

Utopia

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Winter 2007-2008



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

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Submission Guidelines

Submissions: See page 168 for themes. Check our website at www.sinisterwisdom.org for updates on forthcoming issues. Please read the guidelines below before sending material.

Material should be sent to the editor or guest editor of the issue. Everything else should be sent to Sinister Wisdom, POB 3252, Berkeley, CA 94703.

Writing and Art Guidelines: Please read carefully.

Material may be in any style or form, or combination of forms. Maximum: five poems, two short stories or essays, or one longer piece of up to 2500 words. We prefer that you send your work by email in Word. If sent by mail, material must be mailed flat (not folded) with your name and address on each page. We prefer you type your work but short legible handwritten pieces will be considered; tapes accepted from print-impaired women. All work must be on white paper. Please proofread your work carefully; do not send changes after the deadline. A self-addressed stamped business-sized envelope must be enclosed. If you want acknowledgement of receipt, enclose a separate self-addressed stamped postcard. GRAPHIC ARTISTS should send B&W photos or drawings (duplicates) of their work (no slides). Images sent electronically must have a resolution of 300dpi for photos and 600dpi for line drawings. TIFFs are preferred. Please do not send large files electronically – send each photo separately. Include a 3-5 sentence autobiographical sketch written exactly as you want it printed.

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, Arab, old, young, working class, poverty class, disabled, and fat Lesbians. We welcome experimental work. We will not print anything that is oppressive or demeaning to Lesbians or women, or that perpetuates stereotypes. Because many of our readers are in prison, we cannot include explicit sex, obscenities, or art with frontal nudity. No sado-masochism.

Please contact us if you have a new theme you would like to see explored. We are looking for guest editors for future issues.

Sinister Wisdom, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. We provide free subscriptions to women in prison and psychiatric institutions (20% of our mailing list), as well as reduced price subscriptions for Lesbians with limited/fixed incomes.

Enclose an extra \$10 to \$50 on your renewal to help cover publishing costs (larger donations accepted). * Give *Sinister Wisdom* for birthdays, holidays, and special occasions. * Please consider organizing a benefit or subscription drive for *Sinister Wisdom* in your area.

A Journal by and for Lesbians

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Now Available on Tape

Sinister Wisdom #70 (30th Anniversary Celebration Issue)

Contact Fran Day at fran@sonic.net for more information. Appreciations go to Feminist Audio Books for taping this issue. Feminist Audio Books (FAB) is a postal library service, producing and lending feminist, lesbian and woman-focused books on audio tape. FAB also holds the stock from Women's Braille Press since it folded. FAB can act as a go-between for women who wish to share their own audio books with other women. FAB was set up in the 1980s by a group of visually impaired women who wanted access to feminist texts on tape and was re-launched in 2000. By then more feminist books were on tape so the emphasis moved to more (though not only) lesbian and woman-focused novels. Web: www.feministaudiobooks.org.uk. Email: books@feministaudiobooks.org.uk. FAB, c/o The Pankhurst Centre, 60-62 Nelson Street, Manchester. M13 9WP U.K.

jody jewdyke taped *Sinister Wisdom* #62 several years ago and has plans to tape additional issues. For updates, contact Fran Day at fran@sonic.net.

Notes for a Magazine

“The possible shapes of what has not been before exist only in that back place, where we keep those unnamed, untamed longings for something different and beyond what is now called possible, and to which our understanding can only build roads.” Audre Lorde (“An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde p. 101).

“Hopes for a Utopian Lesbian Universe. Dreams of an ideal world. Yearnings for something “beyond what is now called possible.” These were the words we chose for our call for material for this issue of Sinister Wisdom. The response? Once again, we found that we can count on our contributors to inspire, excite, challenge, energize, and affirm. Their powerful words and images will help us leap forward in our quest to, in Mary Daly’s words “Throw off mindbindings/spiritbindings,” in order to “transform a necrophilic world” (*Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Journey*, pp. xii, 414).

Many Lesbians have written about their hopes, dreams, and yearnings for a better world. For example, in *Gyn/Ecology* (and her other books), Mary Daly opens up “a deep and powerful sense of the possibility of our own and all women’s freedom” (p. xxxvii). She encourages us to “break through the silence and the sounds of phallogocentric babble” (p. xx) and live our “lives as freely and furiously as possible” (p. xxxvii). In *Wildfire*, Sonia Johnson encourages us to free ourselves and build a new world by “disengag(ing) psychically, emotionally, materially, and economically from patriarchy and all its institutions” (p. i). Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “For positive social change to occur, we must imagine a reality that differs from what already exists.... Activism is the courage to act consciously on our ideas....” (*This Bridge We Call Home*, p. 5.) Merle Woo states “Those of us who have chosen the path less traveled/Abandoning values of capitalism and patriarchy/Are freedom fighters.” (*Yellow Woman Speaks*, p. 48). And from Chrystos: “My books are shed snake skins of my fierce journey toward justice and safety for the First Nations, called Indians.” (*Resist: Essays Against a Homophobic Culture*, p. 227).

Now in this issue of *Sinister Wisdom* we continue the journey: we reclaim our untamed minds, recover our inventive thoughts and actions, and build roads toward something “beyond what is now called possible.” As Susan Hawthorne writes, “We drive into/ unknown places/ drive off the map of the known world/ into worlds we create for ourselves (*The Butterfly Effect*, p. 71).

“May we possess the steadfastness of trees/ the quiet serenity of dawn/ the brilliance of a flashing star//may the fires of compassion ignite our hands/ sending energy out into the universell/may the love we share inspire others to act.”

Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge We Call Home*, pp. 575-576.

Fran Day
Sebastopol, California



Lesbians for Lesbians Banner. Photo by Roxanna N. Fiamma. This banner was made by SEPS (Separatists Enraged Proud and Strong) for the National March for Lesbian / Gay Rights which was held on July 15, 1984 in San Francisco. The banner has been carried at many other marches and displayed at numerous events.

Gloria E. Anzaldúa Book Prize

The National Women's Studies Association is pleased to announce the Gloria E. Anzaldúa Book Prize. The prize includes \$1,000 and lifetime membership in NWSA and recognizes groundbreaking scholarship in women's studies that makes significant multicultural feminist contributions to women of color/transnational scholarship. The prize honors Gloria Anzaldúa, a valued and long-active member of the National Women's Studies Association. For more information, go to www.nwsaconference.org.

Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1942 - 2004) was one of the first openly Lesbian Chicana writers. She published essays, poetry, short stories, interviews, anthologies and children's books and was recognized as an innovative feminist thinker and social activist. Her writing shaped the imagination and ethics of our generation. Three ground-breaking anthologies — *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981, with Cherrie Moraga), *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists-of-Color* (1990), and *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (2002, with AnaLouise Keating) — provided crucial space for women of color to develop theory and community. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) is a collection of poetry and prose that meshed the personal with the political in breathtaking depth. *Borderlands/La Frontera* was named one of the 100 Best Books of the Century by *Hungry Mind Review* and *Utne Reader*.

Gloria played a major role in redefining contemporary Chicana and lesbian/queer identities and in developing an inclusionary feminist movement. She was awarded a posthumous Ph.D. in literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Gloria gave her loving support to numerous social change organizations; *Sinister Wisdom* was one of her many beneficiaries. In 1984 she became a contributing editor and in 1987, participated in the first Sinister Wisdom West Coast benefit.

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Painting by Chrystos

Jae Haggard

The Wimmin of Our Dreams

Being Authentic, Real, Big and Listening to ourSelves is, I believe, the most personal, political and spiritual choice we can make to tangibly and energetically transform our lives and the world.

A single word that can describe all that is amiss and out-of-harmony in mainstream culture is disconnected. Only in systemic disconnection can that culture, that political system, those hierarchies survive. Whenever and in whatever ways people connect, we dis-empower patriarchal culture.

When we are Authentic, we can and do Connect with Earth, Selves, others and Spirit. When we are connected we can cooperate, make choices to meet the needs of all, can be freely caring and can love, truly and heartfully care.

When we are loving we cannot at the same time fear. I believe fear is the source of our insecurity, competitiveness, scarcity, domination and every kind of dis-ease / dis-harmony. It is also the single most essential tool needed to control us.

To live in a world without fear is to live, thrive and expand in a paradigm that simply is not conceivable when our perception of possibilities is defined by fear. Our most radical choice—define our context by choices based in caring and love.

So, I say discard and refuse outside definitions and limits. We cannot stop fear or any other unhelpful behavior or attitude by focusing on it. We change by glimpsing how we can be, how we want to live and relate and then simply doing it. Not seem natural—still, just embrace how we glimpse we want to be and then act as if. As we embrace the ‘new ways,’ the acculturated behaviors and attitudes we no longer find helpful disappear for they just plain no longer have relevance.

By embracing and in whatever tiny steps living the Connecting glimpses, we change ourselves and by extension the world.

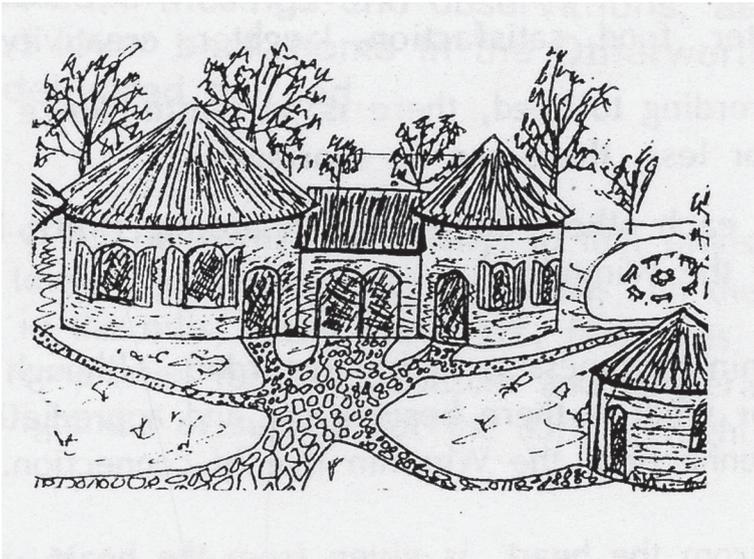
Some years ago I read Marija Gimbutas describing a women’s culture she discovered in her archeological searches. She uses oral tradition, intuition and archaeological findings to recreate pre-patriarchal life in Europe—life where the values of women are central, where villages are located on the most arable land rather than the most defensible position, where there are no weapons and no killing.

Reading her work, I wonder how life was for these Wimmin—a land where for thousands of years there was no war or aggression and no imposition of other male values or violence. How boggling to consider lives not molded by fear.

One trait that I love about many Lesbians and my community of Landykes is our real conscious search for ways to live in balance with the Earth and other wimin. One way I search is asking myself what a life among women, in a Lesbian context and sprouting from Lesbian Spirit, might be like. I picture an ordinary this-world / time dyke unintentionally visiting WimminWorld. Her ourworld name is Patty. In the world of the Wimmin she fittingly becomes Chrysalis. I put these explorations into a book titled, *The Wimmin of Our Dreams*.

What does Patty / Chrysalis observe, learn and ask as she lives and creates a life with the Wimmin? The thoughts I come up with are certainly not new, yet they help me find clarity, more questions, and expanded awareness in my everyday life. I glimpse more possibilities of how I can be more who I want to be and how women could live. Once glimpsed, I can live closer to my ideal.

The following stories are excerpts from both Patty / Chrysalis' Journal and her conversations with the Wimmin, especially Ocean, an old potter in the village. The Journal includes musings and observations as well as letters to her Lesbian friends and lover back home in the Otherworld—letters she knows may never be read.



Drawing by Jae Haggard

Introducing The Wimmin

It isn't so long ago, or so far away, not really. In that timespace there is no word for fear. In villages and towns, on the land, in the woods, on the shores, fear is unknown. On the plains, in the hills, along the rivers, fear does not exist. On the roads and in the homes, there is no need for fear. Seasons and temperatures make no difference, nor does the lightness of sunrise or the dark of night. This is the world of the Wimmin.

The Wimmin know grief for there are partings,
disappointments, death.

The Wimmin know regret for in any time or place
hasty words can be spoken.

The Wimmin know disappointment for not always
does anyone get everything wanted or in the way expected.

The Wimmin understand hardship for the weather can be bitter and
even here the crops can fail and sickness can come into a body. Yet,
they don't call these things hardships as we would. To them these are
cycles of life.

Anger is not unknown. There are momentary sparks quickly released
and aimed at no one and no thing.

There is no fear of hunger for grains are stored for the lean years. Never
among the wimmin does one starve while others are sated.

Since all have what is needed, there is no fear of loss.

Since all are respected and treated with kindness, there is no fear of
revenge.

In the Wimmin there is no word for fear—for there is nothing to fear,
no one to fear, to envy, to be jealous of, no one to disdain or despise, no
one to outwit or defeat or even to defend against.

In a people who do not fear, giving and sharing bring the greatest joy.
Assisting each other and working together in good spirit, laughter and
song is a given.

For a people who do not fear, all that is done is creative, expansive.
Planting, building, celebrating, making clothing, crafting homes and
earthware and baskets and adornments. Using colors, textures, rocks or
shells, grasses or woods, fabrics or clays, fingers or knives. All is done in the
ease of there-is-always-plenty-of-time to make things beautiful, to make
them just right, to go with the maker's imagination, to savor the making.

The Wimmin labor for themselves and for each other, their work always of the essentials— shelter, food, satisfaction, laughter, creativity, connection.

Since all use according to need, there is no waste. Since each uses what she needs, no more or less, there are no shortages.

Since all trust in each other, there is no hoarding. Profit is quite beyond the comprehension of the Wimmin.

Among the Wimmin happiness is highly regarded. Although they would be surprised we even note that, for what is there besides joy and appreciation of life, of each other, of the Earth. Joy is connection, the Wimmin live in connection. They know no other way.

All is done from the heart, is given from the heart, is enjoyed from the heart. And the heart is a most creative place. When there is no fear, the heart can be most open indeed.

To the Wimmin there is no question but to attend the tiniest first feelings of imbalance or dis-ease whether in themselves or each other.

The Wimmin's days are filled with appreciation, with the big and little, alone and together celebrations—some quiet, some downright rowdy, in the laughing and dancing sense, of course.

The Wimmin appreciate, and even more than that treasure and take delight in themselves, each other, the Earth, every part of their lives. Although they do not know the word, compassion fills the lives of the Wimmin—for the joys and agonies of one are felt by all.

Another word the Wimmin do not know is Lesbian. Yet, these wimmin love other wimmin from the very depths of their being. The Wimmin know Love.

Not so long ago there is no word for fear. Can we for a moment imagine a world, a life, a society without fear? On the surface no and no again. Yet, look a little deeper— feel that sigh, feel the heart expand, feel the start-of-a-smile, feel the tears just behind the eyes. The Knowing of this Life is in us. We can touch it, remember it. And, we can help to create it, live it again. For I am of the Wimmin as are you.

Not so long ago, or so far away, not really, the Wimmin live on the land and in villages, unable to imagine fear. Knowing only connection, creativity and celebration. They call it life. Perhaps it is time for us also to once again live. Shall we live, build our lives— together.

Journal— Disappear

Do you think I just disappeared and died? Or, can you feel my messages to know that I'm here? Even in a sci-fi it would be almost clichéd. Girlfriends take day off and pack picnic lunch for romantic outing. Go to inviting cave behind waterfall of anyone's dreams. Laugh, talk, make love, eat lots. One walks deeper into the cave and disappears. For a moment the disappeared one hazily sees her lover searching and faintly hears her calling. Then all is gone, as the Veil slips back into place. Gone. All the makings of a grade B soap opera. Oh, Leaf, what could you think happened?

