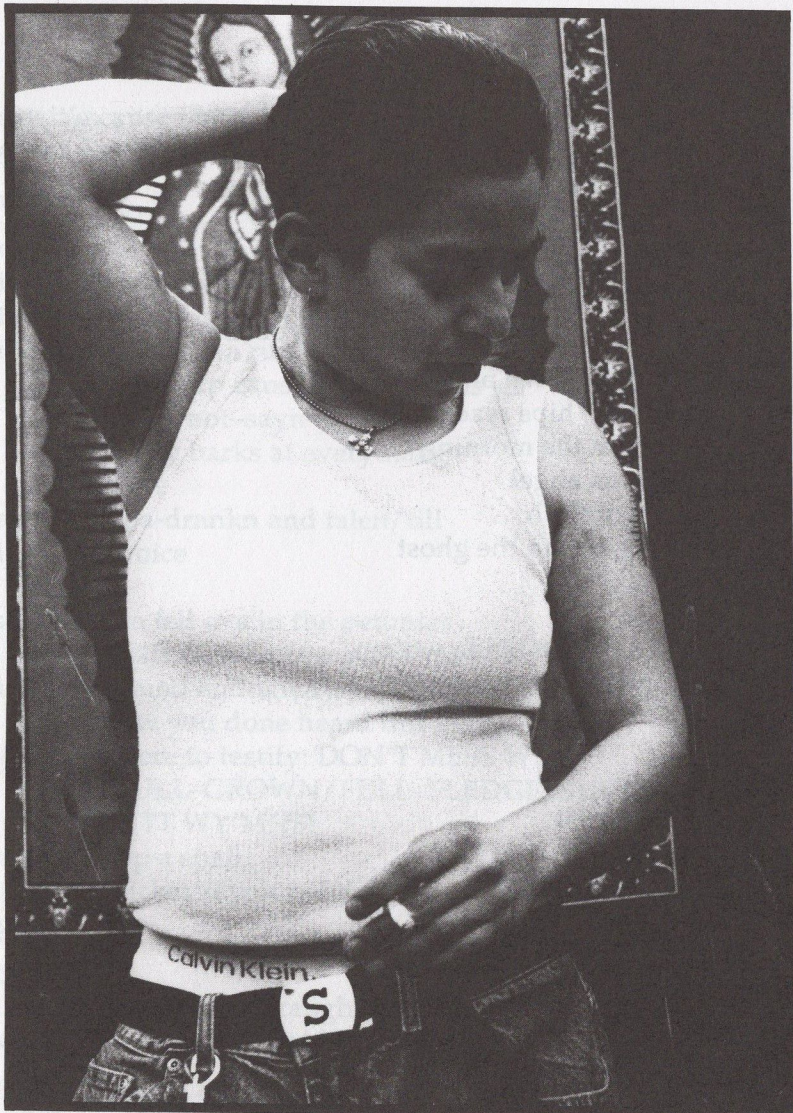
i done spent all the rest of my days

tickln a

permanent

smile

on the wo'mn's face.

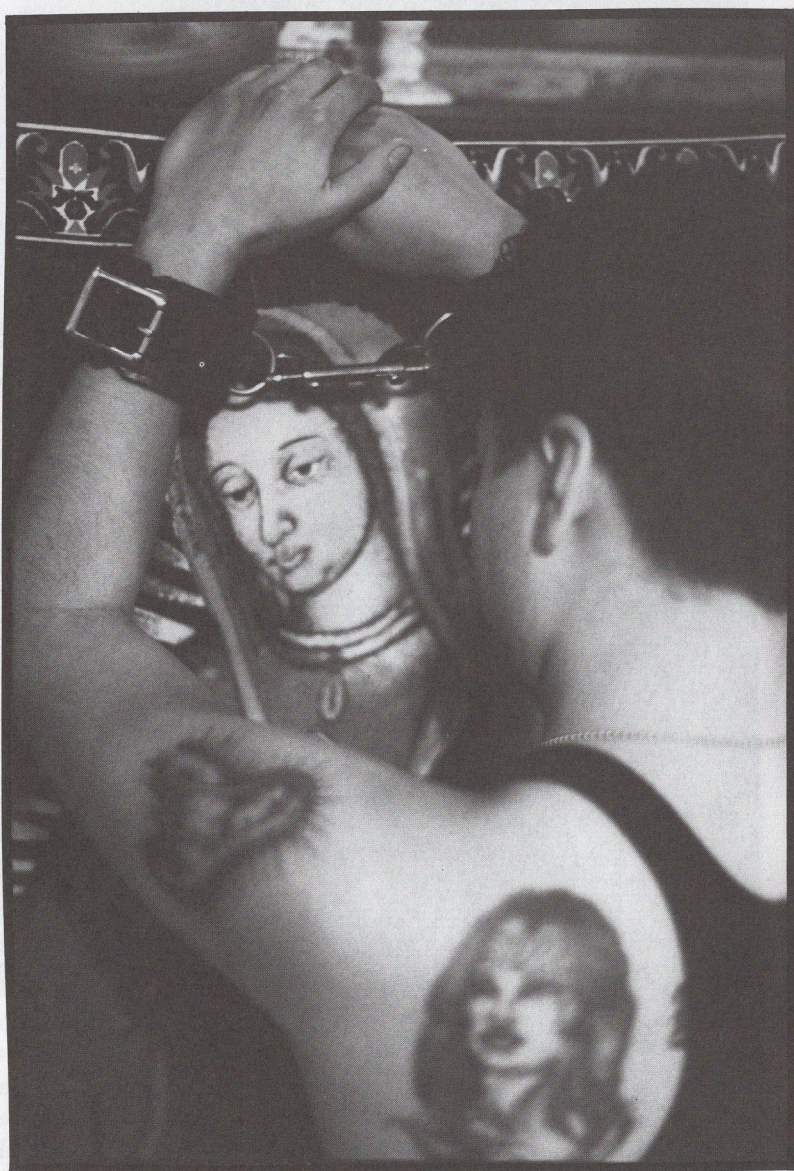


Fotos capture for a moment the spirit of the subject — allowing others to step into a world, sometimes unknown, other times familiar. The following series done by Ananda Esteva reveals the multiple spirits of myself and that of La Virgen. Cultural representation of Mexican Catholicism is not always exposed, yet in these fotos the images challenge viewers to re-examine La Mujer y la Virgen in contemporary light.

— Jacqueline Moreno



Ananda Esteva



Ananda Estevo

— Ingrida Moreno



Ananda Esteva

anda d elle

ode to a woman wearing cleats

Creeping over me like dawn
overtakes the night,
sweet, like honey ...
your thicker-than-aura funk
knocks at my door.

sweat,
having dripped into your
least visible places,
dances with them,
is happy to know them.

i glance at the thousand
bends of your hair,
attempt to memorize
your exact shade of brown,
listen intently
for your voice:
it laughs sleepily,
brushing up against itself.

i close my eyes,
inhale deeply,
imagine
what it would be like
to know you.