Early Letter to Leaf

Leaf—I want so much to be with you. Even more, I want you here with me, among these wimmin. You'd fit in here even better than you fit in those lavender longjanes you wear all winter. I see you everywhere— laughing over eveningmeal in the gatherhouse, planting the corn, repairing the leaky roof, holding a friend who is sad, talking endlessly about this plan or that. This is your place. How can it possibly be that I'm the one here while you're there struggling and dreaming of a place like this? It's more than ironic.

The Village. I've been here just a few days now. I'm learning my way around the village and ways of the Wimmin. Well, village maybe makes is sound bigger than it is. It's a lot how I'd imagine a Lesbian land with a bunch of dykes of all ages living there. It's really true, there are no men. None. There never have been as far as I can tell. That alone makes this a world of anyone's dreams! I don't understand it, but I'll sure take it, thank you very much indeed. Do you know I haven't had one single nightmare since I came here. You who hold me night after night when I wake up screaming or crying know that's a capital M miracle.

There are about two dozen huts. Most hold one womn each, but others house several. Apparently they decide who wants to live alone and who in pairs or trios and who in groups and that's how they do it. Everyone lives where they want. Already in my stay, two wimmin have exchanged huts and one has moved to an empty dwelling further from the village 'center.'

Center just means there's a kind of plaza area. The houses spread loosely out from there without any obvious design. Near the center there's a well, several benches and a couple of big sure-look-like-piñon trees. The community center is here. They call it the Gatherhouse. Big breakfasts called firstmeal and suppers are made here for everyone to eat together if they

want. Suppers are predictably called lastmeals. They don't have a prepared community lunch but someone gets out leftovers and sandwich makings. I guess some habits are similar in any culture.

During an early conversation with Ocean

my name is ocean. It is a name that flows from the heart of me. perhaps your name, patty, has special meaning where you come from? for me it is quite enough to live my naming—to run deep like the waters, to find my unexplored depths.

the wimmin name ourselves. we are a people who take our names to heart.

Journal Musings

The world of the Wimmin is so different from home.

☺☺☺ Life is different because there is no resistance to change.

☺☺☺ Life is different because with no dis-ease to unbalance health, health is the norm, what's expected. Wholeness and well-being are accepted, no big deal.

☺☺☺ This world is different because the Wimmin are aware of their integrity. They really know and believe how important they are in the whole scheme.

☺☺☺ This is a different world because the Wimmin are deeply aware of their world and their connection to everything and every womn in it.

☺☺☺ I know this is a different world because the Wimmin love, everything, all the time.

☺☺☺ This is a different world because every womn likes herself.

☺☺☺ This is a different world because work, laughter, joy and sorrow are all equally accepted as part of life. None are denied.

☺☺☺ I know I'm in a different world because everyone gives and everyone receives in a constant flow. No one goes without and no one has excess.

This is a different world because a stranger like me can walk in, be welcomed, become a part of it, thrive and feel at home.

Every woman should live in a different world.

Journal Musings—Pain

The Wimmin experience pain. The temporary pain of a stubbed toe or scratched finger or broken arm. The pain of disappointment in themselves and each other when they needlessly hurt another by action or word. The

pain of separation when one decides to leave to live in a distant village. The pain of separation when one dies. These are the kinds of pains to be expected in a womn's life.

The Wimmin don't experience the pain of betrayal, of physical violence, of intrusion, of violation. They don't experience the pain of fear for themselves or for others they love. They don't experience the pain of disconnection, discouragement, despair or other diseases. They don't experience the pain of dominance or submission. They don't experience the pain of dreading or not caring what the day will bring. They do not know these pains imposed and endured in man's world.

Under no circumstances, ever, do the Wimmin play with pain. Never do the Wimmin think life's learnings or creativity need to come out of pain. Never do they wish any kind of pain on themselves or on another creature or womn. And, never do they in any form create or glorify pain. They cannot comprehend these practices of a man's world.

In all these ways, I know I am in a different world. It is painfully clear.

Journal Musings—Movement

The Wimmin don't retreat, don't even need a retreat. Their very lives are a retreat. There isn't a moment that they aren't involved with and downright relishing their lives. There is nothing the Wimmin wish to escape from or to. Since there is nothing to escape, the Wimmin can embrace their lives, can feel expansive, can recognize possibilities. In the drawing-in that accompanies retreat, it's difficult to consider change or movement. The Wimmin are a people of movement.

Journal—Habits

In countless ways, every day I make choices that shape my life. Each choice is a brick. Mortared together, one by one, these bricks build my life. From the life I choose to live, my possibilities sprout— for myself and with others.

Societal systems may limit my choices. Socialized beliefs may inhibit my choices. Circumstance may influence my choices. Yet, in every situation, in every moment I have some measure of choice.

My choices may be active and conscious or passive and unthinking. I may listen to my own deep Voice or move in the wake of habit, ways someone else trained me to be or that I slipped into. I may move on my own path or float along in someone else's directions and expectations.

Conscious choice is being true to mySelf and knowing myself in bigger Connection. I can be honest with others only when I am true to myself. I

can be true to myself only when I live my connection to others.

I lay my bricks caringly in a thoughtful pattern. I handle each, deliberate over each. I practice until my brick-laying becomes habit. Today's conscious choices, practiced regularly, can become tomorrow's conscious habit.

Among the Wimmin I'm getting a lot of practice. I want to take this habit home with me.

Journal—BeFriend

The Wimmin talk to the trees. In their building and carving they use the deadwoods. Would they chop down the life of a friend?

The Wimmin talk with the creatures. If they need leather or fur, the wimmin use that given by an animal who is already dead. Would they intentionally shorten the life of a friend?

The Wimmin talk with the Earth. They tend the soil in the cycles of the Earth, gently with their hands and their handtools. Would they gouge the body of a friend?

The Wimmin talk with each other, and listen deeply. They tend each other in their joy and sorrow. Would they abandon a friend?

Among the Wimmin, I learn how in countless ways, every day, I make choices that shape my life and the lives of all around me.

Among the Wimmin, I have learned the meaning of BeFriend.

Conversation with Ocean— Pay

Ocean, are wimmin paid for all they do?

pay? what is that? you are as stuck on own and pay as the fresh pine sap to fingers in the planting season. the wimmin live, each doing what is needed for herself and all others to live with happiness, contentment and connection. no one wants what another cannot have. what the wimmin do, we do because it is fitting, because we want to, because it needs doing, because it is part of the wholeness of everyone's giving and receiving, because it brings satisfaction.

the wimmin count on ourselves and each other. yet the wimmin do not count. when you do not count all is valued. each womn has all we need. if there is a shortage of something, the shortage is spread among all so none suffer. there is nothing to barter, there certainly is nothing to sell, no one to buy and nothing to pay with. we do not need your word 'pay.'

when each womn gives and receives, all putting forth effort for ourselves and for each other, we are provided a bountiful satisfying life. the wimmin thrive on the energy that surrounds us, freely given and freely received.

Conversation with Ocean— Waterfall

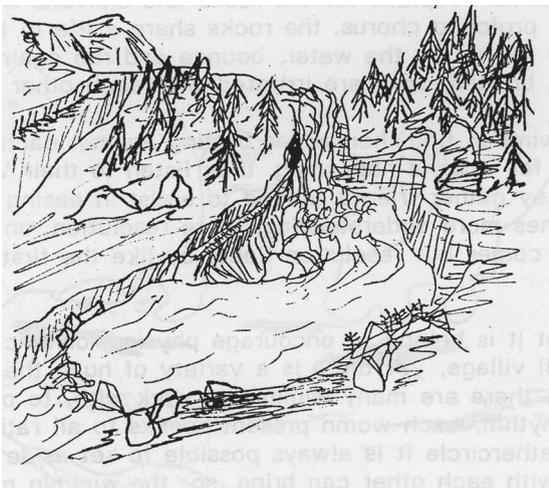
Ocean, what do you do when a womn does not like another womn? Does this ever happen?

does it happen? our connection sings to us louder than the largest flock of piñon jays. mostly we make pests of ourselves appreciating each other. i think we have discovered every way there could possibly be to thank each other, touch, stroke, kiss, say how important each is and on and on like the waves from the great seas. yet it is only my imagination that is limited for the wimmin continue to find ways to express appreciation. to stop the movement of our appreciation is like trying to stop the birds' move with the seasons.

every now and then two wimmin grate on each other like tumbling rocks under a waterfall. these rocks are whole and magnificent. the waterfall creates a beautiful liveplace for the rocks and enlivens the very airs. the waters sing in profound chorus. the rocks share a life in this amazing place. yet the rocks, moved by the water, bounce and rub against each other. they are worn, feel bruised, are irritated with each other and the closeness.

when two wimmin find themselves butting against each other, they search in themselves for what is happening. they listen to their Voices. they meet in mendcircle. they gather friends around to assist in easing the tension. at each step comes more understanding, more resolution. on a rare occasion understanding comes but resolution fleets by like the first whiff of spring in the air.

Drawing by Jae Haggard



at this point it is helpful to encourage physical distance between the two. we are a small village yet there is a variety of huts. there are several times to mealgather. there are many wimmin to work with, to play or talk with. in gathercircle rhythm, each womn present speaks to all rather than to just one and in gathercircle it is always possible to set aside the irritations daily maneuvering with each other can bring. so the wimmin move to more distant huts, choose tasks that take them to different places, meet with different friends so they do not have to bump into each other.

is this a matter of one womn not liking another? i do not know. that does not feel the right phrase. it is moreso not wanting to be so close to each other.

when the stones move from the turbulent water under the falls to live quietly around the pool, they no longer bump. instead they find they have many experiences and views in common. they crave someone with the same experiences to talk with, to laugh and commiserate. they find their voices rise together singing appreciation for the waterfall. they admire the many animals that come to drink, the many wimmin who come to bathe and play. such stories they have to tell each other.

now that they are no longer bumping into each other the rocks find they rather like chatting together. there is a feeling of closeness and shared experience. the friendship grows in the peace of the quiet waters. now when the rocks butt into each other in the turbulent waters, it is in play. the bumps no longer feel like clashings. as they bounce and dance around the pool the stones feel the many smoothnesses of the water and of each other.

so it is with the wimmin as they enter the dance of the rocks, eventually to be rocked in each others arms.

Journal— Random Thoughts

I'm constantly sparked by the ideas and ideals of the Wimmin. I forget most of the thoughts before I get to my Journal, but do have a few scraps with notes on them. Fortunately, I suspect the ideas keep percolating wherever they are!

☺☺☺ The Wimmin are so incredibly generous about everything. They have true generosity of heart. That kind of heartfelt giving makes so much else possible. So very much about life here is a given.

☺☺☺ Many of the foods the Wimmin cook are served in large communal bowls. Everyone just scoops or spoons right out of it. I'm thinking that if this was more common in the Otherworld people would have much more concern for the health of everyone else.

- ☹☹☹ I'm learning that telling time is a lot about careful observation—which insects are out, which birds are calling, which plants are blooming. Is the four o'clock beginning to close? Where does the sun rise and set? Which way does the young sunflower point? Where are the familiar star clusters? In all the countless details, the Wimmin know the time of day and the time of year. I am learning.
- ☹☹☹ Everything among the Wimmin is done in no-time.
- ☹☹☹ There is so much space in the lives of the Wimmin. They don't clutter their yards or their living spaces or their hearts. I think of how much stuff most of us collect in the Otherworld. We fill our rooms, our shelves, our cars, our backpacks, even our pockets. We fill our appointment (and what really is the point?) books, fill our evenings, fill our weekends. We fill our bodies with junk foods, junk ideas. We fill our hearts with junk feelings. We carry more clutter than a porcupine has quills. What, I wonder, are we trying to keep out? What possibilities would open up if there was more room in our homes and hearts? Let's space-out!
- ☹☹☹ Living in Wimminsworld sometimes I can hardly believe how contented I am when my life has so much content.
- ☹☹☹ The Wimmin do not, in any world's imagination, close themselves. No wonder I feel so close to them.
- ☹☹☹ This seems to be a world where there are no rewards or punishments, yet we all live with the repercussions of what we do. Consequences are not a threat but a movement of life's cycles.
- ☹☹☹ In life among the Wimmin, there are no edges to walk, no cutting edge to live on, no edges to get on anyone. There are no limits to push. Oh, what a life!

Conversation with Ocean—Huts

Ocean, do wimmin own their houses?

another day you ask who owns the food. we do not know this 'own' whether of the food or the friend or the shelter. we use what we need. when

we no longer treasure or need one of our gifts, we pass it on.

every womn needs food of some kind. every womn requires shelter. we know our own needs. we care about each other's needs. the wimmin meet our own needs and we assist each other, providing for the needs of each and all. together we build huts so there is space for each womn. we each take care that the hut in which we live is attended and kept in good repair. when we wish a change, we exchange spaces or move into an unused hut or come together and build a new one. we build our lives as we build our houses.

why would I own a hut? the snake lives in her skin until she outgrows it. does the snake wish to carry her sheds with her? such effort and to what purpose? carrying with us all the gifts we are done with turns them into burdens.

in the other world you have much to learn about sheds.

Journal Musings—Embrace

- ☉☉☉ To embrace is to choose, to move, to act.
- ☉☉☉ To embrace is to be our own agents, responsible for our own choices.
- ☉☉☉ To embrace is to release ways we have learned to be passive, self-less, even victims.
- ☉☉☉ To embrace is to welcome, look forward to, celebrate.
- ☉☉☉ To embrace is to be present, be real, be clear.
- ☉☉☉ To embrace is to be alive.

The Wimmin embrace themselves, each other, their lives. My life with the Wimmin is a warm embrace.

NOTE: Jae's 148-page land-published book *The Wimmin of Our Dreams* will be available again summer 2007 to any woman who wants a copy. Donation to help pay duplication and shipping costs most helpful. Jae Haggard, PO Box 130, Serafina, New Mexico 87569. JaeHaggard@gmail.com

Jacqueline Elizabeth Letalien

Every Possibility

*every possibility
creatively
moves to more*

*endless
space fills
with the flowing
movements of power*

*breath flows
rhythmically
for her self*

*no thoughts or plans
no rule to obey*

*except
to breathe
and be*

*gentle wills
bring us
away from fear
and despair
into calm being*

*gentle nights
bring us
away from dread
and trembling
into wise presence*

*the magik moves
to manifest in the invisible links*

*the heart calls up
the presence of unseen influences
from the hidden dreamings
into empowerment*

*the magik moves
to live with courage without dread*

*the chant restores
the origin of the crystal temple
from the scattered shards
into wholeness*

*feel the pulse
the drumming heart
across time and eons*

*tracings of loves birthing
for thousands of years*

*sense wing beats
the humming sound
from wills of bird flight*

*soarings of majesty
from spirits of light*

Ellen Williams

The Womelia of Estesusa

The veil lifted many years ago. A time and space almost unfamiliar to me now as smoky cities and murky rivers, and the busy bodies in early morn preparing for their congested day. Even the echo of screeching rubber wheels on hot asphalt have long been silenced. These images and sounds only visit me when I concentrate to develop them in my mind. Then and then only, do they come to me. It is quiet now, all is peaceful and at agreement. I sit on top of Valarsheus, one of the many tall lavender mountains on Estesusa.

From here I can see the cobalt blue ocean from all sides of Estesusa. The mist from her is comforting to my skin. The chartreuse colored grass is full, and bearing fuchsia lilies. They too, give love to the heels of my feet. I only attempt to describe the beauty of Estesusa, but it only seems to diminish its glory.

I am Ursheria, the warrior, and the record keeper. For here in Estesusa, there is no time, yet for the record, I must go back in time within me, to document where we came from and where we are now. At present, on planet earth, the year is 2020. Thirteen years ago, I remember when the veil began to lift, and planet earth began to weave into other dimensions, turning on its axis, creating extreme temperatures and chaotic weather patterns. But mostly, the imbalance settled within each human soul. This disturbance only occurred within humans who were unwilling to acknowledge that the world was changing and smothered from hatred and pollution.

I was 43 years old at the time when the shift subtly began to take place. Like few, or many, I had been born with “the gift.” Here, in Estesusa they call it the inner-self actualizing. Like a woman in labor, my dreams and visions began to heighten within me. Ever intense, ever immediate. All of these insights showed the new coming world approaching, and all to take place in 2012.

I was often visited by beings from other worlds. The Arcturians in particular. The beings of love and light from Arcturus, the brightest star in the Bootes Constellation. I wrote all these things down and pondered them in my heart. I shared them with my partner Iddian, and A'baha, a woman whom the universe placed into our lives. We loved her deeply. Iddian and A'baha also had gifts. Iddian hands were often very warm and electricity flowed through them. She healed many. A'baha also had the gift to heal. They both taught and had a wealth of wisdom. They still have these gifts.

With their help and guidance, I stepped into the self I was destined to be, the warrior and record keeper I am now. At that time, I was afraid of my own powers. Seeing future events, stepping into other dimensions, and viewing Akashic records. These were but a few. Surely as sun and moon grace the heavens, I became non-afraid. With the suffering of the human race, especially the lesbian human race, I embraced my powers to assist other lesbian leaders to ready our departure to this present utopia.

Many were predicting that 2012 would mark the end of the world. Yet, Earth still remains, only in another dimension. The end came only in the shifting of the minds and form of the body. I was told by another light body, an Ascended Divine Mother, that in 2010, suddenly humans who studied peace and love would begin to disappear into the 5th dimension, and the Headline news would declare these bodies missing from abduction or unexplained murders. The first signs of the veil being lifted would be disharmony and uncomfortable-ness within the self. Humans would be more agitated, angrier, more selfish, and have a deep feeling that something was missing from their lives. All would search desperately to find some peace, unfortunately, seeking synthetic joy and peace with substances not good for the body or mind. When all along peace and joy resided within “the self” or higher mind. There were no real religions, but, each body inhabited its own religion according to its DNA, and what caused that “body” full empowerment, peace, and joy. And when this discovery was tapped into, all good became of it. Sadly, only a few humans took the time to embrace or listen to what their higher self really wanted, thus, creating a world of chaos within themselves and spreading to a world of chaos outside themselves. The Ascended evolved being also informed me that crime would become commonplace throughout the world, as it already had become, only more. And because few had any real concerns about polluting Mother Earth, she would throw-up her waters upon the shores, and earthquakes would shake the ground, causing the soil of the U.S. to separate, and the waters would flow through those separations, creating a huge river to flow from the top of Canada to the end of Mexico. All these things happened...and more.

It is difficult to imagine all these events now as I sit atop Valarsheus. For women love freely here, there is no discord, no laws to inhibit our love for the other. The trees bear us bountiful fruit from their wombs and there is plenty for everyone. As I sit here, I sense Oyishya calling me. She has come to see how far I have gotten with my recording. For I do not record like we did on Earth on paper, or computers. Our minds are our recorders. There is nothing we forget, and yet, if we choose, we place the things we wish

not to think of on the higher shelf within our thoughts. We communicate with our minds and hearts, and although our skin shade is different from the other, there is no race in the sense that the Earth declares. For we are all called Womelia. In this way, we are all one.

Oyishya comes and sits down beside me. Thought form, “Hello, Usheria my sister. How is your recording coming along?”

“Very well. I was just about to take a break and go eat at the Chalet.

“Well, let us go. I am getting hungry also.” She smiles and kisses my cheek.

We climb down from Valarsheus and take the shortest route along the river Jamaya, named after another woman warrior, as myself. I can see the Rainbow fish scurrying between the indigo grass blades and crystals in the clear water. I glance up at the stars that can be seen in the daytime here in Estesusa.

Oyishaya looks at me and sends a vibration. “Yes, it is beautiful here, isn’t it?”

I send one back to her. “I can never get used to its beauty.” I smile.

“Are you attending the ceremony for our new sisters who just arrived?” She asks.

“Indeed. I would not miss it for anything.” A bluebird swoops down and sits upon my shoulder. I rub her gently and send her love. She returns the love as we continue walking.

Oyishaya stops and looks intense—a result of fighting for Gay and Lesbian Rights during her purpose on planet Earth. “I want to travel through the veil to get the rest of our sisters on Earth.”

“You will one day. One day you will get your turn to do just that. But remember, our sisters on Earth chose to stay there, whether consciously or unconsciously. I believe one day they will find the courage, through their dreams, to step through the dimensions and be with us. And remember my sister Oyishaya, us warriors do go back every ten years to compel our sisters to come. We cross through the veil and attempt to contact them through dreams and visions, like the Arcturians did us. But if they aren’t ready to accept the things they cannot see, they will not accept us. They must believe in themselves and the power that is stored within them. How I wish we could travel there more often, but the veil is sometimes very difficult for us to pass through. We are Light Bodies. Now, and often the lower vibrations of Earth weakens us, and sometimes holds us to Earth if we aren’t attuned to the higher vibrations.”

“Sa-sa’ia,” She sends to my solar plexus. It is an emotion of deep love. I am still getting used to this passionate orgasmic feeling.

“Sa-sa’ia.” I smile and send it back to her.

Oyishya is what would be considered Caucasian on earth, and I African American. When we arrived on Estesusa, we were made soul sisters. Each woman is given a soul sister. Much like a sibling on earth, but closer. Although I have thick black hair and chestnut skin, and she blond hair and ivory, we have an essence of the other given to us by the transforming of light, color, and DNA. To explain it would take days. All I know is that it is.

I can tell we are getting close to our village by the stronger vibrations I feel. “Have you seen Iddain and A’baha this day?” I ask Oyishya.

“When I went to commune with the sisters this morning, I saw Iddain in the temple. She was sending healing vibes to some one on Earth. Later, I saw A’baha sitting on the side of the Golden Bath in the Center, teaching the Womelia. Both asked if I’d seen you.”

I smiled from the information.

“It is wonderful that the three of you knew and loved each other on planet Earth, and now share a home together here on Estesusa, still carrying on this great work for Mother Goddess.”

“Oyishya,” I say, “We all have gifts here on Estesusa. All Womelia are very special. Before we are born in human form, we are called to do a great work, even if we did not know it on Earth it was encoded in our ethereal body. You were a powerful fighter for Lesbian Rights on earth, and you still are powerful. You must go to the data bank of your higher mind and bring it forth to your conscious mind and keep it there.”

“Yes, my sister. I must. Thank you.” She kisses my cheek.

“Thank you, for this time of love and sharing,” I reply.

The smell of fresh bananas and berries reach my senses as we enter the village. A large group of women greet us, sending their loving vibes to us. I give my loving goodbye to Oyisha and embrace Junipher, a Womelia Warrior as myself.

Junipher greets me with a loving hug and strength. I become stronger and powerful by her vibrations. I look over to the full table of plenteous fresh fruits and see Iddain and A’baha sitting together. They see me and smile and I feel their healing power and wisdom flood my gates of womanhood. Soon, we will go home and share what each of us has been given this day, and what we gave. Soon, and very soon, we will cross through the veil and make another mission to planet Earth to rescue our other sisters. We will bring them into our loving fold of everlasting peace, good health and harmony. Our journey will be dangerous and many will not listen to our message at first, but we will reach them with love. Our mission is to leave none behind—for to leave any behind, we leave ourselves behind.

Tanager

Dreams of a Lesbian Feminist Utopia

I'm dreaming of a Lesbian Feminist Utopia. I dream of a peaceful place of love, equality, abundance, freedom, safety, and harmony. No crime, rape, murder, overpopulation, or poverty. A planet without misogyny, sexual harassment, violence, female infanticide, pornography, genital mutilation, gender selection, deforestation, or global warming.

My dreams are filled with images of living on a planet where we can leave our doors unlocked. Where we can leave our windows open on hot summer nights. I want to live in a place where we are safe to go everywhere alone or hand in hand, dressed or not, at any hour, day or night.

I'm yearning for a testosterone-free universe. No wars, genocide, appropriation, torture, sado-masochism, forced prostitution, corporations, pollution or toxic chemicals. I think about how the quality of our lives would be different without hierarchies, competition, abuse, genetic engineering, or stress-related illnesses.

I want to live in a world without greed, hunger, scarcity, money, the military, electric shock treatments, exploitation, animal experimentation or environmental illnesses.

I dream of living in a galaxy without fat and size oppression, girdles, anorexia, bulimia, stomach stapling, or gastric partitioning, I want to know what it would feel like to have never been subjected to patriarchal brainwashing, rhetoric, or conditioning.

I think about how the past might have been different. No phallocracy, colonization, imperialism, slavery, gynocide, Holocaust, foot bindings, witch burnings, clitoridectomies, or ozone depletion. I wonder what our lives would be like if we had never experienced or witnessed sexism, racism, classism, elitism, looksism, ageism, anti-Semitism, ableism, Lesbophobia, heterosexism, sadism, or masochism.

I'm dreaming of living on a planet without beauty contests, the fashion industry, perfume, cosmetics, electrolysis, liposuction, plastic surgery,

corsets, high heels, insecticides, pesticides, capitalism, napalm, acid rain, or lobotomies. I'm yearning for a life with no fears, worries, anxieties, pressure, stress, snobbery, cruelty, or humiliation. No guns, killing, or homelessness.

I want to live in a place of abundance. Plenty of food, love, shelter, time and energy for all of us. A peaceful world filled with fun, relaxation, laughter, music, art, dance, and Lesbian literature. I want to go there now with my Lesbian sisters and all our animal relatives.



"Untitled" by Sudie Rakusin ©

Beatrice Ilana Lieberman

*merciful time
the green hills
are spread
yellow mustard
narcissus
and quince
i no longer
can cover
my longing
for sun
nor keep the rain
from falling down*

*merciful time
do not return
to me
with memory
merciful time
return to me
only
with your hand
holding spring*

Susan Wiseheart and Jenna Weston

The Mists of Aradia

“Someone, I say, will remember us in the future” -Sappho

Back in the mists of time, before word processors, cell phones and ipods, there existed a secret tribe of strong, creative, wild women. These women lived, not in a deep forest, or on a remote island, but in the midst of a largish city filled with churches, malls and freeways. Known to each other as “Aradians”, these women built a complex culture that was embedded in the surrounding Flatlands, while being invisible to all but those to whom the women chose to reveal themselves. Aradians called their hidden world Aradia, after the goddess Diana’s daughter, who was sent to Earth to promote self-sufficiency in women’s lives.

This all began in an era known as “The Seventies.” At that point in time and in that particular place, conditions were just right for all the necessary elements to come together. The Women’s Movement was still fresh and full of idealistic naivety. Lesbians were bursting from their closets and finding each other. The Flatlander’s City was large enough to supply a good number of Feminist and Lesbian women. Technology then was at a relatively low level of development; so many women were needed to accomplish tasks that in later eras would require only one or two women and their electronic machines.

The socio-political context of their surroundings was repressive and boring enough to drive the women to create their own separate society. And the dominant mainstream culture was so ethnocentric that it literally could not recognize anything that was not itself. Thus, the women were free to go about their business unhindered by the strictures that kept the Flatlanders’ lives in check.

Both an organization and a community, Aradia was constructed with a semi permeable membrane which allowed the women to move freely in and out at will, but prevented unwanted entrance from the outside

The women spent some time (as little as they could get away with) on the outside, disguised as Flatlanders. This is where they obtained what few goods and services they could not provide for themselves within Aradia. Unbeknownst to the real Flatlanders, many of their resources were brought back and “donated” to help keep the Aradian way of life going.

Although Aradian women and their children did not all live in the same house-- there were far too many of them for that-- their lives were intertwined in ways that made a kind of movable collective homeplace. Nearly every aspect of community life was provided for, from entertainment, socializing and assistance

with physical- plane concerns to emotional support, creative expression and spiritual development.

Aradia was a self-created alternative culture. It was inspired by utopian tales and myths the women had read and heard about. In their research they learned that the term "utopia" was defined as "imaginary" and "perfect." The women knew that Aradia was not imaginary. For that matter, neither was it perfect. But it was the closest thing to a Lesbian Utopia any of its inhabitants had ever actually experienced.

In the late seventies, after quite a few women from the Grand Rapids, Michigan area attended the first Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, the dream of creating an organization that would help us remove ourselves as much as possible from the patriarchy became real. "Let's form an organization," we said, "Let's call a meeting. Let's try to start working for ourselves instead of for 'the man'."

We just forged ahead, doing all we could to be what we wanted to be, a Lesbian Utopia existing simultaneously with the patriarchy, using the patriarchy for our own purposes. We gathered regularly to give each other support and a sense of family and community, doing our best to create an alternative to the present mainstream culture, one that celebrated us as the women-loving-women we were. Though not every one of us was a dyke, each of us loved women and most of us called ourselves Lesbians.

There was a pervasive feeling of magic and excitement for about a decade, as we held parties, played softball, wrote and produced plays and photography shows, opened a gallery for women's art, held concerts and celebrations, made slide shows of ourselves, gave workshops, worked hard for the ongoing presence of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, produced several publications (Innerviews, Otherviews, Practicing Antiracism, Wimmin of Earth Bonding), connected with other Lesbians across the Earth, valued our own work, and, most of all made for ourselves a sense of belonging.

We claimed that everything we did-- from mothering to auto mechanics to construction, house-painting, teaching, working on the line, being part of the Dyke Patrol, the Domestic Crisis Center, the Rape Crisis Team, the Take Back the Night coordinating group, writing, taking photos, all of it, was Aradia work.

Though we set up a system of task forces* and sub-task forces covering every possible thing we could come up with, we did not try to think up work for each area; we simply categorized what we already were doing, for pay or not, as Aradian work under one or more of those task forces.

Aradia seemed to us revolutionary, in fact evolutionary and many of us felt what one of us later described, “as if we were all in love with each other”. We were a huge girl gang that spread out from our geographic center to join up with Lesbians wherever we found us. We were a family, a community, a legal entity, and an amorphous group, some of whom “joined” as members and some of whom attended events or simply read our publications.

While we were doing all this, we were aware that many other women across the globe were also getting together to create and celebrate women’s culture. We felt allied with and inspired by their efforts. We would hear that somewhere a women’s bookstore was founded. Somewhere else lesbians started a restaurant. In yet another location women began an all-female rock band. Those endeavors encouraged us and added to the feeling that, if we so desired, Aradia could constitute a daily way of life-- and for many of us it did. We created an entity that encompassed every aspect of women’s culture within one community, one organization, one name. Aradia: a Lesbian Utopia.

Back then, something like Lesbian Utopia was not only possible, it was actual. But in today’s world, would something akin to Aradia be “beyond what is now called possible?” We identified some of the elements that made it utopian and possible.

First, we were essentially separatists. Aradia was for women who loved women. We began with and maintained a Lesbian consciousness and any straight women who were part of it loved being involved with women. Woman-only space was the prevailing norm.

Second, we did it as a group—a large group. It was not an individual undertaking. We had many regular events and a flock of one-time ones. We noted and celebrated each other’s birthdays, helped each other with tasks, loaned money, gave support during break-ups, illnesses and deaths. We developed rituals and told stories of the community events over and over. Even if we didn’t like someone, we still saw her as a vital part of the community. We had common understandings of what was expected of us. Our publications, phone trees and day-to-day meetings plus the many places where we met kept us constantly in touch. We found out things through the grapevine almost as fast as if we had been using email to spread news. We did our best to include any woman who wanted to join us, to call herself an Aradian.

The third element that made Aradia a kind of Utopia was that we were profoundly conscious of all our actions. We realized early on that what we were doing was important. We felt compelled to name ourselves, both collectively and individually. We were dedicated to documenting our

experience so that it would not be lost, as so much of our foremothers' had been. Our records would show what changes we made in the world. We deliberately attempted to shed our victim identities and strove to relate with each other authentically. All this consciousness made for some intense times. We were aware that what we were doing required courage, but we carried each other with the synergistic energy that we created together.