Miranda

somewhere from home

I would sadly let you go
but I would let you go,
or maybe never need so madly
if I could go home again

I would love from sources
rich, replenished,
own what power is yours to take now
and know I would continue,
if I could go home again

If I could go home again,
I would give you someone
who did not need to sink roots
in your skin

I would give you someone
who would move like wind
but like wind,
would surely move you

A Desperate Act

My parents knew
what it meant
to grow up Cuban
 how to love in Cuban
 marry in Cuban
 raise a family and work and live
in a place called Cuba

I live only in exile
In places where I don't belong,
I love like the exiled
 longingly, unrequitedly

Mi tierra de palmas
has let me go,
 and it was a desperate
 act of mine
to beach my heart
at the first sight of land
you offered me

Margo Mercedes Rivera

4 Directions

No
you cannot
hold a workshop
at my job
on how to make
Native American healing sticks

You think you're an instant expert
just because you read
a couple a books
about how Indians lived
past tense

Our cultures are not foreign
exotic charming
inn-ter-esting
primitive childish
up-for-grabs
because christianity don't wipe your ass

You have four directions too
I call them
greed
false entitlement
thievery
ignorance

Maria Cecília Santos

Academic Convers(at)ion

In which language?

Do I have any?

Minha língua já nasceu tortuosa My language was born already torturous

Minha voz já nasceu cínica My voice was born already cynical
desde o primeiro minuto since the first minute

não chorei I didn't cry

não gritei I didn't scream

Faria alguma diferença? Would it make any difference?

Seria melhor para mim? Would it be better for me?

This is not my language anyway

Do I have any?

Now, you ask me to speak

Now, you say that I have the chance to speak

You're so kind, you're so polite, you're so gentle

But I can't cry, I can't scream, this must be clear, do I understand?

And I should articulate myself critically by the way ...

ARTICULATE YOURSELF, ARTICULATE YOURSELF, CRITICALLY, CRITICALLY, CLEARLY, SO THAT WE CAN EVALUATE YOUR CAPACITY TO ARTICULATE YOURSELF. YOU CAN'T SAY WHAT IS OBVIOUS, WHAT WE CAN ALSO SAY. YOU CAN'T SAY WHAT WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND EITHER. YOU KNOW, YOU NEED TO BE SOPHISTICATED, YOU MUST SAY WHAT WAS ALREADY SAID BUT SOUNDS LIKE WAS NEVER SAID. YOU MUST TRANSLATE WHAT WE NEED TO HEAR, BUT NOT ANY KIND OF TRANSLATION, BECAUSE WE WANT SOPHISTICATED, ELEGANCE, IMPROVEMENT. WE NEED SOPHISTICATED TRANS/ARTICU/LATION. THIS WON'T BE ENOUGH, OF COURSE, BUT FOR SURE IT

IS THE FIRST LESSON YOU MUST KEEP IN MIND. BUT DON'T LOSE YOUR HOPE. YOU NEED SOME. AND IF YOU FOLLOW OUR LESSONS, YOU WILL PRODUCE SOPHISTICATED, ARTICULATED, KNOWLEDGE. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

Yes, what ... what is this conversation about?

Do you know that?

How can I answer?

In which language by the way?

Is there any?

Is it possible to trans/articu/late that in/to your language?

You don't have to answer

I can't answer either

What I feel, well, I'm not sure I can trans/articu/late this

It's late now, I just feel that

Minha língua tá escorregando

sua boca adentro...

My tongue is sliding

into your mouth...

Carletta Bullock

Liberations

On hand & knees, I wept
as I scrubbed their wooden floors;
even at that tender age, images of the
unjustly treated accompanied each tear.

*On hand & knees, we wept
as we tended their babes & homes;
even in our caged minds, we felt
unjustly treated, but continued for fear.*

On hands & knees, I cowered
beneath my bed lodged against the door;
her ranting voice penetrated to assure me
of doom for having defended myself.

*On hands & knees, we lowered
our eyes & buried our faces in the dirt,
as angry lashes penetrated
our flesh for having defended ourselves.*

On hands & knees, I was used
for his gratification; tolerance for
the empty act fell away and with it went
the last vestiges of the love pretext.

*On hands & knees, we were used
for their glorification; as tolerance for
their malevolence fell away, with it went
the last vestiges of the inferiority complex*

On hands & knees, I am to supplicate
their great God, ask forgiveness
for my sins of dissension, and be grateful
for the life He, in His wisdom, gave me.

*On hand & knees, we are to supplicate
their great God, ask forgiveness
for our sins of dissension, and be grateful
for the life He, in his wisdom, gave us.*

Now, seated quietly, I meditate.
I see that I was created in Nature's image;
my life past was not intended.
Freedom is mine by walking tall as Her conduit.

*Now, seated busily, we educate ourselves.
We realize that, created to rob our birthright,
those God lies were invented.
Freedom is ours; standing together we can do it.*

Rayo Lynn

UNDER GOD...

Virginia Harris
One Nation Under God

you are forced
to wither yourself
in the battle of survival.



One Nation Under God
Virginia Harris

their great God, ask forgiveness
for my sins of dissension, and be grateful
for the life He, in His wisdom, gave me.

Raye Lynn

For the Strong Woman,
Nien Cheng.

Your wrists ache,
they bloat with pain
opened to the bone.

The snow has melted
but there is still no water for your thirst,
though there is more than enough
of the cold
to cover your small skin.

You quiver,
lose sight of yourself,
multiply to keep your peace,
pray you will not lose your mind:
never think of signing false confessions.

It has been too many years
since your eyes kept a smile,
too many years
you've only known their
faces, their uniforms,
unflinching arms.

And you are wasted.
The strength of a woman like you
could accomplish so much,
win so many battles;
instead
you are forced
to wither yourself
in the battle of survival.

What many lives
you could have helped,
or changed
will now always
be the same.

I read your words,
cry at your wounds,
want to lift you
from the page,
soothe,
the fever of your mind.

Each time now,
my own wrists ache,
my own strength fails,
I think on your words,
your uncompromising will;
and I have faith
in myself:
that you could survive,
I can succeed.

a poem inspired by the writings of Nien Cheng, who was a prisoner during the Cultural Revolution in China

Kimberly Aceves-Denyer

Don't tell me you understand

Don't tell me you understand
the way my tears fall
you cannot begin to
touch the place that makes
my heart bleed like a wounded animal,
torn open,
there are places in me that will scare
you,
places that are cold, white, hot
they hide and devour me,
sometimes,
they rage war on my flesh and because
I love you,
don't enter these places,
and if,
after warning
by chance,
you find a way in
tread carefully over the scars
that lay open,
raw and painful
when you look into the light of
my dark eyes
and watch salt filled emotion
slip down my face
remember,
my blood runs warrior thick,
I will fight my way to air
and with the breath of those
before me,
safe,
I will not allow you to suffocate
in my history.

Skye Alexander

In Memory of K.R.

Who may still be alive
last I heard you were living in some housing in Tacoma
they said you had about three months if you were lucky
had decent care
good food and you got to stay in one place for a while
but you were being choked and thrown up against doors
and stabbed 27 times by your husband,
by your girlfriend,
bruised by whoever's bed you were in
lacerating your own arms in the miasma of your fever dreams
and the blade protruding from your four months along belly
And this is in memory of the twins and Danny
and four months' worth of another new life

K. the doctor said your feet were atrophying out from under you
you couldn't walk that far, not even to get the police
I almost offered to carry you but you were cursing the streets
throwing bricks through the police station window to get a
place to sleep
even the day you threatened to bite me
when we'd called every goddam medic in town trying to flush you
out of the 8th Street neighbors' bushes
before you digested every pill in the whole shelter

"This is AZT. It's poison. Kind of funny
how they're giving us poison.
Kind of makes you think they want to kill us off
real fast."

us faggots and junkies and
us dirty women

Kassie the night they hauled you off,
gloved and sick expressions as soon as they were sure it was you

— looking you over like any other piece of butchered
meat, but still meat —

But they had the guns
Kassie they left the handcuffs on you
when you had to piss I went in with you because you couldn't
move your hands
you making pussy jokes the whole time
Kassie even at this final hour I looked away

They tied you down in the back seat
5'1", pregnant, three months to being dead
or half an hour,

you were dangerous
I touched your cuffed hands
said Kassie don't cry like this
don't let these bastards get you down
you said Baby I never do
you cried
tied down

Someone else's streets now, raising hell
or is that you raising rainbows

Kassie you didn't make it for the cure

Marcia Rose

From Rachel's Mother

After you were gone all those years,
I started looking at baby pictures.
Sorting, staring, longing for something
Like an answer, and exoneration, a whisper.
Obsessing.