Fourth, we were a very creative bunch. An overarching value of fun and play permeated everything we did. Music, theater, art, dance, and writing were ever-present. Sports, cards, scrabble, bowling and other fun-filled activities kept us laughing and engaged.

Yes, we had some hard times. Two of us were murdered during those years, one by her sister's estranged husband and one by an unstable employee. We fought, cried, lost custody of children, experienced illnesses and upsets, but we could count on each other in a most profound way and that, we think, is the essence of Lesbian Utopia.

We existed in this way for over eleven years, and then bunches of us moved on or moved away, while others stayed put. The organization ceased to exist legally, but the legacy continued in the Grand Rapids area and in all of the places to which we scattered. Some of us see Aradia as ongoing, in new form. Some of us look back with nostalgia. But all of us recognize that in Aradia we found our voices. And we are still speaking.

In the middle of the era known as "The Eighties," the Aradian women began to disperse. It was time. One by one, two by two, and in small clusters they broke away, like seeds coming loose from a single flower head. They floated to new places and planted themselves. Wherever they landed, the women couldn't help but sow Aradian ideas. Though still invisible to most of the outside world, they knew that their presence altered the environments of their adopted surroundings.

Even today, when their paths cross, Aradians of old immediately re-ignite in each other the passion and exuberance of their once-shared Utopian lives. And this is a true tale: The myths of Aradia, the midst of Aradia, the mists of Aradia.

*The nine task forces dealt with: The Arts, Spirituality & Natural Healing, Education & Research, Self-Sufficiency, Finance, Structure & Process, New Age Relationships, Environment & Energy and Media

Marjorie Norris

The River of Dreams

I yearn for what is beyond. As the universe and our world warms, I hope hearts do as well. I am for a nation of women's hearts, exploding each upon the other, the generosity of giving, the sweet hail of harmony, the sharing of the trees and wind. I want to know what the whales feel and the dolphins. I want us all to be sacred elephants, grounded and lurching through well-worn paths to find that new millennium, a new celebration, one strictly our own, our children's and our grandchildren's. The world they say now is full of indigo and crystal children, like none other than the earth has known. But perhaps we were indigo and crystal at one time, before we forgot our main purpose, the rope we shuttled to earth from. The Iroquois say that earth was born on Turtle's Back, and I say Yes, this is the place where all blooms variegated, many-hued, curly and wild, willing, brave, rambunctious, loud and robust, but also burgeons into the peace of listening, the softness of taking in each other. Who are we if not poor and abundant all at once? Who are we if not weak and strong? Who are we if not the most delightful givers of power, food, and artistry? Who are we if not the players of drums? Who if not the diviners of water, the sailors on air, the fire keepers who repair to sleep on our cots on the verdant coast just at the river of dreams?



© 1985 Sudie Rakusin: Hydromancer: Diviner
by means of signs derived from water.
First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly

Shaba Barnes

Accepting the Dream Or *Is it the Reality?*

I had been studying the Mayan Calendar since 1993, becoming more and more aware of its importance and purpose in this present time, while practicing its principles off and on. It was easier when I was around believers with whom I could meet and share ideas, stories and practices. It was when I moved from that supportive environment and once again got caught up in the Georgian Calendar, the calendar that is used worldwide today, that I all but ignored the energy, the rhythms and the colors that the Mayan Calendar represents.

During a special celebration recently, a reunion of the Feminist, I recommitted my life to live by the 13 Moon Calendar, the calendar that resonates to the female cycle with 28 days in each month.

I was sitting in a darkened auditorium among over 200 women and we were all recognizing and declaring each other's wisdom, artistry and many other gifts. As I was witnessing and participating with sisters, all renewing and giving birth and dedication once more to our commitment in freeing our sisters and ourselves from the yoke of discord, separation and lack, I saw It. With my eyes wide open, there across the room about three feet higher than the seated audience, was a vision. It appeared to be a waterfall because it was moving and shimmering and I could see thru it. It was approximately five feet round in diameter and was drawing me to it. It was a portal or vortex of some kind. I was startled. Before I could say anything to my companion I felt myself lifted and flying into it.

In an instant I knew that I was in another dimension, another world, another place. I shook my head, I blinked, I even slapped myself but nothing changed.

My body was suddenly filled with such joy and love. This was also an auditorium with approximately the same number of women celebrating their lives but this was clearly different. In the previous experience, I had a difficult time hearing because of a hearing loss to my right ear. Now I heard everything. There was also a continuous soft chant behind the words spoken from the speaker. The stage was full of women of all complexions, sizes and ages, playing instruments; each woman was dressed in fabrics that eluded light and various moving patterns, a true spectrum of beautiful colors.

The room was much lighter, but I could not find the source of the light. I could not see any windows or lights. I sensed a fresh air fragrance, helping me to remember to enjoy taking deep breaths. With each breath, I noticed something different. Terra, with whom I was speaking prior to seeing the vision, has always walked with a cane and was now having problems breathing due to the high altitude, she was complaining of not feeling well; she was now walking without a cane, smiling and talking with friends. When I looked around at others, they too were more animated, happy, and full of life. I remember what was going on in my mind just prior to seeing the portal. I was communing with my higher self, giving thanks for these moments, and for the opportunity to be a part of such an event. I was experiencing joy beyond measure and feeling so appreciative; yet I was sad that we still had to fight for our human rights as females, as women, as nurturers of our beautiful planet. After so many years of petitioning, marching, letter writing, campaigning for politicians who promised to make a difference yet still we waited, we kept hope alive and believed that a deliverance was near. We were still trying to find ways to bring all of our sisters together, and heal all the pain that has kept us separated for so long. I was asking for answers when I saw the opening, the doorway to my heaven on earth, another dimension, or did I simply fall asleep and dream the rest?

So much was happening in such a short time, in almost a wink of an eye. I realized that I was missing the present; by thinking of the immediate past and wishing that this was reality. I was getting caught up in thought instead of living the new now. I was again pulled into the moment with the sound of drums, many drums and many women beating the drums, ringing bells, singing and dancing. Oh such a moment, I shall never forget. Women were saying their goodbyes for a while and promising to meet more frequently and visit each other often. I joined them with love, good wishes, hugs, kisses and promises to stay in touch. I recognized these women; this is the woman with whom I was speaking prior to the vision, and there are the same friends that I had for so many years, yet they were different. Had they all come thru the portal also?

What happened? Life before going thru the portal was fast becoming not even a memory. After another deep breath and another, I felt high with love, excitement and was enthused with my surrounding. My discriminating mind wanted to know the date, to validate the location, to see if my car was the same, to call home, to speak with my loved ones. While I searched for my cell phone my granddaughter's voice spoke to me loud and clear, "Mother, are you on your way home?" Yes, "I replied. "Did your friends come by?"

Mental telepathy, I was using mental telepathy. I was ecstatic. I was turning around in circles, trying to take in everything at once. I ran up to women whom I recognized, hugging them and thanking them for being there. Many of them were expressing the same excitement that I was experiencing. Tears of happiness were running down my cheeks.

I had planned to go to the convenience store when the Conference was over to get some eye drops. The store was there but there was no pharmacy, just a list of supplements for homeopathic treatments. I asked a clerk who was stocking items on a shelf to direct me to the nearest pharmacy. She looked at me quizzically and told me that there was no such place in this world; no one used pharmaceuticals to improve their health. I got up the nerve to ask a few more questions, she seemed happy to talk with me. I learned from her that there is no need for healthcare as we have experienced it because we are taught from childhood how to eat to live and treat our bodies to be free from disease, that emergency healthcare is free, for those who have accidents, other emergencies and unusual circumstances. Everyone receives the same level of service. Good positive thoughts go a long way to create optimum health. It is also taught from early childhood the art of breathing properly and the use and power of visualization in all areas of our lives.

I wanted to buy a gift for a friend and stopped to admire some artwork displayed on the street corner. The woman who was selling her work said money was not accepted as a means of exchange. She said that she would exchange a piece of her work for a piece of mine. I felt that I had nothing to offer until she saw a bracelet that I had enjoyed making in my spare time. I learned that in this world, time is not money but as the Mayans say, Time is Art. It was also interesting to learn that the 28-day Women's Moon Mayan Calendar was also the only calendar used on this planet and the planet name is Cella. It is the sister planet to Earth but is in the 5th Dimension, The Dimension of love and harmony. The name of the leader is Goddess Cella who rules with representatives from various areas of the planet. A new Goddess is expected when the previous Goddess life in her present body has come to an end. The heavenly stars and Planets announce the birth of the new Goddess Cella when they are in certain alignment. The Steering Committee is the name of the body of leaders who come together whenever there is an issue, question or problem that calls for their attention. They use consensus in all of their decision-making.

I found out that there were 10% men whose sperm was used to father children to 10% of the women once a year. When male children were born into a family, they were loved, nurtured and taught until puberty by specific

women. Then they were sent to something similar to a boarding school where they continued to prepare for adulthood, giving to the community and being selected to donate their seed to previously selected women for motherhood.

It was interesting to discover that poverty is unknown in this new world. Women had more or less possessions according to her consciousness. Some were more talented than others, some worked more than others; there were women who filled the need that the society/community or society created.

I did not see any industry or construction or large commercial enterprises. People shared what they had with those who may need a portion of something without being asked. There were always homes for families and singles to stay at no cost. There was work for everyone and food was for the growing and picking. There was abundance everywhere and love for each other was the norm. Another norm on Cella is the practice of thought processes manifesting the effect or action, or bringing the thought into being as action follows thought.

Creating art played a major part in the lives of the population on the Planet Cella, one of the most beautiful Planets in the Galaxy. Be it music, sculpture, drama, dance, the spoken word, magic, all forms of creative entertainment was desired. Teaching was among the highest respected professions as well as other support systems. Caring, doing and being there for others and being cared for in return worked well in this society. Children were lovingly nurtured and had the birth parent for the first six weeks only who were fully responsible for them. After that time different women took part in her training and teaching, similar to our school system. Only in this world of Cella, a specific teacher had the student for longer periods of time including nights, weekends and holidays. The birth mother remained in the child's life until adulthood and often after. Among the subjects taught is communicating with the animals and inanimate objects. In this world, the women in the village were responsible for the children in it. Each person continued to learn, study and teach for her entire life. The intelligence of these inhabitants is phenomenal. They knew how to contact beings in other galaxies and traveled to distant Planets; they also knew the language on many of them. They taught the Herstory of the Planet Earth, the various dimensions and how the Planet Cella came into being.

Life is simpler, people were not judged by possessions they have, but by the opposite, by being fulfilled and happy with less. Crime, war, violence are unheard of. No one is trying to become richer because everyone feels rich with all their wants and desires met; concerns and issues are thought out and

discussed. If no conclusion is reached, another person or persons are brought into the discussion until a consensus that everyone can accept is reached. There is no such thing as rape. Women are honored, matriarchy rules.

The earth and all of the animals are treated as friends. There is no hunting or fishing except for food and most of the people are vegetarians. There is no word for war because war does not exist. Mass transportation does not present problems because the sun energizes the vehicles. Another method of transportation is something similar to the bicycle or for those who study long and practice diligently, mental teleportation.

I later learned that this way of living was not limited to the east or the western hemispheres, or to the north or south. It was an entire world of female energy ruling with love and patience and support, creating abundance and life-sustaining health-healing beauty everywhere. I discovered that we each could tap into the others thoughts without dishonoring them. I noticed so many colors in this world, some translucent. I even saw colors that I had never seen before, therefore indescribable. They were close to a shade of blue or purple but not exactly and some that did not fit the spectrum at all.

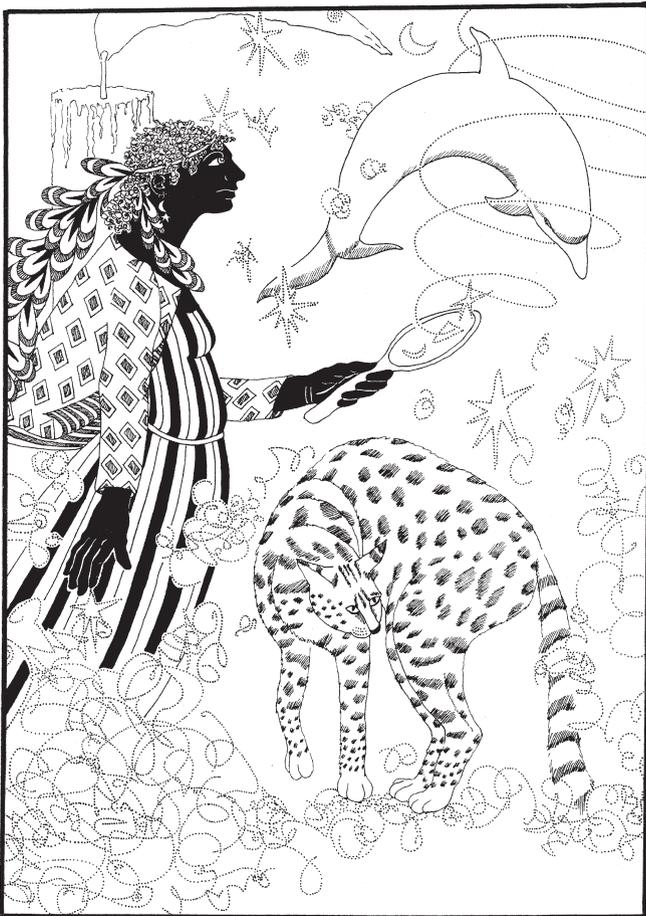
I was ready to go home to my family, yet a bit hesitant for not knowing what to expect. I found my car where I had parked it and was not surprised to see that it was more compact, had less accessories and learned that it was recharging while it was parked. It would only travel twenty miles per hour until it reached what I have known as the Freeway/now called the Ribbon. Then we were permitted to fly the vehicle. Yes, actually fly above ground until we came off the Ribbon closest to our destination. The corridor or how high it was off the ground designated the speed we could travel. I also found out that I did not have to steer my vehicle, it was programmed to where I wanted to go. I just had to push a button and it took me home.

My home was made of a strong fabric in the shape of a tent. It had clear areas that acted as windows and controlled temperature from the floor. It had all the amenities of a modern home in 21st Century U.S. and more. We did not use phones of any type. There was an entertainment center to listen to music and play games. The table was filled with all types of fruits, vegetables, breads and fish when I arrived. I thought perhaps we were expecting company, but no, it was set only with our small family in mind. My granddaughter, her partner and I sat down on comfortable soft chairs that were almost invisible when not in use. We thanked the Goddess for our wonderful life and opportunities to be of service to others, we ate, shared the day's activities and read some poetry. I prepared for sleeptime and dreamtime.

Is this a Dream or is it a reality? Did this story come out of my study

of the Mayan Calendar? Could it happen? Is it happening in another Dimension? You be the judge.

I realize now that for me, it was not a portal that I entered. Nor was it a vortex. It was a bridge. It was a bridge to a better life, a wholesome life of Peace, Prosperity, Love, Wisdom and Light. The message I received from my higher self is to build bridges for us to visit each other, here and now, in the physical and in our dreamtime. Now is the time to build bridges of love, acceptance, understanding and happiness. Build positive bridges of all kinds and it will happen. My name is White World Bridger. I am another yourself. I am guided by the power of timelessness. You are each invited to attend the opening ceremony.



“Creating a Glamour” (magic spell) by Sudie Rakusin ©1985
First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly

Beatrice Ilana Lieberman

*even
the laughing leaves
speak
your name-
and green arms
of trees
hold you.
even
the sad dove
sings you-
its wing
gray
against
a gray sky.
even
these orange loquats
that fall
upon the ground-
color
the cracked cement
with you*

Sunlight

Prologue to Womonseed

High in a mountain valley, not far from the sea, there is a land of women and they call it Womonseed. Their lives are governed by the earth, the moon, the stars, the sun, and by the quiet voices deep inside themselves. And by listening that understands the animals, the wind, rustling leaves, and each single raindrop as it falls or flows along in the water of the creek.

They have come back to themselves again, after thousands of years in a foreign land where they were held in bondage. They were kept away from contact with each other and from their closeness with the earth who was their Mother and who had given them strength and taught them how to live.

Long ago their captors decreed that all must think and act alike. They forced the women to change their ancient, magic ways. Some strong women continued to practice their beliefs, but they were tortured cruelly, burned at the stake or drowned or hanged. Other women found devious means to protect themselves or try to have their own way, but this caused them to become even more alienated from their true, forgotten nature. Most of them capitulated, being a gentle race. They served their captors and did as they were told, and raised their daughters to do the same.

The fate of each woman was determined by her master—she was his possession and subject to his rule. She had to be ready to fulfill his every wish, for that was her means of livelihood. Imprisoned in his house and in his world, she suffered isolation, indignity, silence, abuse of her body and her spirit, loss of self, despair. But the worst of all was the loneliness.

Outwardly, the women forgot their origins as they lived longer and longer as slaves in an alien world. For they were led to believe that this was their natural state. Inside, however, most of them knew that something had gone wrong. Inside, they had a deep memory, like an old dream, of another time when they were free and their children were free, and so were the many plants and animals who shared that space—when they all understood, and cared for, and respected one another.

In the morning when they woke up from these dreams, or sometimes when, unguarded, they glanced into each other's eyes, they saw that their lives were not their own and that there must be something more. But they felt powerless, and had been taught by their masters to be suspicious of each other. So they pushed back the intruding thought and decided that something was wrong with them for having entertained it.

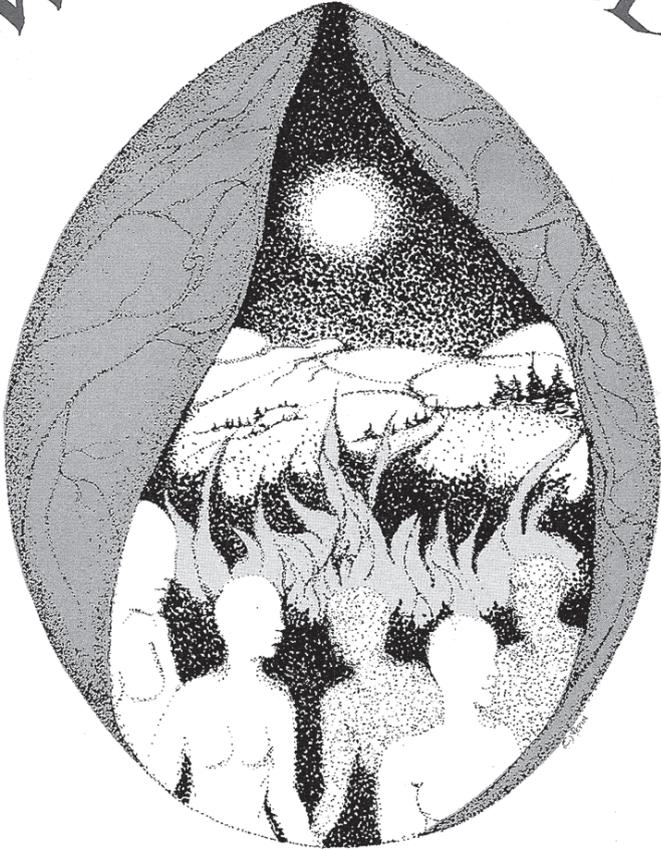
Throughout the ages, some of the strong women declared themselves free, and lived the lives and did the work they chose. Some went against the laws of the land and allowed the deep love that women feel for women to come forth. Some gave birth to music or art or literature as well as, or instead of, children. Sometimes their masters claimed the work as their own and presented it to the world. Sometimes it was destroyed or lost. More often, these works rotted away in secret closets or died in the creator's mind because there seemed no way that she could ever share them. The repression was complete because the captors believed, as captors must, that the slaves were lesser creatures, not worthy of being heard. But also, they sensed the hidden power of the women, and they were both envious and afraid.

In spite of the danger, however, women's voices kept emerging from the silence in every time and place. They spoke to their sisters who could hear. They called to the part of them that remained alive with the knowledge of their own rich past, their present underlying strength, and a future not yet conceived of in their waking thoughts. The voices became louder and bolder and more numerous. They were heard by more of the sleeping women, who stirred in their dreams and woke up, remembering.

The women began to look each other in the eye, sharing a deep knowledge they could not even name. They began to gather in circles and tell each other of their lives and thoughts and feelings. Then they could see that they knew each other because they came from a common place. They recognized their state of captivity, and were never the same again. They began to touch each other, feeling the warmth and strength and nurturance of woman's touch that they hadn't felt since childhood. Only now, it moved both ways and began to grow and reach out to welcome others, because that is the nature of a loving touch. The energy it created filled them with hope and resolution, and gave them the means to break out. Of course, their masters tried to hold them, but they had no power over those who declared themselves free.

As the women awoke from this world of bondage, they saw paths that led away, and they set out to follow them. It was painful because the bonds had so tightened around them as to become a part of their flesh. It was hard to leave what they had always known—except for glimpses deep within, where they knew so much more. It was hard to go because they hadn't traveled, except in the journeys of their dreams. It is hard to follow a path to an unknown place. But once a woman's numbness has worn off and she feels the sharp pain of her oppression, once a woman has awakened and sees that a path is there, even though the end is not in sight, she cannot stay. She has to move out and along that path. With the first step she gains courage. The earth feels that step and, responding, sends her energy for the next.

WOMONSEED



by SUNLIGHT

Cover art by Yvonne Pepin

Each woman had to find her way; to free herself as she was able, and go from there to where she had to go. But not one of them was ever alone again because she knew that her sisters, scattered everywhere, were doing this too, and they would come if she cried out for help. The energy of that touch was there. It added to her inner strength, which began to flow from a well inside that had seemed like an empty pit before. At first it came as a trickle, only to run dry again. But with care and time, removing the dams that had blocked it, she uncovered that spring where she could go for courage to overcome her fear, peace to heal her pain, love to replace her loneliness, and power to create her own life.

Thus, women learned to free themselves. They breathed deeply of the new, fresh air that takes them to the source where they know that they are Goddess. Doors began to open where there were only unscalable walls before. One by one, two by two, circle by circle, the women began searching for their home. Dreams pointed the way, and always there was love and joy and sisterhood at the end of that long road.

Their journeys led them through forests of dense shade, over mountains deep in snow, across deserts shimmering in the sun. Sometimes the path was hidden in weeds, obscured by tangled underbrush or covered with wind-blown dust. Then they held each other's hands, listened to their inner guides, and found their way again. When the women were hungry, the plants along the road offered themselves as food. When they were tired, the earth held them gently in her strength. When they felt sad or afraid, the women took each other into their hearts and arms until their courage was restored.

And so for many cycles of the sun the women traveled, searching. Some of them came to a beautiful valley—long and sweet, like the long, sweet valley between a woman's thighs. They touched the earth and knew that this was home. They celebrated. Singing and dancing day and night, while the hills echoed with their joy. This was a land full of promise, like their hearts. They felt free, for at last they had escaped from their captors. They felt hope because they saw the moon and the sun and rainbows shining with beauty, lighting their new world. They felt safe as the valley embraced them. The celebrations went on and on until the first winter rain began to fall.

Some of the women built shelters and gathered wood for fire. Others just huddled under dripping trees, crying like the rain. Some were too tired or sick to even try. For all of them this was new and they were new and there was much to learn. All needed healing from the captors' world they'd lived in for so long. All of them carried fear in their hearts because they'd had reason to be afraid. They wore the doubts they had learned from the ages of teaching

that women are worthless and weak. Sometimes these feelings overshadowed their hope and love. Then the women wept and screamed their pain and feelings of helplessness, and it turned into anger against each other. Their visions seemed to come crashing down around them. And without visions, where is there to go? Despair, then, was worse than the anger, because it left them motionless unable to go on.

But after the times of anguish, one of the women would get up and bathe her wounds in the clear water of reflection. She refreshed herself and her sisters with herbs from the nurturing earth. For the Mother was always there, strong underneath their feet, feeding their bodies and spirits with her infinite energy. Then the women would feel her love again, and their love for her, and each other. They began to listen more carefully to her voice, and to their own voices within. They looked at one another and saw themselves in each other's eyes. They saw the passion and the gentleness. They saw the pain and the joy. They saw fear, courage, uncertainty, wisdom, helplessness, power, anger, love. They saw the mother and the daughter and the grandmother. And they knew that they could go on together toward their dream.

Then came renewed rejoicing, but of a deeper kind, born of a deeper knowledge. Their lives would continue—discovering, sharing, creating, expanding, touching each other with beauty. The storms would come again to the women and the earth. And again, when those storms are over, the energy is transformed. The cycles grow into a spiral, and with each turn, each lesson, the women also grow into a higher place.

In this way, women gather everywhere: islands in lakes or in the sea, forests, meadows, deserts enclosed by purple mountains, plains that stretch out endlessly under the open sky. They come to wash their wounds and heal the scars from their years in bondage. They come, open to learn new ways and to rediscover the ancient ones. Their teacher is all of nature surrounding them and the nature within themselves, which is the same.

One of these lands is *Womonseed*. Life is simple there because it flows simply out of being. The women and children get up with the rising sun, their dreams mixing slowly with the light. They plant the fields and gather from the woods. They bathe in the creek and dry on its banks. They build shelters from the rain. They make pots from the red clay soil, weave baskets from reeds that grow by the river's edge. They make love in the soft, clean air. Together, they eat simply from the bounty of the earth. Then they gather by the fire to sing their songs and tell their stories.

They meet in a magic circle in a meadow ringed with stones. In the center, a large rock is set—like the megaliths ancient women used to raise

by the power of their thoughts. From that, in six directions, stones radiate out to mark the passage of the sun.

The stones that indicate the rising sun of the longest day point to the northeastern slopes of the hills. The summer sun illuminates the chaparral that thrives in the heat and dryness, making a home for rabbits, rattlesnakes, and birds that nest low in the prickly brush.

The line for equinox dawn extends toward the creek that runs through the land and the blackberries along its banks. In autumn, the rose hips are bright red, and the leaves of the alder bright yellow. With squirrels, the women and children gather the nuts and acorns; with birds, they harvest the grain.

Winter solstice sun. If it rises through the rain, it moves low across the southern sky to set early behind the hills. The oaks are barren now, except for an occasional leaf tattered by the wind. Their branches make lacy silhouettes against the sky. Madrones, still green, stand out beside them in an eternity of their own. Burrowing creatures are fast asleep in the damp, deep earth; snakes, in crevices in the rocks. And the women and children, who learn from the same Mother, rest now too, as the earth is resting. They go early to their nests, make love or snuggle with friends, sleep and dream, entering other worlds to rediscover the wisdom of the night.

The rocks for the setting spring and autumn sun lead to a lovely meadow where the deer like to graze. In spring a progression of wildflowers covers it with yellow, purple, white—changing with the moons. A dozen streams of clear, cold water run through the smaller valleys. The whole earth explodes with life and joy.

Summer stones show the path to the pond, the women and children splashing with laughter. They rest and cool in the shade of trees from work in the gardens and fields. Afternoon stretches into evening, a supper of fresh vegetables and sprouted grains. The sun goes down at its northernmost point. The end of a day. The end of a year in this circle and spiral of time. The fire is lighted. The women and children join hands surrounding it. They sit down, and the stories begin.

*Reprinted from *Womenseed by Sunlight* (Tough Dove Books, 1987) with permission from the author. Prologue in a different form was published in *Common Lives, Lesbian Lives* (Winter 1982).*



“Brava” by Nancy Nau © 2007

Susan Hawthorne

Sense

*I am sense
I exist in the most complete*

*way I can I walk with joy
using every muscle in my body*

*to express vitality
in China I am so numerous*

*that we have begun to waltz
daily on the Bund in Shanghai*

*I teach the young where she
should put her hand*

*how to find the rhythm
in the bones of her feet*

*I speak of my self breathing
words into her ear while*

*walking down the street
my genealogy is recorded*

*and we visit the place of
our ancestors weaving silk*

*making rituals of hair
licking the juice of sweet mango*

*I climb the family tree and
sit firmly in the Y of the trunk*

*some go this way others that
the deserts when you look*

*when you really feel
are already so full of life*

*the dictatorships? the young
ask for the meaning of such words*

*for they have vanished as
completely as those they once*

*disappeared I take flight
at times of my choosing*

*parachuting into love
the sea's arms a caress*

*my art is my own drawn
from the heart the hand*

*our worlds flourish not
because of some reward*

*but because we are human
in these worlds our histories*

*and archaeologies
are celebrated for the*

*richness they prove
that lies in each of us*

Sonia Johnson

Full Moon in the Park

You asked where I've been tonight. If you'll go back with me to midnight, I'll give you the long answer . . .

The night is too beautiful to waste in sleep, so I wander toward the bend in the river and the big cottonwood. Soon I feel a furry body brush my leg and reach down to scratch a coyote's head, stroke her muzzle. A barn owl gliding overhead stops to watch us walking together then drops gently to my shoulder, folding her great wings around her. When I put my cheek against her, she gives the end of my eyebrow a delicate nibble. A nighthawk and a magpie look down on the pageant we make—coyote, bear, deer, mountain lion, horse, woman, rabbits, skunk, badger, snakes—touching with heads and hands and tongues and tails, as we walk effortlessly together up through the air toward the top of the tree.

And soon there we are, at ease together in the starry air above the cottonwood. As her wonderful energy surges up around us from the tips of her branches, we caress one another's feathers, fur, scales, and skin, murmuring and purring.

Then the stars begin to dim, alerting us to turn toward the east where the sky glows with growing intensity. As we watch, a bold orange arc rises above the mountains and suddenly the whole body of the moon swims up before us as huge as a world. We gasp one big collective gasp. Then shouting, barking, howling, roaring, and neighing, we leap up to join her in the night sky, where at once we are her and she is us, all of us one consciousness, one great love.

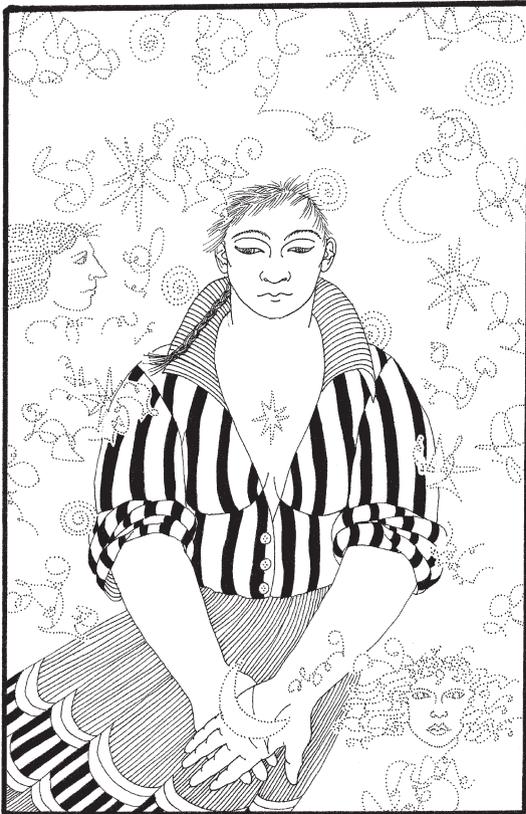
I look beyond the moon and to my joy I see in the vast space between the stars other women and animals from many planets. We are delighted to meet, the women no longer speaking the dead languages of linear time and space but connecting as females do, directly, immediately and whole from heart to heart. And not just with one another but with the whales and ravens of Earth who are communicating with the women and fish and spiders from other worlds in exactly the same way and as effortlessly and fully as we.