Newborn with strange dark hair.
Little girl posing, smiling with the plastic Mickey Mouse.
A dotted dress puffed out.
A Princess, you dreamed.

After you disappeared, there were a few three a.m. calls.
Scratchy, mumbled, desperate, tripped-up.
"Yes," you promised, you would at least let me know
you were still alive.

Ten phone calls over those years.
Motherless, childless, dumb, accusatory, amnesiac years.
One visit. Christmas. Your return in a black Cadillac.
You reached toward us, not like my kindergarten stories
and summer park needs but the deep-socketed sad need
of your own. Gone so quickly,
thin, dyed, scarred, cyanotic and bruised.

Mom's relapse. To the refuge and insularity of that surreal album.
Save us.

"So, have you heard from her lately?"

"No, not since the calls from Bellevue ..."

"Oh ..."

The hard edges of silence. I hated.

New York City, New York.

Somewhere in the dim, distant chaos
young women are dying at a very high rate.

"Mom, you know it's a plot against prostitutes and junkies."

"Do you use condoms and clean needles?"

"Yeah, Mom ... so, I'm getting my life together now.

They have this program ... I am just waiting for him to get out of prison. You know, I had to live in a fucking car and I got frozen feet ..."

Snapshot. Standing beside your sister.
Long hair braided and pinned to the top of your head.
You wore a long gypsy skirt and little Mexican blouse.
You were holding a large Easter basket.
It is you.
I am the Mother ... I know you!
I have known you.

AIDS came to us and I cared for them.
Saying Good-bye and on to the next.
Losing myself along the way.
Looking for you, I think.
Afraid.

I brought the picture album into the grief circle.
So many pictures of men.
Some standing on rocks above the ocean in hiking boots,
tan, looking into our eyes, smiling.
Thin cowboy men, virile, mustached. Black leather and Ebony.
Young, handsome, perfect. Lost.

"Who is the child?" They ask me.

Recently called again and told me
you needed to come home.
You were sick, your lover was dying ...
Now, I look at pictures. New ones design
my freshly painted walls.
This one was taken last week.
We stand together, you and I, before your hotel.
Your head is leaning against my shoulder.

...

Marcia Rose

Vigil

When my second born daughter had been dead one month, I walked down the street to the funeral home to pick up her ashes. They felt heavy, not the way I had imagined they might. What did I know about the weight of a young woman's ashes? I felt as if I had reclaimed matter and element rightfully mine. I had made claim to life stolen and snatched that terrible night in that hideous hospital when I walked down the hall leaving her precious, tortured body for the nurses to take to the morgue. Now, this day I had my girl back.

That night I dreamed I was back in the old house, the place where I attempted to raise my six kids. The place I left when youth was irrevocably over. The weather was hot and dry. The summer had turned into its most ripened end. Places watered were wild with green and fruit. Places unwatered were not. I remember that so well. There had not been a garden for years, only the longing. The ground was hardened, compact. Out to this brilliant, buzzing place I had wandered. This is where I found my dead daughter's wedding dress. It was not white or lace or antique or beaded — did not rustle or slide sensuously in great yards and bunches. It was dark, short and tight — soft, well chosen. My Rachel's kind of dress. It became her funeral gown, her cremation shroud. Stuck in the dirt so tightly. Only partly visible. It had been embedded there for a long time. I tried to pull it out. I tried digging but it was stuck fast. The weather had washed the color away. The strength and newness faded. The fabric was fragile, breaking down.

How did this dress, this sacred garment end up out here? I stood there uncertain, confused and self conscious. I wondered if the neighbors were looking, unable to see what I saw. Were they wondering about me? After all, this was my, strange and wild, child's dress. It was my daughter who was missing; her beautiful hair, her smile, her perfect muscle and bone, her blood melted down to ash. I had the cheap brown box on my

dresser, didn't I? So, how was it that this dress was in the dirt, here in the very fullness of summer?

A year later I often wake at three or four a.m. My stomach full of nausea. A familiar condition. A predicament which has the capacity to overpower, swell, and grow outward as if some strange malignant ascites. I know its origins are deep inside me. I also know it blooms outside of me — waiting to be born. There is nothing to be done for it — no cures, no potions, no restorative herbs, chants, smart sayings, poems, paintings, books or pills. There are not enough gardenias or red roses, piercings, prayers or dark tattoos. When I look for our dead children, I hear silence. All of my girl's lovers dead or missing. All their relentless craving sucked away. Mine is not!

At the flower stand, on 16th and Market after closing, I often see bunches of soggy leached flowers. They get thrown on the sidewalk or in the gutter. Too spent to be sold. The gutter and corners all smell like piss and shit. I pass by frequently, disabled by grief and emptiness. I have a ritual. I watch something there. I remember the smell of her dying. It moves in my blood. Sometimes I feel it behind my eyes in the blurriness and pressure of tears uncried. I am unable to push myself much more than here.

*In memory of Rachel Ellyn
Taken by life, by sorrow, by HIV.
June 15, 1993 10:55 p.m.*

It is important for me to tell my story to other Lesbians. We are all affected by HIV. So many of us are infected. I have felt particularly unsupported in my storm of grief. I wish that my life partner and I could say that our "community" has been here for us. Sadly, this has not been the case.

tova

lost and found

I. *for my son, mayim chai eli stiller, 12/1/94* —

What an odd reflection you are
everyone says how much you look like me
i laugh, say it's good i don't see this resemblance
for you are so unbelievably adorable
and i can still hardly look in a mirror.

but there are so many moments
at the done edge of a feeding
when your lips are sated and pursed
your fingers graze my breast
and your eyes close with a fixed tenderness
and there's so much i can't avoid
the eerie depth of the words familiar and likeness
as i brush your cheek
feeling somehow it's my own
reflection so real and yet an image
i'm lost in and found.

II. *for my friend, leah moussaioff, 11/25/55 — 6/6/95*

it was a strange time for this reflection
another jewish working-class lesbian gardener
barely a year older than me.
we were in the hospital the same day
(though we both thought we'd be home).
my yet to be born son mayim in stress
pulled out of me limp and blue
and you having your breast cut off
your lymph nodes carved away
to find them filled with cancer.
we all needed oxygen.
mayim gained strength as you weakened
and held him to the place your breast had been.
you said it was one of the only things

that made you less afraid,
 i knew what you meant so well.
 six months later you used a precious breath to hold him
 just once more
 i was not ready
 to find the tallis to dress your dead body
 or understand your permanently closed eyes
 but i can't avoid the eerie depths
 of the words familiar and likeness
 as i brush your still cheek
 feeling somehow it's my own
 reflection so real and yet an image
 i'm lost in and found.