Nor is there any separation among us as we sing and dance and laugh; all of us—the animals, fish, insects, birds—touching and holding one another, knowing and loving one another as we know and love ourselves. Later, as I sit in the air “talking” with a circle of these female beings from a

dozen different planets, I lean against the shoulder of an elephant lounging beside me, she and I as comfortable with each other and our new friends as if we have met here like this for centuries—as certainly we once had. With one hand I stroke her warm rough hide while my other hand plays gently with the hair of a little girl from Cassiopeia who has fallen asleep with her head in my lap. I am profoundly peaceful. “This is what I’ve longed for,” I think. “This intimacy is my home.” Our hearts now beating in one another’s breasts, we promise to come together again soon in this park, uniting our worlds.

Already looking forward to that meeting, we part, and instantly I am back by the bend of the river above the old cottonwood, watching the other animals disperse silently down the air into the moonlit hills and fields.

You asked where I’ve been tonight, what I did. The short answer is, tonight I’ve been at large in the female universe, finally being female again.



Aeromancer: one who Divines from the state of the Air or from Other atmospheric substances. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly

Billie Dee

How I Wish to Live

*As if I stood in the long blond wild oats
of twilight, singing to the crickets;*

*as if by pounding a night drum in the forest
I held the stars in their sockets;*

*as if I gathered dew from orb webs
and fed the last sequoia; as though by afternoon*

*my shallow curve of life stretched to form
the perfect arc — echoing the passage*

of the moon.

Francine

A Utopian Lesbian Universe

A utopian Lesbian universe, an ideal world would be filled with understanding and solidarity, freedom to exist as we wish it with our differences. No forced isolation in an often oppressive het world, when you are disabled, aged, or very young and so on.

Bridges and wings over deserts.

Pulling out the roots of oppression without destroying each other, avoiding what could feed patriarchy.

As a dewdrop on the corner of a leaf, the taste of hope.



“Untitled” by Francine

Tanager**Praise**

Sunrise
 Birdsong
 Trees
 Clouds
 Rain
 Rainbows
 Flowers
 Animals
 Snowflakes
 Waterfalls
 Meadows
 Mountains
 Canyons
 Oceans
 Lakes
 Rivers
 Butterflies
 Rocks
 Glaciers
 Sand Dunes
 Geysers
 Caves
 Volcanoes
 Laughter
 Harmony
 Sunsets
 Moonbeams
 Stars
 Constellations

Alabanza

Amanezer
 Canto de ave
 Árboles
 Nubes
 Lluvia
 Arco Iris
 Flores
 Animales
 Copos de Nieve
 Cascadas
 Prados
 Montañas
 Gargantas
 Océanos
 Lagos
 Ríos
 Mariposas
 Rocas
 Glaciares
 Dunas de Arena
 Géisers
 Cuevas
 Volcánes
 Reir
 Harmonía
 Puestas del Sol
 Luzes de la Luna
 Estrellas
 Constelaciones

Spanish translations by Corina Abouaf

Amy E. Winter

From Euphoria to Despair, and Everything in Between: Lesbian Utopia in the Real World

What would a world based on lesbian-feminist values look like? That's a question I've asked myself for years. But you know, when it comes to utopia, we're not lacking for vision. Women writers have dedicated themselves to imagining, if not always specifically *lesbian* utopias, at least *feminist* utopias—as just a few examples, see Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, Katharine Burdekin's *The End of This Day's Business*, Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground*, Joanna Russ' *The Female Man*, Katherine V. Forrest's *Daughters of a Coral Dawn*, Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed*, Sheri Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country*, and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

I was seven years old when *Woman on the Edge of Time* was published in 1976. Of all the works named above, Piercy's book had the most profound influence on me—I read it as a sophomore at a women's college in 1988, a place and a time of my life when radical change seemed possible, indeed likely. The best and brightest of my classmates, those in leadership positions or doing creative, innovative, unusual things, were lesbians. Our politics mattered to us, and we mattered to each other, passionately. That time is as close as I've come to the heady expectation of impending revolution I've heard talked about by feminists old enough to be politically active in the early 1970s. And as my lesbian life subsequently unfolded before me, I discovered that I was not alone in being transfixed into inspiration by radical lesbian feminist utopian visions—internationally, other women were working to make the imagining real, from the too-brief bliss of the annual week-long Michigan festival to lesbian intentional communities scattered across north america and europe.

I spent May to October of 2006 as a provisional member of a women's land community. From my very first contacts—because of my wholehearted embrace of the visions and values of feminist (science) fiction—lesbian land has felt familiar to me in so many ways. Lesbian lands value what the people of Piercy's village of the future, Mattapoissett, valued; our communities are based on what I used to think all lesbians were striving for. We value self-governance, decisions being made at the local level by the people they will affect. We value participatory democracy, the hearing of any woman who cares to speak. We value a balance between autonomy and connectedness, what Dianne Post has called “interdependence”(1) and Sara Hoagland

“autokoenoeny” or “self in community.”(2) We value sustainability and ecological conservation, including the right to undisturbed existence of the animals, plants, insects and geology of the world we share. We value cooperation over competition. We value power-to, not power-over. We value relationships structured by the needs and desires of friends and lovers over the demands and constraints of the heterosexual nuclear family. We value introspection, self-awareness, and politico-personal growth. We value inclusiveness and the productive working out of interpersonal conflicts. Because we understand that the basis of any successful community is acknowledgement of inequalities and a commitment to eradicate them, we value the undermining of white supremacy, capitalist classism, consumerism, and other habits and ideologies that contribute to the subjugation of the women we love.

Visions of lesbian utopia are not what we lack. In spite of my commitment to the values expressed above, my provisional women’s land membership did not result in joining the community. It’s come painfully clear to me that there’s a huge gap between our undeniably lovely visions, our gossamer dreams of togetherness, justice, and sustainability, and the reality of what actually happens in our communities. The problems and difficulties that plague lesbian land are not much different than those any group of human beings organized for any length of time struggle with—but they are *our* problems, and to love something deeply is to feel deep pain when that thing is less than what you believe it could be.

So I’m starting to wonder if utopia means not, as I imagined in my collegiate naivete, the place where there are no problems, but instead the place where problems are faced with integrity, responsibility, and acceptance of complexity. Now that I’m older, perhaps not wiser but more experienced, I reread the feminist utopias, and I notice that none of them are perfect. In every book mentioned in the first paragraph, there is some central concern, challenge, or struggle that the members of the society face. Its source may be within the community, or the community may be responding to an outside threat; sometimes it is both. In Piercy’s book, the people of Mattapoisett argue among themselves about the application of genetic technology to human beings; and they fight a war against a competing society where the sexual exploitation of women and the economic exploitation of the planet have been taken to vicious extremes.

And what of the problems of women’s land, our collective attempt to bring lesbian-feminist utopia alive? Well, we’ve learned that communities that start with one or two women owning the land struggle with eradicating that power structure, even if the original owners give up ownership willingly.

We've learned that many women can't afford to join communities located at great distances from available jobs. The reality of economic inequality must be addressed fairly and without manipulation within communities. We've learned that if life on the land is too physically challenging, some older women and women with disabilities can't live there. We've learned that land communities started by white women, and/or located in the middle of rural white america, are not appealing options for many women of color. We've learned that the back-to-the-land movement, whether the lesbian or heterosexual manifestation, is in opposition to demographic trends of the last 30 years which show people moving *away* from rural areas and to cities.

We've learned that groups need to have very clear values in common as well as a clearly articulated idea of group mission and purpose. Group members have to care about each other—as a good friend of mine said, “Find the women first.” Some groups, unfortunately, wanted rural land community so much that they decided to work with women they didn't like. Not liking someone makes it really hard to care about her perspective over time. We've learned that group norms and expectations have to be created within the community, not decided up front by one or two women, and they have to be open to change as group makeup changes. Creating a lot of rules in advance and expecting women to abide by them forever does not make a community appealing to newcomers. And as for newcomers, groups have to find ways to both make room for new people to create change while simultaneously discouraging the disempowered impulse towards “You all should do X!”

And at some point, both as individuals and communities, it becomes time to realize that health does not mean perfection, it means living well with problems. Honestly, how interesting is it to read a story in which everything is perfect? It probably wouldn't be very interesting to live in such a place either. Problems and challenges, when faced with courage and integrity, provide opportunities to change and expand who we are and what we can do. If perchance a problem does get solved—a difficult person leaves, unfriendly neighbors move away, a drought ends, there's finally enough money—another problem will arise to be dealt with. And there will always be problems whose solution eludes us; learning to tolerate them with grace and good humor is a utopian skill we ought to incorporate into our dreaming.

1 “Interdependence: A New Concept in Relationships” by Dianne Post, *Lesbian Ethics* Vol 4 No 1 Spring 1990 (<http://www.feminist-reprise.org/docs/interindependence.htm>)

2 *Lesbian Ethics* by Sara Lucia Hoagland (Institute of Lesbian Studies, Palo Alto, 1988)

Sharon Stewart

Marble Canyon Meeting

Wings traversing the turquoise sky, she rises from the dry, cracked earth of the mesa. She swoops, dives and cavorts against the laminated sediment baking in the relentless Arizona sun.

At the place where the aquamarine river thundering from the north meets the muddy wash from the Vermillion Cliffs, two ribbons of water, one blue, one brown, run side by side. The confluence of the Colorado and the Paria. The land allows this singular launch site for rafting into the Grand Canyon.

A solitary hiker wades among the rocks, taking respite from the hot limestone trail. From the canyon walls above, the hiker feels a rush of air, feels the flurry of feathers, and suddenly in front of her lands a most magnificent bird. Strong graceful lines delineate a bright rainbow plumage. Her song is a light, lilting melody as she hops from rock to rock. They recognize each other immediately and together enjoy the cool ecstasy of the merging rivers.



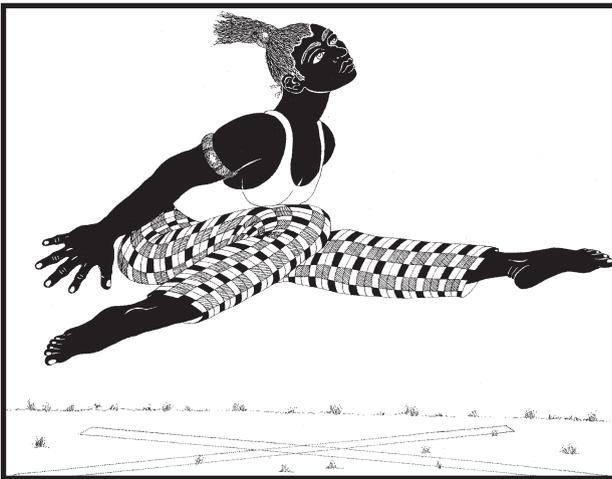
“Untitled” by Sudie Rakusin ©

Shawn Helmen

Visions of Love

*In a world where there is no fear,
And everyone cares for each others' tears,
For each others' concerns,
Taking the time to learn
From one another.
And everyone is our sister or brother,
No one is above any other,
Where things like deceit and dishonesty do not exist,
Truth and trust are the only prerequisite.
Where we are no longer undercover,
Walking side by side, proudly with our lover,
Fighting the cause, breaking stereotypes of woman and man,
Separating ourselves as Lesbians.*

*And where there's a roadblock,
And the door not only closed but locked,
You can lean on me,
I can lean on you,
With lots of love!*



© Studie Rakusin: X-ing: Contrariwise Qualitative Leaping of Questing Women. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly

jody jewdyke

Remembering

You asked me to tell the Story again. It still fills me with such joy to Remember when our Lives Began Again. All right, I have my cup of tea and am nestled close to the fire to keep these long lived bones of mine warm. All right. So begins the telling.

One morning, so very long ago, not sure how long exactly, for I am ripe with long livedness, my face deeply etched with many fine lines, my hair silver, my voice as strong as ever, my hands sinewy from many cycles of tending our food and shaping my beloved clays. One day, so very long ago, I awoke and something had happened. I heard the birds outside my window and for the first time Heard them. In my Mind. I Heard them laughing and cheering and saying, it's Ok Now. The Earth is Ours again. I wasn't sure if I was quite awake, though I Knew this was Real. As I lay in my soft bed, Listening, an Excitement welling up inside of me, the Feline companion who had been sharing her Life with me, and was curled in a soft ball by my head, also Awoke. She Looked at me, slowly stretched and Smiled. She too laughed and said It's Ok Now, Oh Purrrrrr, Finally the Earth is Ours again. They are gone and will never return. We will never know fear again. Oh Purrrrrr.

I was filled with an overwhelming sense of Joy, as tears ran down my face and could not move as I tried to take it all In. I Looked into her eyes and Listened. I Heard more. I heard the trees laughing. I heard the plants laughing. I heard the seeds and the worms and the tiny flying ones, the water, the rocks, the soil, all cheering. The excitement flooded into me and I leapt up to run outside and could Feel it. I Knew it had finally happened.

The males were gone. And so was every harmful thing they had brought with them. They and their destructiveness were gone. Completely, without a trace.

I thought of my Friends and immediately Heard them cheering, saying, Yes, I Know, How Amazing! OH YES, We are Free. It's Over. No, it's just Begun. Yes, YES. And then All those I Knew and those I as yet, did not know, in All the many languages started coming through. And we were all laughing and crying and shouting with glee and dancing and hugging and kissing and rolling in the grasses, and frolicking in the snow, and caressing the flowers and hugging the trees and splashing in the waters. We were All Connected and we All Knew.

And so it Began.

It took so much less time than you would think to Become Fully OurSelves again. We Knew it would take some time. Yet, it was remarkable how quickly we moved past and healed the pain and damage. It was amazing how quickly we shed the fear and mistrust. It was wonderful how quickly our bodies, minds and spirits healed and renewed and opened. The Knowing of our Connectedness, the Hearing of All just catapulted us into this fine World as we Know it Now.

Faster than we could sing “ding dong heteropatriarchy’s gone”, we were All living in the world of Our Dreams.

Some of us took longer than others to assimilate all that we suddenly Knew, that Day/Night that the Earth purged HerSelf. Suddenly, we all Remembered. Remembered Everything. Well, of course there was the Mind Hearing. Which though delightful and powerful at first, soon required Learning to Shield and Choose. So first we Remembered how to Mind Hear. Then we Remembered how to Shield our minds, so we could Choose how and when to Connect. We Learned to remain Open to degrees of Hearing and could choose to Hear some or All. It took some practice and mostly lots of Laughter as many of us rolled on the ground holding our heads and nodding to the Others and laughing so hard the tears were rolling down our cheeks.

And there was the Being Together. We Remembered How to Be. Together. And as we were Remembering, sometimes it took time to Connect Fully and Deeply and Openly. Many of us had already been remembering and practicing this Connection for much time. Many of us, especially those who had already been living gently and quietly, lovingly together in the wilder places of the Earth, already Knew how to do that well, and would Lovingly share with those of us who needed more Learning. All would Share and Teach until we all Knew how to do it Well. It took some time, but less than you would think, to work through the differences and misunderstandings and unintentional hurts. Then, as we do now, We would sit alone, together, with others outside the situation if need be and stay present and listen and share until we have shifted into where we need to be.

Dear one, you smile and your eyes sparkle, and your brow creases with puzzlement imagining what it would be like for One to not Know these things. But, many of us were separated from OurSelves and each other for so long and the disconnect was so deep, that Our Ways had been forgotten.

So We All Remembered and Knew. And Learned and Practiced and more quickly than I ever could have hoped, came together in chosen Circles and shaped our lives and built and grew and laughed and cried and loved

and healed and blossomed. Oh how we Blossomed. Like flowers wilting in the dry cracked earth, we had been thirsty for so long and suddenly, with the Love and Knowing and Connection, we burst forth into such Vibrant, Excited, Enthusiastic, Loving and Thriving Beings who could not Create as fast as the Ideas and Desires came to us. It was a time of such Excitement and Creativity.

Yes, dear one, our lives are Exciting and Creative Now too, it was just a different way then. As Delightful as Now, only the newness and relief and sheer Thrill of it all made it sweeter. Like the taste of something that makes your mouth sing. Though your mouth may sing each time it fills with such tastes, the first time brings its own Joy.

So, quite quickly, we All Remembered and Learned to live Simply and Gently, with the Earth, and all Her Creatures and Beings. For some it took longer than others. Yet All Remembered and many of us would Lovingly Hold and Be With another while she struggled to Know and shed the ways of before.

We All Remembered to Give and Receive. To Share. In fact, at first, almost all we did was Give to those we Loved. We would make or find something and immediately think of One to Share it with. Sometimes, she lived close by. Sometimes she lived Far. When she lived Far, we would Open and Reach and she would Welcome us and we would Shift to her side and Lovingly Embrace and Visit and Gift.

Oh Yes, the Shifting to and from. Once we Learned to Shift, many of Us spent much time visiting our Friends of Far away. And it took much time for many of us to choose where to Be. Some chose easily, especially those who had already been living in the Wilds of the Earth with small circles of Friends. Others, who had more Learning before they could Fully Connect with the Earth, with themSelves and with Others, took more time. To Shift and Visit and Explore until they found where they wanted to Be. Some decided they wanted to Live as Travellers. Simply visiting and Shifting and Staying until they choose to Shift again somewhere else, to be among different Ones in different places.

And then the circles we chose. Some from the beginning chose to be in circles among Others most similar in appearance or culture or ways of thinking or a lived experience. Some from the beginning chose to be in circles among many different Ones. And as we Learned and Remembered how Precious all our many differences are, we Learned and Remembered how to Celebrate these Differences and Share of our ways. We learned to Enjoy Togetherness among us All. As our fears and past pain fell away, Connections became easier, more open and free.

With time, our Circles settled and Now, as you know, our circles are ever changing. We are all each exactly where we want to be. In that moment. We Live where and how we Choose and Desire, with shared Heartstrong Connections with those both near and far. In our Circles, we are All Here. Those from every way of Being, every way of Knowing, every culture, every part of the Earth, those of every age, size, every shape, and every shade of skin.

Some of us Live in small villages among the trees, forests and deserts, by the rivers and lakes, down in the valleys and high in the mountains. Some of us live in the prairies, with the snows and the winds. Some of us live by the sea, and some deep in the earth in her moist caves. There are as many ways we Live as there are shades of browns in our skin.

We Remembered and Learned Everything.

We Learned and Remembered to Do what needs to be done Joyfully. We Learned to Choose what to do, how and when, Freely and Fully. We learned to tend Lovingly to Our Selves, our Bodies, our Connections, our Homes, our Circles, our Food and our Ways. We now tend tenderly and fully. All we do is Full.

We used to call it Abundance. There is Fullness in Everything. Our lives are Full with Food, Companionship, Affection, Intimacy, Peace, Stillness, Celebration, Encouragement, Resources. Everything.

Now, and for so long, this is How we Live. We Live with Harmony and Ease and Certainty. With Fullness of Heart, with solid Knowing of Self, feeling Love and Openness and Joy. We speak from our Hearts, Thoughtfully, Openly, Lovingly. There is Deep belly Laughter everyday. There is music and Loving and Sharing and Giving every day. There are fire circles where we Celebrate and tell stories and sing and dance with the moon and stars and night beings.

We Learned we can Do All that we Desire, like Flying with the birds and Swimming with the fishes. I still Remember the first time I Flew. It was quite soon after the purge and Every one of my senses was newly heightened. I remember feeling my arms wrapped around my body and a smile so big on my face and a peace so deep inside of me as I lay in the soft grass with the warm sunlight streaming through the trees. I could smell the fragrant blossoms and hear the creek nearby, with the water flowing over the smooth rocks into the pool below. I remember looking up to see a Goose gliding high in the bright blue sky. And I Reached to Her. And she smiled and invited me to Join Her. And I threw my arms open wide and slowly floated up into the air. And as I rode higher I could see the tops of the trees and the villages in the distance and Feel the warmth of the air. And Goose swooped

over and Showed me. She Showed me How to find the currents and ride them. She Showed me how to Spiral up and up and to glide and glide with the Wind. Such Bliss I had yet to Know.

And Now, Here, Today, I have known such Bliss and more. So much More. In all the many years of living in Our World. With such Love and Connection and Knowing and Joy.

So come dear one. Let us hold one another. I am tired from the telling, though it is a Joy Full tired. I will rest now. I once again offer my Love and Appreciation for Our World, where we All Live with the Fullness and Beauty and Stillness and Joy of Knowing All is as it should be.

Appreciations

When I think of my ideas and desires for Lesbian Utopia, I know much has been inspired and remembered and called forth by many Fine Dykes before me. Deep Heartfull appreciation for You All. The Words written, the Spaces created, the Music made, all bring us closer to this Loving Connected way of life together. Books/Stories such as Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (79), Sunlight's *Womonseed* (86) and Jae Haggard's *The Wimmin of Our Dreams* (95) have so lovingly described Lesbian Ways of Being and Doing and Loving. Festivals and Gatherings and Lesbian Land Communities have created and continue to lovingly maintain Times and Spaces where we can Live and Practice our ideal ways of Being Together.

Like most of us, I have had Moments over the years, of deep Connection, Presence, Wholeness, Love and Community. Just recently, this past June, during the fabulous *Feminist Hullaballoo*, both in Santa Fe, and with the Amazing Lesbian Land *Outland*, I had many Precious Magical Utopic Moments. How beautiful to Be, Feel, Breathe, Experience, Contribute to and Participate in such Connections. Deep Heartfull Appreciation for all the Dykes who were part of This. And for all the Dykes both known and unknown, past and present, who inspire and encourage and love and learn together. The Passion and Courage and Strength of those of Us who Dream, and Try and Keep Trying just bring us ever Closer to It Happening for us All. Here and Now. See you There. Soon.

Mary Meriam

May the Women in Prison Dance

may the women in prison dance

*women dance, your dresses of purple linen
swaying, dance on flowering grasses, sunlight
dancing too on brown skin and silver bracelets
you are invited*

*ice cold water, clean and refreshing, drink it
lunch is ready, feast on the grapes you gathered,
ripe and juicy, sunflower seeds and almonds,
roasted and crunchy*

*lovely island, dreaming of lesbos, scented
seaside song, her laughter is pleasure, shadows
lead the way to late afternoon and making
love with your lover*

Mary Meriam

Iris

*What's the matter,
That this distemper'd messenger of wet,
The many-colour'd Iris, rounds thine eye?
~ All's Well That Ends Well*

*No one regards me with much awe. My red
would like to talk with you. Or orange, close by
in hue and cry, could sing to you instead.
If yellow doesn't satisfy, I'll try
my green, in hymn, perhaps Amazing Grace.
You say that you prefer to hear the blues,
and can't I see the teardrops on your face?
That's why I'm many-hued, so you can choose!
But listen, indigo just wrote a tune.
You still say no? Your ears are shut for good?
Then violet, the loveliest, la lune
in June, should turn the tide, and so she would
if she could bring you rainbows from above
and multiply your chances for sweet love.*

Lynn Brown

How to Make a Legend

Yearning yearning and then more yearning. Not to manifest romantic illusions but the actual ticking of a handmade quilt done over years of working with other women who love women and enjoy the efforts of collaboration and co-creation. To have the time to spin out our fantasies and employ our minds and bodies in the co-creation of these ideas. To make our dreams and visions a reality. That would mean opportunity for pleasure and learning to know each other through the work we are capable of and the time we are willing to devote to our own and each other's endeavors. It might mean a theatrical scenario where each woman is employed by the demands of her heart and hands and allowed to learn at her own pace, helping to achieve the imagined and manifested beauty of her thoughts and dreams. To want community where each woman is able to give and take what they need without demands beyond their means. A place where we support ourselves without devoting a lifetime to accruing finances for our dying days. It happens now, all around us, in pieces and parts.

What I want is to see women's visions manifested and fulfilled, sustained by a web of support for that which cannot be contained and should be created. We all have something to offer. Every one of us has a yearning to devote something to make our lives richer and to leave beauty for the future. Every woman I know wants a world of peace and equality and the lesbians I identify with take their aging bodies to the street or to their computers to give time and energy to what supports the creation of these desires. In-between these same women might be helping each other through personal crises with healing words, deeds or prayers. It's always a stretch and when we reach out past our own envelopes to share the wealth there is contact and the possibility of completion. Every woman is gifted with love in her creations and her children might come first. There are those whose birthings were books, sculpture, breads, massage, gardens, buildings, paintings, medicine, ideas, shepherding, theater, dance (and who doesn't have a dance!), communication, healing, poetry and language, design, midwifery, plumbing, welding, sailing, quilting, knitting, nursing, teaching. The dream would be to live in community around the world knowing that our skills could be shared and compensated by each other, that our resources would only be limited by our imaginations, that our strengths would be enough to give us a reality that we could cherish and embellish with care and growth.

That would be a heyday to celebrate. When a group of women would be traveling through our communities with power plays sharing what they have learned from different spheres, different cultures where ritual and celebration cross over.

I don't see interrelationships propelled by money even though I live in this society which lauds the god of capitalism above all else. I envision both country and cities where women will celebrate their universal gifts in giving to life what is necessary and desired in their own hearts. I believe that the resources for creating comfort and beauty are within our tribal skills and that this comfort and hearth can be shared with other skilled artisans and craftswomen, homemakers and lovers of children, individuals who will grow together to materialize what is valuable and needed to create safety, beauty, comfort and delight for anyone interested in sharing the wealth. We already have the poetry and politics in our language. We just need the space to begin and to reward ourselves with our own dreams and accomplishments as we see them and be willing to trust our own creativity to bring them forth. It has happened sparingly in many places all over the earth, places where women and matriarchy have the support and respect to exercise their innate and learned power with love for the world around them. I see a world where the power of women is exercised with the same care and restraint that is used to raise a loved one who will in turn love and be loved. This is at the heart of adventure into the unknown and a place to lean forward with possibility shining towards our openness.



©1985 Sudie Rakusin: Muse: A Woman in touch with her creative spirit, herself. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Natasha Carthew*Home*

*I will give you a home
built of wood and stone
with these hands
digging
food and flowers for the table
home grown.*

*I will sit you a porch
swinging on the tropical breeze
barefoot and tipsy
kicking sand
singing songs that only you have heard.*

*I will kiss you a second at a time
from the sunset to the sunrise
chasing you into the sea
confident with the swim you taught me.*

*I will hold you a million years
to be like this
as native to the sun as to the stars
time to bury the watches
drown the clocks
now all the world's time is ours.*

Betsy Rose

Coming Into My Years

*I'm a gray haired woman and
I'm coming into my years
I'm a weathered woman and
I'm coming into my years
No more holding back,
no more trying to please
I got the will and the power
to get off my knees
I'm an aging woman and
I'm coming into my years*

*I'm a street wise woman and
I'm coming into my pride
I'm a fight back woman and
I'm coming into my pride
No more shrinking with fear
when they whistle and jeer
I got a fist that's hard,
A mind that's clear
I'm a night walking woman and
I'm coming into my pride*

*I'm a loud mouth woman and
I'm coming into my voice
I'm a talk back woman and
I'm coming into my voice
There's an ocean of words
That got caught in my throat
Gonna let loose the waters,
Gonna learn how to float
I'm a sing out woman and
I'm coming into my voice*

*I'm a big boned woman and
I'm coming into my size
I'm a take space woman and
I'm coming into my size
Now some of it's muscle,
Some of it's not
But all of it's me and
It's the best I got
I'm a boundless woman and
I'm coming into my size*

*I'm a light hearted woman and
I'm coming into my Joy
I'm a fun loving woman and
I'm coming into my Joy
The weight of the world
Is off my shoulders
I'm getting lighter
As I'm getting older
I'm a laugh aloud woman and
I'm coming into my Joy*

*I'm a loving woman and
I'm coming into my own
I'm a heartbeat woman and
I'm coming into my own
I'm gonna go for passion, go for strength
Go for the moment gonna go for the length
I'm a hot blooded woman and
I'm coming into my own*



©1985 Sudie Rakusin: Dryad: Tree Spirit who listens, teaches, inspires, and encourages. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Doreen Perrine

Over the Rainbow

The eight a.m. ferry crept across the gray harbor toward the looming, steel giants of the Manhattan skyline. Sprawled behind, the limbs of Bayonne's waterfront factories seemed to yawn and stretch into the overhead flatness. A mute silhouette, the Statue of Liberty appeared as much in need of coffee as Eve felt that early autumn day. Opposite the immense Lady, the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway stirred with the frenetic motion of jammed-packed vehicles.

In defiance of the uninspiring scene, Eve lifted her eyes to the eastern sky. A shimmering array of purples and pinks splashed over the unseen horizon like a fireworks display. An emerald streak backlit this New York version of Costa Rican skies on the painting retreat of Eve's last spring break. Above the vanishing splendor, ominous clouds threatened to consume the last of this aerial bravura.

At eight-twenty, the "Alice Austen" ferry approached the gaping mouth of the colossal arch of Whitehall Terminal. Inside, the boat buzzed with non-stop voices competing for listeners. Business people outfitted for their workday routine, discussed weather, their jobs, or more excitedly, weekend plans. Fused with the roar of the rumbling engine, the crowd's din slowed to a blur of sound. The boat glided between the creaking piers, then slammed against the dock. The crew raised its rusty gates and passengers clunked down the terminal's metal steps and through the exit doors.

As people continued to herd off the vessel, Eve remained slumped in her window seat. Bored with the daily hustle, she'd wait for the throng to thin before relinquishing her warm seat. Instead, she feigned interest in the copy of *Art Views* on her lap.

Eve's thoughts drifted from the magazine to her dream the night before. She was flying, just barely above a crowd like that plodding past her. Flying in dreams, she'd heard, symbolized 'rising above a situation.' It was a predictable interpretation, but apt.

She then recalled a similar childhood dream of flying over her parents' heads. They'd hopped up and down like rabbits in the living room as she evaded their frantic grasp. The memory of her early home came back to Eve with excruciating detail. Everything, the plush carpet, the wide TV, the slick, marble coffee table, and a plastic-covered, throne-like couch, spelled out their drab lifestyle.

Eve was seven at the time she'd had that dream and, now, she had just turned twenty. Too sleepy to delve into cryptic meaning at that *ungodly hour*, she dismissed the connection between both dreams. Like surreal sci-fi, it was the uncharted stuff of subconscious memory; one she could always explore on some future *star date*.

Rising from her seat, Eve stood fairly tall, her hazel eyes less round in drowsiness. Average weight for her five-six height, her olive complexion hinted at her Italian heritage. A sixty-word-per-minute word processing and office clerk for an insurance firm and aspiring artist, she was on the lowest rung of the business and art worlds. Her job, as Eve saw it, only supported what she'd sarcastically dubbed "the eating and rent thing," and precious tuition—the barest necessities.

Ambling with a handful of stragglers down the ferry ramp, Eve turned to take in the lingering sunrise. Nothing remained but a wash of flat clouds, dead as a blank ceiling. Underneath the scene, the downtown race was on as subways, buses, cabs, and cars poured into the waiting city. Everywhere commuters pushed their way up Broadway, down Water Street, and over the myriad back streets like a charging army.

With a heavy stride atypical of her laid-back pace, Eve made her way toward her office. Her milky blue work shoes, though worn to softness, pinched in their severity. The light beige, *preppy* plaid jacket she'd picked up at a thrift store was unsuited to the chilly morning. She much preferred her well-worn, white-tipped sneakers and jeans to the severe uniform she donned each weekday.

Her ash-brown pony tail swung across her nape as Eve headed to John Street. Hunched, her eyes were bent to watch her mechanical steps like disembodied feet. The rush hour madness was contained by the *straight and narrow* streets where she felt caged in by a maze of buildings.