III. for us all

i know i should say something profound,
 life and death surrounded on each end
 by so many gasps for breaths
 that cloud and clean and
 cover the mirrors for mourning
 protecting oneself from temptation
 to go with the spirit of the dead*
 to the other side
 where my new son just came from
 his body always stretching towards a mirror
 looking open and unafraid and at once
 for spirit and self and other and

i
 caught between and called by
 this new life and this new death
 reach for and recoil from reflection
 lost and found in this precarious silver glass.

* during the first week of mourning (shiva), it is tradition to cover the mirrors.
 one of the many reasons given for this is that the spirit of the dead can live in the
 mirror and because of your grief, the spirit can tempt you to go with them to "the
 other side."

Raye Lynn

Shadowing

It has been more than a year
since you passed
out of this world

Yet I still grieve,
I still feel this clotting
in the efforts
of my throat.

And she says,
of course people move on;
of course humans forget,
the intensity of first pain,
of course, and that is all,
there is no time
for reverie.

But even as she speaks
I hear the stones
weighing
on her words.
I know, she too,
has not forgotten
or, "moved on" as she says.

You are
gently,
beneath some weight
always
in her thoughts.

And when she lifts
her heaviness
and peers in at you there
she still cries,
she still blames the god
and curses at your death —

Odilia Galván Rodríguez

Ponies

for Dee Dee

my first pony blue
warrior made in the USA 1957
bought in 1987 for
one hundred dollars
a fortune to me then

Chevy with manual column shifting
no power steering before stick
shifts were in out again
back seat full of black top
broken and spit
through a big hole in the floor

I grew up in a City of buses
the L snakes winding
tunneling through the town
no reason to drive cars
Chicago Transit Authority
for getting around

Moms came from Texas
couldn't part with hers
so many old and broken down
kept them sitting in the railroad yard
behind the Projects where we lived

our prairie
though kids not allowed
because of hobos passing through
we'd disobey make those cars forts
our motto you can't hurt steel

holes in floors are nothing new
but a pony needs to be reliable
no matter what
even if people point
laugh at its looks

who cares you know
theirs is probably no better
an old beater brought back to life
like those old mustangs waiting
in the junk yard other '57's

those one-eyed fords of our youth
dappled with rust painted primer gray
mufflers held up
by duct tape and bailing wire
doors and trunks tied shut with climber's rope

Indian cars part of our story
we're nations
proud of our ponies
these vehicles that give us hope

Janell Moon

Strawberry Markings

It is 3 a.m.
together for the first time
I lift the blue blanket
my eyes follow
your delicate bones
go over your skin
stomach wrinkled above
your round pouch
genitals I examine
your hip line, an arc
your fine legs
each toe I count.

I am the inspector.
Turn you over on your back
hold your falling head
careful not to disturb
the black sore, the source of life
check your bottom, straight spine.

On the back of your legs, two tiny
spots. I run my fingers over
the birthmarks. They do not hurt
you. This is not the last time
I'll see a flaw and touch it.

This poem is to you.
I wish it had been this way.
I wish I could have loved your body
right away. I wish I hadn't been afraid
to touch you but I wasn't in love
with your father
wasn't using my body for love.

I was repelled by sex with a man
afraid of what my body would give
from such a shudder
first a miscarriage, then a stillborn
all that blood, now you come
full of cries reaching for me.

Holley Daschbach

Snowed In

This is not a time, I tell her
for decision or discussion.
Shut up and take off your shirt
I whisper gently then pull her down
and we slide together down the hill again
and then again. Please one more time
again.
This is not a time either for sleep
apparently. Only little bits, ten minute
snatches caught between an endless tumbling
game, flakes flying on gusts of wind.
One more time she croons persuading me
with her fingers and her eyes.
You lie here with me and I will count
the hours and your freckles.

Meg Jochild

For J.E.S.

I almost went
where you went,
more than once
palms flat on the sill
ready to tumble over.
Can't say what stopped me:
Not you
Not anyone I loved.
How we all adored you in those
Saturn-return years,
traded your stories,
stole your haircut,
coaxed out your butch,
ate your charm like warm pudding.
Yet I never heard
a word from you
to give my Why, now, a place to start.
We weren't supposed to make it.
No one saved a place for us,
and defiance wears bare
after enough years alone.
They tell us love means
devotion, respect, decades of
questions followed by rich silence.
If you're right, then no one loves us
We are weak as the girls we were raised to be
unable to throw a line
or pull ourselves up.

And if you're right,
I have been stupid.
I could bear stupidity:
Better this than to think
I know something you did not.
If I puzzle it out,
even write it down,
it won't be in time
for anyone but me.

Laverne Williams

Unconquerable

Doves shade the breeze
in the belly of Kojo —
Jackhammer heart
drummin' time for us
to make love in. Arctic
winds undulate wolf head
bones while labias circle the moon.
I sense wool in a lesbian
dream of mossy mountains
tasting of old lemons
and banana fritters. I come.
Some soul sparkle snakes
through my veins and I dream
jaguars running through roses.

Elizabeth Clare

The Terrorist God

the one dressed in blue eyes
white skin who lives
not tree roots fingertips
horse tails he who swears
against sex god of
witch burning jew killing
consort of smallpox

let me talk to him not
his popester not his jesus
not his pedophiles the big
man mean man sadist
in the sky let me
bring him down

take a walk sea
to shining sea crack house
to uranium tailings watch
a sunset a moonrise visit
a psych ward lead him
quiet to the torture chambers

arrange meetings with
leonard peltier angela
davis cesar chavez harriet
tubman barbara deming
joseph beam audre lorde
wilma mankiller emma
goldman leave the prisons
ringing dead and alive

there will be no
confession no blood
and body no penance only

this pocketful of dirt
salt water and fresh
stones and stars

Susan Stinson

Following

I'm a force field. Glops of mayonnaise leap to my breasts at every lunch. It's not just maternal-type substances; the raunchiest greases and muds cling to me, too.

The most dangerous thing I ever did was to hug a pair of wet trees regularly. They were markers for me, close together, things I could recognize. I was new there, and they were huddled and distinctive. Everything had just changed, and even the things that had come with me from somewhere else looked confused and out of place.

I like some things to follow me: forks and socks and a pink shell from Australia that I bought in Corpus Christi, Texas. My purpose is only sometimes volcanic, an interruption in the landscape. Often I'm walking through trees and streets with smears of mayonnaise and distress all up my blouse, trying to get the rhythm of the way the world is bending, and bend with her, even genderless (sometimes I consider this, that all of the female I recognize in everything is actually unsexed and large enough to carry it off). I'll shake and waver in cold or in the hardest light, as sun when the earth stops being in the center. Even this star system is spinning around something. I love being the one static thing until it all dissolves.

Niobé Ngozi

Gender Variant and Available

I didn't come out
 I expanded
 into a gender
 variant woman
 on the make
 for
 someone
 to love

now
 my eyes do
 discreetly
 admire the
 the wide hip
 swings
 of women
 and
 the
 legs
 which
 carry
 them
 but

I didn't come out
 I broadened
 my horizons
 to find
 a soulmate
 with a genuine
 heart

i do love
 the way
 women
 smell
 feel

taste
touch
breathe
stare
sit
stand
walk
talk
woman
trash
talk
and

i much prefer
swimming in the water
to sitting on a rock
and

a love that cleanses
rather than a love that soils
and

only
when i'm
lonely
do

I
backslide
onto the
hard
memories
of a man
but

I didn't come out
I outgrew
my own
limitations
and
decided
to be
a woman
exercising
my right
to choose

now

i

love

women

like i

love

full moons

mangoes

pomegranates

and

other

wonders

of creation

am i

a dyke?

maybe

i've

never

excelled

in categories

and

i prefer

the exception

to the rule

i don't wear

team player T-shirts

nor do I want

to be the poster dyke

for the feminist

movement

so

i name

myself

gender

variant

and available

Contributors' Notes

Kimberly Aceves-Denyer is a Mexicana born in Chula Vista, California. Currently works in a non-profit organization in San Francisco's Mission and Potrero District with girls of color helping to promote self-confidence and self-esteem. Her future goals are to continue writing and encouraging young women of color to be strong leaders in their communities.

abimbola folisade adama — an over-fifty African American lesbian and mother from Philadelphia. I self-published two books of poetry, *Gifts from Spirit* and *Quicksand! African American Lesbian Erotica* was my coming out celebration six years ago. My work is included in *Adam of Ifé* (Lotus Press), *Sisterfire* (Harper Perennial), and *My Lover Is a Woman* (Ballentine). I was part of Black Poets with Attitudes, a California performing poetry group. In 1992, I was given the Black Renaissance Poets Award by the International Black Writers and Artists, Inc. as the Black Writers' Award by the Peninsula Book Club. I enjoy teaching meditation and other metaphysical practices, yoga, waiting for the right mate, sewing, walking, laughing, hugging trees, creating black angels from fabric, in short living 200% value of life while leaning on the Divine within.

Sky Alexander is Irish, Scottish and German and lives in San Francisco. In her spare time she organizes for human rights, focusing on child sexual abuse and women's and queer issues. This is her sixth year of not being able to march straight. She has been previously published in *Insomnia and Survivorship*.

Tiana Arruda is a "carioca," born and raised in Rio de Janeiro. An activist since age 14, she has participated in many movements, both in Brazil and the U.S. Tiana has a passion for words, books, moves, and photography. She is a quintuple Scorpio and is recently calling herself a writer. Some of her work has appeared in *Compañeras*. She has loved in the Bay Area since 1974.

M.C. Ball— I am a white lesbian, aged 53, originally from North Carolina. I have published in *Sinister Wisdom*, *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*, *The Lesbian Review of Books*, *Amethyst* (Atlanta), *Southern Voice* (Atlanta), *Hot Wire*, and *The Dictionary of Continental Women Writers*, among others. I currently live in Atlanta and teach at Kennesaw College.

Barbara Lynne Brush received her B.A. in linguistics from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and her M.F.A. in poetry from San Diego State University, where she has been an instructor of creative writing, composition and literature. She currently works in academic journal production for Harcourt Brace & Co. and teaches at the Writing Center in San Diego.

Carletta Bullock is a lesbian of the African Diaspora who lives as a spiritual warrior and artist of life, works as a physician and loves as a new mother, all in the enchanting mountains of Tijeras, New Mexico.

Barbara M. Burrows — I am a 50 plus Lesbian, born in Connecticut, presently living in Northhampton, MA with my life-partner. Though I enjoy working with children in education I must admit I look to the time when I may spend most of my day writing. Through poetry I enter into the deepest recesses of my soul extracting fears which I believe are universal in lesbians, by doing this they are placed in the sunlight where they may heal and give strength and support to all of us. With other words I attempt to reveal the lush sensuality loving women evokes, be it raw and wild or sweet and delicious.

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

Sandra Calvo is currently working on a novel, short stories and essays. I have had several poems published, and was a recent writer in residence at Hedgebrook Farm. Originally from San Jose, Costa Rica, and then Los Angeles, I have been living in the Bay Area since 1979. I have a Masters of Education from Stanford University and have been teaching middle school in San Francisco since 1981. A visual artist, I live with my lover of fifteen years and our thirteen year-old daughter.

Elizabeth Clare is a white, mixed-class (working class/lower middle class), disabled poet, essayist and activist living in Michigan, transplanted from Oregon. She has an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Goddard College. Her poems and essays have been published in a variety of anthologies and periodicals, including *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*, *The Disability Rag*, *Hanging Loose*, *My Lover Is a Woman*, and *the Arc of Love: an Anthology of Lesbian Love Poems*.

anda d elle is a daughter, a girlfriend, and a sista. She writes poems, essays, short stories and songs. She uses pseudonyms and her given name. She is a Libra.

Ananda Esteva AKA La Gitana Loca — writes to grow roots. Yo soy la meztiza from too many places. My history been lost to me. I write cuz I feel like a tumbleweed with no seeds for the future. I think I said it best in a song I wrote:

*cuz I don't like where i stand
gotta find a way back to my land
and I cant take this waiting anymore anymore*

I hope that my words help fill others as they do me.

I have been officially published in June Jordan's *Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint* by Routledge Press, as well as in *Sinister Wisdom*, Galeria de la Raza's *Manteca*, *Connocion*, U.C. Berkeley's *La Llorona*, and other small publications.

Patricia Fontaine — is a white woman of Quebecoise and Irish-American descent, brought up in Chicopee Falls, a Massachusetts mill town suburb. I know from difference. The purple birthmark on my face, grey hair at 17, and coming out as a lesbian have all informed this. I live in the hills outside of Burlington, Vermont. I teach women's studies at the University of Vermont and diversity activism at local community colleges and high schools. I have been writing poetry since high school. Most recently, I survived the apocalypse of breast cancer by writing a series of poems called *Lifting My Shirt*, which is now part of *Healing Legacies*, an archive for art and writing dealing with the disease. The handmade book has been shown in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Burlington, Vermont. I have given local readings and have been published in *CommonWoman*, *Burlington Women Council's newsletter*, *Women's Recovery network newsletter*, and reviewed in *Vermont Times*.

Darlene Grainger — a recovering from incest lesbian from Tampa, Florida. I started painting and writing as a means of healing. My inner kids love moving the paint around.

Virginia Harris — as I internalize the insights achieved through making quilts, I find a source of tremendous vitality and spirit inside me. With the investigation of history, heritage, and legacies and adapting that knowledge to designs for quilts, I find my connection to truthful traditions.

Carol Hill is a die-hard Washington Redskins fan from Washington D.C., Wellesley College grad; lover of dance (Afro-Haitian, Brazilian) and music (hip-hop, house and dance-hall); budding Capoeista; future MacArthur fellowship winner ("Hey, ya gotta aim high") comedienne; writer.

Meg Jochild lives in Austin, Texas, where she earns a living as a Medical Transcriptionist. She traces Jewish family trees, speaks on the radio about being an honorable Dyke, and is celebrating having reached 40.

PHKimura sometimes feels like a poet when she is writing, otherwise she just feels kinda cranky. She was born in Hawaii, and grew up in the shadow of the old Waipahu Sugar Plantation. She now lives in western Mass. and continues in the struggle and romance of words.

Raye Lynn is a 25 year old dyke active in human rights and environmental issues. I often use my writing as another way to speak out about the issues that are important to me.

Jacqueline Miranda is a Cuban butch who makes a mean flan to die for. Her poems have been published in *Wanting Women*, *The Poetry of Sex*, *Sinister Wisdom*, and *Circulo de las Americas*. She is a recipient of the '97 Serpent Source grant for poetry.

Janell Moon won 1st place in the 1996 Salt Hill Journal Contest from the Syracuse University's Writing Program. She also won the Stone-wall Prize offered by Chestnut Hills Press in 1965 and the publication of her chapbook of poetry, *The Speaker's Bureau*. She also won awards in the Whiskey Hill Press Competition, the Wildwood Prize, the National Poetry Competition, and the Billie Murray Denny Poetry Contest.

Liz Morrison wishes she could write all the time but her days are spent working for a Internet consulting company in San Diego. This work was inspired by her participation in the Women's Voices group at the San Diego Writing Center.

Niobé Ngozi is a poet and performance artist with a concentrated interest in women and children's literature. Niobé's poetry has appeared in *Black Texas Women*, *Kente Cloth*, a poetry anthology, published by the University of North Texas. Niobé is currently

searching for a publisher for her collection of poems, *Shout and Other Pleas for Mercy*. Niobé teaches creative writing to incarcerated youth in the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department.

Ekua Omosupe lives in Aptos, California and she teaches writing, Women's Studies and American Literature at Cabrillo College. She is mother of three children and has three grandchildren. Ekua and her partner, Maria Davila, co-own a business: **MAKUAPRODUCTIONS**, ethnic arts, crafts and jewelry. She is current poetry editor for *Sinister Wisdom*. Ekua's poems and essays are published in various journals and anthologies. Her most recent contribution is to a new anthology published by Crossing Press, *From Wedded Wife to Lesbian Lives*, 1995.

Mandy Precious is a poet and playwright based in Manchester, England. She has published two pamphlets: *Life's a Tupperware Party* and *Something Piggy and Unappealing* (with Carmen Walton). She has performed her work in the United Kingdom. She is currently working on a poetic/photographic exhibition with Mindy Meleyal and has recently received the Alfred Bradley Bursary. She has written several plays including *We're in this Together* and *Patty and Chips with Scraps*. She is a part of a lesbian theatre company, Our Three Selves as well as being an all round good egg.

Elizabeth (beth) Ribet is 24, and was 22 when she wrote grrl story. She is Jewish, disabled, lesbian and a fat grrl. She is an activist.

Margo Mercedes Rivera is a mixed race jewish butch from a working class background who adores: her gorgeous wife, tropical fruit, dusk, convertibles, candles, and other hedonistic delights.

Margaret Robison's books are *The Naked Bear*, Lynx House Press/Panache Books, 1977 and *Red Creek*, Amherst Writers and Artists, 1992. She has been published in *Sojourner*, *Disability Rag*, *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*, and *Sinister Wisdom*. Since her partial recovery from a stroke that paralyzed her left side and damaged her speech (apraxia and mild aphasia), she leads creative writing workshops for women with disabilities. E-mail address: MROB11735@aol.com

Marcia Rose — 52 year old mother of six, grandmother. Recently bereaved of my mother and best friend who died weeks apart from cancer. I am white, working class, a student at New College, writer of poetry and short stories. I hope to teach a class to teenage

women on diaries and journals. I celebrate and grieve my dead daughter's life and honor my fourth daughter's survival from the nightmare of psychiatric institutions and loss on the street as a result of incest.

Odilia Galván Rodríguez is a Chicana/Lipan Apache who was born in Galveston, Texas, and grew up in an extended farm worker family who settled out of migrant life when her father chose to work in the steel mills on the south side of Chicago. Odilia lives with her partner and son and teaches creative writing in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her work recently appeared in *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, edited by Jo Harjo and Gloria Bird. Odilia's chapbook, *Ponies, Dreams and an Occasional Goddess*, was published in 1996 by Prickly Pear Publishing in Berkeley, CA.

Maria Cecília Santos—born and raised in Recife, in the Northeast of Brazil. She moved to Berkeley in 1991. She is a graduate student in Sociology at UCB and is now writing her doctoral dissertation.

Dorothea Smartt — London-born daughter of Barbajans, is a writer and live artist. Her poetry appears in several anthologies. She was selected for the 1995-6 Institute of Contemporary Art's Attached Live Artist scheme.

Susan Stinson has written a book of poetry, *Belly Songs*, and two novels, *Fat Girl Dances with Rocks*, and *Martha Moody* (Spinsters Ink, 1996). She's at work on a new novel, *Bus*. She takes a lot of joy in fat liberation and in working relationships with other lesbian writers. She lives in Northampton, MA.

Tova — i have been published in numbers of journals and anthologies, such as *Sinister Wisdom*, *Bridges*, *common lives*, *Songs for Our Voices*, *Feminist Voices*, *The Raven Chronicles*, *Garden Variety Dykes*, *Wavelength*, etc., have won a few small awards, and am an editor of *Bridges: A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends*.

Laverne C. Williams is a poet and writer living on Long Island. She has written a to-be-published book of poetry called *Blue Mood: The Depression Chronicles* and is currently editing an anthology on the subject of women and rape. She has been published in several literary magazines, including *The Pegasus Review* and *The Caribbean Writer*.

Books Received

About the books received list: I've listed (almost) all the books we are sent. Unfortunately, there is never enough room or time to do much actual book reviewing. We are seeking women willing to write reviews — if you're interested please contact us. Most of the blurbs which follow each book's vital statistics are from the publishers' press releases or the back cover of the book. The exception is the information included in brackets which signals that I have read all or part of the book in question. Margo

The Lesbian Health Book: Caring for Ourselves. Edited by Jocelyn White, M.D. and Marissa C. Martinez. Seal Press, 1997, distributed by Publishers Group West. [Many of the articles I read in this book were wonderful, for example "Spit and Image" by Evelyn C. White about "Black lesbians, silence, and harm." White writes powerfully about relationships between African American lesbians. There are pieces about CFIDS (Chronic Fatigue Immune Deficiency Syndrome), old lesbians, working class background, butch identity, breast cancer, AIDS, being supersize (over 300 pounds), and being a survivor of child abuse.

While I think this is a very important book I was disappointed there wasn't more information included about lesbian of color health issues including dealing with multiple barriers in accessing health care. Facing not only homophobia and sexism, but also racism and often lack of options because of not having health insurance and/or money. Add in the real fear of seeking health care because you don't have or have lost your documentation for being in the U.S. Factor in the reality that most medical materials are only available in English and that the limited materials available are often inadequate].

Night Bites: Vampire Stories by Women. Seal Press, 1996. From insatiable vampire to uncommon victim, the provocative images of women in *Night Bites* reveal the vampire mythos through the female gaze. Includes work by: Nikki Baker, Toni Brown, Terri de la Peña, Judith Katz, Mabel Maney, and others.

Along the Journey River by Carol laFavor. Firebrand Books, 1996. The author is a Two-Spirit (Gay) Ojibwa who may have written the first Native American lesbian mystery.

The Faces of Five O'clock by Kaushayla Bannerji. Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour Press (416)533-9353 sisvis@web.net Bannerji's collection of poems is international, political and sensual in scope. Includes poetry with lesbian content. The author was born in India and raised in Canada.

A Gift of the Emperor by Therese Park. Spinsters, 1997. A gut-wrenching fictional account of real-life atrocities inflicted upon 200,000 Asian women during World War II.

I Used to be Nice: Sexual Affairs by Sue O'Sullivan. Cassell, 1996. An authoritative and engaging collection of writing on a wide range of issues that have been at the forefront of feminism and lesbian politics since the 1960's.

Last Standing Woman by Winona LaDuke. Voyager Press, 1997. This is a powerful and poignant first novel tracing the lives of seven generations of Anishinaabe (Ojibwa/Chippewa). Beginning in the 1860's, the story chronicles a Native American reservation and its people's struggle to restore their culture.

If You Had a Family by Barbara Wilson. Seal Press, 1996. A startling and sensitive story about the struggle for ordinary pleasures, told in the kind of prose that provokes ordinary pleasures.

Film Fatales: Independent Women Directors by Judith M. Redding and Victoria M. Brownworth. Seal Press, 1997. Distributed by Publishers Group West. A fascinating glimpse into the lives and work of women filmmakers. Profiled here are over thirty pioneering directors, producers and distributors who have changed the face of contemporary film by delivering new and distinctly female images and sensibilities for the screen.

Journal of Lesbian Studies. Volume 1, Number 1, 1997. Haworth Press 1-800-HAWORTH. A Scholarly lesbian journal.

Carolyn G. Heilbrun: Feminist in a Tenured Position by Susan Kress. University of Virginia Press, 1997. Biography of a woman who continues to challenge the boundaries between popular writer, scholar, and cultural critic.

To Sappho, My Sister: Lesbian Sisters Write About Their Lives. Edited by Lee Flemming. Gynergy, 1995. Lesbian sisters from several countries explore their relationships with one another.

The Last of Her Lie: A Maggie Garrett Mystery by Jean Taylor. Seal Press, 1996. Strongly plotted, well-paced, and erotic, the second Maggie Garrett mystery makes us hope for a long series of successors.

Silent Words by Joan Drury. Spinsters, 1996. The second Tyler Jones mystery.

Spinsters and Lesbians: Independent Womanhood in the United States by Trisha Franzen. New York University Press, 1996. Looks at autonomous lesbians — once called 'spinsters' — in this important comparative study of two generations: women from the early decades of this century and those who came to maturity with the great social changes of the sixties and seventies.

Sex and Sensibility: Stories of a Lesbian Generation by Arlene Stein. University of California Press, 1997. First book to analyze shifts in lesbian identity, consciousness, and culture from the 1970s to the 1990s.

To "Herland" and Beyond: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman by Ann J. Lane. University Press of Virginia, 1997. Fascinating biography of a complex early twentieth-century woman, informed by the voice of an astute historian.

Shifting the Ground: American Women Writers' Revisions of Nature, Gender, and Race by Rachel Stein. University of Virginia Press, 1997. Ecofeminist Literary criticism at its best. Examines the work of Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Emily Dickinson.

Mother Without Child: Contemporary Fiction and the Crisis of Motherhood by Elaine Tuttle Hansen. University of California, 1997.

Ecofeminism: Women Culture Nature edited by Karen Warren. Indiana University Press, 1997. Writers explore the real-life concerns that have motivated ecofeminism as a grassroots, women-initiated movement around the globe.

The Mayor of Heaven by Lynn Kanter. Third Side Press, 1997. This novel poignantly describes the process of mourning and moving on after a lover/friend dies of breast cancer.

Living at Night by Mariana Romo-Carmona. Spinsters Ink, 1997. A novel about a working-class Puerto Rican lesbian. Written by the co-editor of *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*.

The Activist's Daughter by Ellen Bache. Spinsters Ink, 1997. In this novel the protagonist questions her radical Jewish mother's politics all the while encountering racism, bigotry, and anti-semitism in the South which brings her to her own activism.

The Well-Heeled Murders by Cherry Hartman. Spinsters, 1996. Mystery with a sleuth who is a therapist.

Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of Midlife by Margaret Gullette. University of Virginia, 1997. Tracks pervasive mythologies about 'midlife' and 'aging' with an expert's coolness, and a militant's ardor.

The Family Silver: Essays on Relationships Among Women by Susan Krieger. University of California, 1996. An adventuresome foray into the construction of gender and a view from inside the citadel of higher education.

Into the Widening World: International Coming-of-Age Stories edited by John Loughery. Persea, 1995.

Goodness by Martha Roth. Spinsters Ink, 1996.

Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance edited by Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly. University of Michigan, 1995.

Restricted Entry: Censorship on Trial by Janine Fuller and Stuart Blakely. Press Gang, 1995. The story of Little Sister's Bookstore in Vancouver and their battle to end Canadian Customs' ongoing harassment of gay and lesbian authors and booksellers.

Forbidden Vision by Nina Bouraoui.

Station Hill, 1995. A novel about a young Moslem woman forcibly confined by her repressive family in Algiers.

Subject to Negotiation: Reading Feminist Criticism and American Women's Fictions by Elaine Orr. University Press of Virginia, 1997. Charts contemporary feminist terrain and the historical process by which feminists have come to occupy an important place in American literary studies.

Bending the Landscape: Fantasy edited by Nicola Griffith and Stephen Pagel. White Wolf Publishing, 1997. Some Lesbian and Gay content.

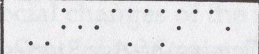
Our Little Secret by Edwina Dae. Commonwealth, 1996. Suspense Novel. Annie has been vowing to kill her abusive father for years. This year is different. He's already dead.

Like There's No Tomorrow: Meditations for Women Leaving Patriarchy by Carolyn Gage. Common Courage Press, 1997.


A Craving Vacancy: Women and Sexual Love in the British Novel, 1740-1880 by Susan Weisser. New York University, 1997.

Revolution, She Wrote by Clara Fraser. Red Letter Press, 1998.

& HIKANÉ &
THE CAPABLE WOMON
 Disabled Wimmin's Magazine
 For Lesbians & Our Wimmin Friends



stories • poetry • drawings • essays
 networking • reviews • experiences
 letters • ideas • desires • demands
DISABLED WIMMIN SEND YOUR WORK!



Suggested Donation for 4 Issue Sub.:
 \$14 individ \$18 groups \$24 institutions
 Sample \$4 • Specify print or cassette

- Approx. 40 pp/issue (2½ hrs. tape) •
- more if/less if • free to wimmin locked-up

All wimmin welcome to subscribe
 Please do not send scented mail

HIKANÉ
 P.O. Box 841
 Great Barrington, MA 01230 USA

**JOIN
 THE
 DEBATE**

***The Women's Review
 of Books***

Not just a guide to good
 reading—a monitor of
 contemporary feminism

•

The Women's Review of Books
 Wellesley College
 Wellesley, MA 02181
 617-283-2087

Individual subscriptions
 \$17/year: check, money order,
 Mastercard, VISA

Published monthly

Belles Lettres
 A Review Of Books By Women

**A Quarterly Magazine Of
 Interviews, Essays,
 Candid Columns,
 & International Book News**


Belles Lettres reviews exactly the women's
 books I want to read. It is unpretentious, and
 its recommendations are right on the money.
 Does it get any better than this?
 —a BL subscriber

Annual subscription \$20 (4 issues); sample \$3
 P.O. Box 372068, Dept. 27,
 Satellite Beach, FL 32937-0068

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____

Lesbian Ethics

**Incest and Child Abuse:
 A Lesbian Analysis**



(LE Vol. 4, #3)

Radical, intense and wide-ranging.
 Definitely not the same old story.

- *Incest and Lesbian Identity*
- *The Politics of Ritual Abuse*
- *Survivors' Forum*
- *Mother Perpetrators*
- *For Lesbian Partners*
- *Ethics of Confrontation*

◆ \$6.00

Or subscribe:
 3 issues \$14 u.s., \$16 international sur-
 face, \$24 intntl. air. Institutions add \$4.
Lesbian Ethics or LE Publications
 P.O. Box 4723, Albuquerque, NM 87196



essays fiction poetry art reviews
reflecting the diversity
of women's
lives

subscription \$12
sample copy \$2.50

inquiries to: 401.456.8377 email: mreddy@grog.ric.edu
dept. of english, rhode island college providence, ri 02908
send self-addressed stamped envelope for submission guidelines

AMETHYST

A JOURNAL FOR LESBIANS
AND GAY MEN

AMETHYST

is available for subscription.

The current rate for 1996
is \$15.00 per year (2 issues).

To subscribe, send a check
or money order to:

SAME/AMETHYST
884 Monroe Drive NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
404-733-6112

Lesbian Health News

-a bimonthly newsletter-

Health News & Views, Personal and Professional Articles Welcome

P.O.Box 12121
Columbus, OH 43212

Subscription: \$12-25/yr.
\$2 Sample Copy

(614) 481-7656

A JOURNAL FOR JEWISH FEMINISTS AND OUR FRIENDS

BRIDGES

G'SHARIM / מ'שארם / BRIKH / בריח / PUENTES / פונטעס

**Proudly Jewish
Boldly Feminist
Crossing Boundaries**

**Poetry + Essays + Fiction
Art + Reviews**

Edited by:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Ruth Atkin | Ruth Kraut |
| Elly Bulkin | Tobi Mae Lippin |
| Fai Coffin | Helena Lipstadt |
| Rita Falbel | Adrienne Rich |
| Clare Kinberg | tova |

Two issues per year
write for free brochure

P.O. Box 18437 + Seattle, WA 98118

The Lesbian Review of Books

A quarterly review of books by, for, and about lesbians

- ▶ fiction
- ▶ history
- ▶ biography
- ▶ theory
- ▶ psychology
- ▶ erotica
- ▶ poetry
- ▶ film
- ▶ mystery
- ▶ science fiction
- ▶ ethics
- ▶ spirituality
- ▶ romance

Loralee MacPike
Editor

One Year \$10.00 Two Years \$18.00 Overseas postage add \$4.00

P.O. Box 6369, Altadena, CA. 91003 818/398-4200

**Engage with
feminist politics—**

Read off our backs

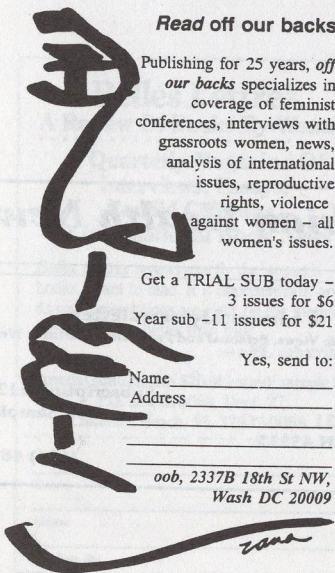
Publishing for 25 years, *off our backs* specializes in coverage of feminist conferences, interviews with grassroots women, news, analysis of international issues, reproductive rights, violence against women — all women's issues.

Get a TRIAL SUB today —
3 issues for \$6
Year sub —11 issues for \$21

Yes, send to:

Name _____
Address _____

oob, 2337B 18th St NW,
Wash DC 20009



for people who don't apologize for their size

SUBSCRIBE NOW!!!

You get:

- interviews with famous fat folk!
- eye-opening photo essays!
- fiction, poetry, art!
- true tales from fat life!
- Roseanne sightings!
- investigative articles!
- Aunt Agony's advice!
- fun Cut&Paste projects to do!
- and MORE!!!

Just \$12 for four issues a year!

FAT!SO? P.O. Box 423464 SF CA 94142

sinister wisdom

Some Current & Back Issues

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

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



fiction
poetry
essays
graphics
reviews
plays
sex
humor
revolution
vision
diversity
survival
defiance

SINISTER WISDOM

Since 1976. . .

Please send:

THE CURRENT ISSUE, SINISTER WISDOM #58 _____ Copies @ \$5 = _____

Yes, I want to subscribe, beginning with # _____ (see rates below) _____

Back issues (please circle): 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57 (\$5 ea.) 43/44 (\$8 Sale Price) Total for back issues = _____

Postage & Handling: \$1.50 for first back or single issue, 50¢ each add. = _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

I am adding a donation to support free & hardship subscriptions: = _____

Please send SW to my friend, beginning with issue #58

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

Sign gift card: _____

Total Enclosed: = _____

your
donations
are now
tax
deductible!

| SUBSCRIPTION RATES | | 1 year = 4 issues |
|---|--|----------------------|
| Individuals: 1 year, \$20 | | 2 years, \$34 |
| Out of U.S.: \$25 (U.S. \$) | | Hardship: \$8-15 |
| Institutions: 1 year, \$33 | | Sustaining: \$50-200 |
| Free on request to women in prisons and mental institutions | | |

— bulk discounts available —

SINISTER WISDOM, INC. PO BOX 3252 BERKELEY, CA 94703 USA

**What to do with
MANUSCRIPTS, SUBSCRIPTIONS,
ADS, MONEY & BACK ISSUES**

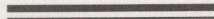
**MANUSCRIPTS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, BACK ISSUE ORDERS &
CHANGES OF ADDRESS**

Please send all to: *Sinister Wisdom*, POB 3252, Berkeley, CA 94703

Submission Guidelines

All written work should be mailed flat (not folded), with your name and address on each page. Submissions may be in any style or form, or combination of forms. Maximum submission: five poems or two stories per issue. We may return longer submissions. We prefer you type (or send your work on 3½" discs, ASCII or Mac, with a printout). Legible handwritten work accepted, tapes accepted from print-impaired womyn. All submissions must be on white paper. SASE MUST BE ENCLOSED. *Selection may take up to nine months.* If you want acknowledgment of receipt, enclose a separate, stamped postcard. GRAPHIC ARTISTS should send B&W photos, stats, or other duplicates of their work. Let us know if we can keep artwork on file for future use.

We publish only lesbians' work. We are particularly interested in work that reflects the diversity of our experiences: as lesbians of color, ethnic lesbians, Jewish, old, young, working class, poor, disabled, fat. We welcome experimental work. We will not print anything that is oppressive or demeaning to lesbians or women, or which perpetuates negative stereotypes. We do intend to keep an open and critical dialogue on all the issues that affect our work, joy and survival. See page 9 for details on upcoming issues. We are open to suggestions for new themes.



Sinister Wisdom, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We provide free subs to women in prison and mental institutions (15% of our mailing list), as well as reduced price subs for lesbians with limited/ fixed incomes. • Enclose an extra \$10 on your renewal to help cover publishing costs (larger donations accepted). • Give *Sinister Wisdom* for birthdays, holidays, special occasions. • Consider doing a benefit or subscription drive for SW in your city.

We need lots of lesbian energy to keep printing. • We particularly need volunteer or commission grantwriters and ad sales reps. • Our equipment needs list includes (in order) an office-quality Mac-compatible laser printer, a scanner & OCR software, a CD drive, a fax or fax-modem. Thanks to each of you who participates in reading, writing for, building *Sinister Wisdom*.

fo i know'd SHE the kinda wo'mn
make you want ta give it up/say
baby
take me
take all i got
take all i'll ever git
tell me
what you want gal
here
i'll give it jes ta see you
smile.

—sharon bridgforth

If I could go home again,
I would give you someone
who did not need to sink roots
in your skin

—Jacqueline Miranda

In eighth grade, I wanted to be a chola.
The girls from La Colonia were so
beautiful. Most of them had the full
bodies of women, faces painted with
dark makeup, and long feathered hair
always combed and perfectly in place.

—Juanita Chavez