Pausing, Eve examined a silver music box that caught her eye in an obscure boutique she'd never noticed before. The fine filigree of its ornamental twirls were especially artful. *To have money to splurge!* The *if only* thought that she might buy the costly gift for her new sweetheart melted to oblivion as she was prodded along with the pressing traffic.

Once in her building, an older construct of sixteen floors, she squeezed in the cramped elevator. People stared like mute zombies as Eve straightened the twists in her skirt. A bright blue-green with red stripes, its folds had swirled in her brisk stride around her thighs.

Like the rainbow flag of her first pride parade that summer, Eve's skirt was like a multi-hued flag flying in the face of what she *should* wear—and be.

In stark contrast to the bullying crowd she'd just escaped, the streets, she'd felt happily that June day, had been freely animated. Despite her antipathy for stifling events, the lively parade had lifted her spirits like a mighty wind embracing her newfound identity.

Arriving on her floor, Eve doled out the usual “good mornings,” then headed for the *straight jacket* of her rigid desk. Between paperwork, she stole a glimpse at the magazine crammed in her overstuffed bag. Sipping her coffee, she leafed through its pages, drawn to bolder paintings that boasted the dominant force in her own art—color, brilliant and pulsating with a rhythm that blazed Kandinsky's path.

Nothing could move her so dramatically as color in her one-sided partiality. It was a partiality that harkened to the miraculous moment she'd first lifted a paintbrush in kindergarten. More than technical inclination, color stirred her painter's soul.

Working as late as she dared on a weeknight, Eve had painted in her kitchen studio the night before. Her girlfriend of a record six months, Maggie, who'd made the *radical* confession that she “didn't get art,” had been asleep for hours. What did it matter if they had so little in common? Their sex life was good, the best Eve had ever known. And didn't Maggie's physical passion more than compensate for her lack of artistic interest? Despite her youth, passion, Eve understood, was living each day as a unique endeavor—never to be stamped like a manufactured product for mass consumption.

To Eve's immense relief, Maggie, just twenty herself, hadn't broached the subject of steady commitment. Newly emerged from the “prison” of high school replete with *requisite* boyfriends and with one year of independence under her belt, Eve wasn't into getting deep. *Deep*, like sci-fi or the exploration of her evolving lesbian identity, was reserved for the kind of intensity with which she approached painting. One day, Eve figured, she'd pursue a serious relationship and career. For now, she instinctively got that, like creative venture, *growing up* was about getting in-sync with who she was meant to be.

Eve saw her world encapsulated in the fluctuating settings of her job, dating, and her circle of student friends with their similarly fantastic dreams. In her new life, she was barely fazed by the indifference of her increasingly distant family. If they couldn't accept the on-and-off girlfriends she'd brought on infrequent visits, why did Eve need to accept them? Where she'd always seen herself outside her parents' materialism—or what she'd secretly dubbed, their “competitive lawn mowing”—her coming out was one more sign of her *alien status* in their stuffy world.

Their tacit disapproval of Eve's love for women was on a par with their response to her decision to pursue an artist's life. Where they'd offered to pay for her secretarial training, the "luxury" of art school had been out of the question. Despite her dominating father's vehement protests, Eve had packed her things and, with a day's notice, abruptly moved out.

Their suburban cure-all of a husband, kids, and house with a trim garden had always eluded Eve. Just as in her dream of flying blissfully over their heads, she'd renounced their *just-add-water-and-stir* version of her future. Shouldn't the future, like science-fiction or painting, be unpredictable and full of unknown surprise?

But Eve had been frustrated with painting lately—a recent still life of bottles and shells, simply wasn't as crisp as she'd wanted. As far as the painterly standards of her professors and classmates went, it was passable. Armand, her artist neighbor, who'd stopped by to drain a bottle of red wine, had gone so far as to call the viscous brushwork "juicy."

Somehow, for Eve, it fell drastically short within the confined framework of its too-rectangular canvas. Like her dream reflections, she'd set the painting between her easel and refrigerator for a more inspired day.

Experimenting with a hybrid of styles and genres, Eve tried her hand with ever-changing approaches. These were culled from her budding understanding of art and the world around her. She searched or, more so, yearned, in her painting, like her life, to create something beyond ordinary vision.

Antithetical to the restrictive Catholic school background which had pegged her bland destiny, Eve sought a sublime, if impossible, goal. In the freedom of painting, she wanted to mix hues not found in any spectrum, dripping color that didn't exist to breathe life into her canvas. Was that so odd—or so impossible? Heaven, she'd heard somewhere, was what no eye has seen or ear heard or could, she supposed, be imagined. These colors were there.

Her thoughts full of this fanciful reverie, Eve worked until lunch. A vegetarian, she took her cheese sandwich and soda can from the company fridge and munched beside her co-workers in the lunchroom. After a brief exchange of small talk about the "fickle weather," she went outside.

The morning rush had been transformed into the lunch crush and, again, the streets were flooded. Eve wished people would stay inside their buildings and let her enjoy her walk in peace. Chuckling at the whimsical notion, she strove like Thoreau's courageous drummer to maintain her easy pace. It seemed she battled the more predominant boom of a war-drum to which this ceaseless multitude marched.

Claustrophobic in the milling crowd, Eve swerved back toward her office. Rounding the corner below John Street she stopped short as her eyes met a small, feathery body on the hard ground. Wedged into a niche in the corner building was a tiny, no bigger than fist-sized, bird.

She lay so rigidly stiff Eve wondered if the bird was dead. She couldn't have been long dead in what looked to be still-vibrant wings. Streaked white, her radiant blue, purple and gold feathers furled in curving tips. Mesmerized by the exotic image, Eve gazed at the dainty form lying unceremoniously on the unfitting concrete. Here was no ordinary creature. She was delicate, like a finch her grandmother had once owned, yet unlike any bird Eve had ever seen.

"*Unreal!*" she exclaimed in girlish wonder as she glanced around for a pet store. Seeing none, she thought incredulously, *What's she doing here?* What news had this silent messenger brought from what unknown land or planet even?

Just then, the bird's feathers fluffed up and she rolled to her clawed feet. Eve met her round eyes, blinking in the hazy afternoon. Then she squatted and whispered as if to encourage the stunned bird, "Flying's easy, once you've tried it a couple of times." Like riding a bike, she figured birds never forgot their ingrained flight instinct.

As if taking Eve's words to heart, the creature hobbled, then sprang to the curb like a jumping point. Spreading her wings, she pushed upwards. Eve tilted her head to watch her soar like a tiny rocket in the air. Her keen eyes followed as the bird faded to a colorful speck, then vanished overhead.

Laughing with joy, Eve mused on her recurring dream. Did this bird's abrupt appearance have something to do with celebrating color and a life of flying transcendence? Could her flight, like Eve's dreams, have predicted more promising days? Eve might not always feel enslaved to her dead-end job; she might someday awaken to a *happily-ever-after* reality in the arms of the love of her life. She might just make it as a struggling artist in this fiercely competitive city. Who could say? Maybe she would even create vibrant color, the like of which has never been seen. Although her parents, teachers, and her past had told her she'd never rise above prescribed convention, maybe she would.

Eve had only stopped a moment in her perplexity over the fantastic flight. All around her the whole world seemed to swell in the enveloping throng and she was caught up in its flow.

Margie Adam

“Avalon”

Words and Music by Margie Adam

*Avalon - from the mist you call to me
Avalon - just beyond where I can see
Looking out my window can this be a visitation
In my deepest longing such a tender revelation
Avalon*

*Avalon - every seeker will be shown
Avalon - as you make your presence known
In an ancient rhythm I can hear an earthbeat drumming
In my deepest longing I can hear my heartbeat thrumming
Avalon*

*In the darkest shadows a memory of this place
Stands in utter stillness whispering your grace
Here is the stubborn flower growing up through stone
Here is the power within us calling...
Calling us home*

*Avalon - may we find our way to you
Avalon - there's a winding path in view
In this sacred circle I can hear our heartbeats talking
In our deepest longing the labyrinth is where we're walking
Avalon... Avalon.*

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www.margieadam.com



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Shevy Healey

Just Suppose: An Imagining Exercise

Get as comfortable as you can in your seat. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath, letting all the air go out. And another ... And another... And now just let your imagination go.... Imagine that we live in a society that is non-sexist, non-racist, non-ableist, and non-homophobic. The President of our country is a woman. Half of the law and policy makers are women. Wages are truly based on ability, not sex. Lesbians, who are women identified women, are held in high esteem.

Now imagine that our society is non-ageist as well. This will not be easy, but imagine life — not just the opposite of the way it is now, but the way we would like it to be.

Let's let our imaginations go into as many details as possible. Imagine, for example, that there is simply no question about the right of old women to have a decent income — that social security is never put on the block to be whittled away, but is automatically increased. To provide less than comfort for old women would be unthinkable.

Imagine that employers vie for the part time or full time services of old women — whatever they can get, since everyone knows what richness of experience and dedication old women bring to their jobs. Imagine that the choice to work or not to work is simply made by each individual woman, with no social stigma attached to either choice.

In keeping with the special status we now have in mainstream society, we are naturally a part of any social circle we choose — young, old, mixed, for we live in a non-segregated society. We partake of all the things that are available at community centers, along with our sisters of all ages. Senior centers are long extinct, as is the term itself. We are attended to in large and small ways. Clothes are designed for the full figure — clothes that are beautiful, comfortable, and colorful. When someone really wants to give a special compliment, they might say, “You look almost good enough to be old!”

Old women are seen in the media all the time — as newscasters, political figures, women of action, as the beloved, or the lovers. No one would dream of leaving old women out of any important project, and we ourselves decide what we choose to participate in, what we choose to turn down. No one dares tell us what we are capable of doing or not doing. In fact, no one would presume to speak for us about anything.

And since everyone knows that old women — like vintage wine — are the best lovers, we are considered quite desirable. We never lack for lovers, or affectionate friends, or comrades.

Some of us are, as we have always been, sedentary, studious, and contemplative, while others of us continue to climb mountains and enjoy great physical activity. Some of us are in poorer health, or just feeling the twinges of our bodies growing old ... a bit of difficulty hearing, or seeing, or remembering, a twinge of arthritis — all just small signs of the wear and tear of our years — the badges of a long and hearty life. Some of us might become quite disabled, and need help from the rest of us — and since everyone is honored to help, the load doesn't fall on just a few. There is, of course, no question about our right to full and complete medical care — and by doctors who LISTEN to what we have to say — REALLY LISTEN — without dismissing us, who, just because our bodies are old, treat us with special attention and care!

Being old or sick will never mean that we do not make decisions about our own care. And if our capacities become diminished, we still are in charge of making decisions for ourselves to the fullest extent of whatever those capacities are. It is unthinkable that any member of the “helping” professions would dare to presume to speak for what old women want and need. We speak for ourselves!

And because asking for help would not diminish us, we feel free to ask — as we need to — not feeling “less than” because of our need. Whatever our ailments, they are only as noteworthy as the color of our eyes or our hair — no more, no less — certainly having nothing to do with our capacities as human beings.

And finally, in such a world, imagine that we would truly be in charge of our dying. We would plan our death to suit our needs — whatever they are, instead of having to submit to the indignities of being kept alive when we're ready to go, or being killed off through neglect and inattention before our time.

Quite a world that would be! Think about it for a minute in most personal terms. How would your world be different? ...

And when you're ready, come back to this space. Open your eyes. Look around you. Take the hand of the person on either side of you. For a minute pretend that there are a thousand spaces just like this one all over our country — all over the world — filled with old women looking at each other, smiling, and saying — loudly, powerfully:

“We’ve had enough. We won’t put up with unjust and unequal treatment any more. No more. It is our time now. This is our beginning. We are strong. We are powerful. We are united. We will be HEARD!”

This imagining exercise was written by Shevy Healey and presented at the closure of the First West Coast Conference and Celebration, Southern California in 1987. Reprinted from The Facilitators’ Handbook, p. 85. Appreciations to rainbow williams for sending this information to Sinister Wisdom and to Arden Eversmeyer for researching and writing Shevy’s biographical statement.



“Old Dykes Gather” by Frances Lorraine

Beatrice Ilana Lieberman

*in these last days
before dying
let us
break bread
and brave
the narrow lane.
let us lift the curtain
to morning light
raise the wooden window
each day
to clean sky
and running wind.
let us work
the good work
our breaking back
and aching arms
embrace each other
at evening
when we rest.*



©1985 Sudie Rakusin: Grimalkin: Name given to a cat, especially a Wise Old She-Cat, honorifically applied to a generous, powerful Old Woman. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Ida VSW Red

The Mauvety

Three old womyn wind their way up the coast, staying on the edge — the edge of the water wherever they can, otherwise on the edge of the cliffs. Always, they cling to the edge of possibility. They have been traveling for weeks looking for the famed Womyn's Landing. All reports lead them to believe they will recognize it when they see it, so their task is merely to move on.

Some days Nettie proceeds with vigor, urging the others forward — especially George, who tends to explore every tide pool and curl up in every cave they pass, clearly preferring passage to destination. During other periods, George and Natalie encourage Nettie to keep her spirits up. Natalie's cycles are headspinning, the blahs replacing bursts of creative energy, and confidence chasing despair all in an hour as surely as one step follows another.

So it has been throughout Natalie's careers in the theater, in international underground nuclear disarmament politics, in the new style of kibbutz she established at the Presidio for creative children, and in the pet project of her old age — teaching an improvisational psychodrama technique she developed for suicide prevention. Friends just laugh at Natalie when she complains that she's hardly gotten started on her lifesework at age 85. It is true, though, that she is still a hotbed of ideas and will probably continue to leave one lover after another to pursue her projects.

George, on the other hand, has stayed with her lover Venus through the years. They were together while George established the back-to-the-land-and-nudity-and-natural-music movement. Music performed with all body parts, functions, and combinations is artistically edited and amplified through the soft technology she discovered in her early career in computer accounting.

Later George surprised everyone by retreating to Nepal to study pure math for fifteen years — until she found the solution the physicists had needed for so long. Turns out it isn't a formula at all, but a different approach involving a meditational state produced by rubbing the lanolin from black sheep's wool on the temple and on a corresponding ankle spot before approaching the problem. Returning to the city, George got busy inventing new musical instruments, which Nettie builds and Natalie markets — all in their spare time — to benefit the International Feminist Coalition.

The three old friends weave in and out of one another's lives, always meeting at the Universal Ovular each thirteen years to report on their evolving research, philosophies, politics, experiments, and unique perceptions. Now that they are all octogenarians — George, then Natalie, and at last Nettie reaching the Age of Mauvety — they are beginning the time of life for the enactment of personal dreams in a universal amphitheater from which they will be reflected to and interconnected with all womyn's colors in a cosmic aura that will pulsate their individual hues throughout the endless circles of womonkind. Each woman's enactment will affect the general aura and thus influence every living thing by casting it in a new light — an ever-changing light reflecting all old womyn's Mauvest dreams.

Passage to the theater is said to be by ferry from the Womyn's Landing. Strangely, the enactment can be staged only by certain young womyn at the Age of Alizarinity. The three oldsters wonder what these young ones will have to offer them.

Meanwhile, the chosen youths — Miriam, Friel, and Lisa — are decorating the ferry with calligraphy, Sanskrit, leaf prints, Rorschachs, ancient symbols and languages from every culture. As the wind moves, waves of

meanings, knowings, and sensations float to the sky like clouds from the kaleidoscopic sails. The young ones work with the kind of concentration and innovation common to the creation of sandcastles, soapbox racers, mother's day pincushions, tree houses, and matchstick pigpens. The three novices simply intuit how to accomplish what is necessary. They move as if on a schedule set by the natural order of things. The ferry ready, they touch up each other's bodies with wode and pictographs of their quest cycles. As soon as their images are clarified, they hop on the ferry and head for the Womyn's Landing. As they sail, they hum forth the new technology and ancient wisdom that will allow them to usher the Old Ones through their Mauvety Ceremony into a New Age.

Sooner than expected, the Womyn's Landing looms ahead and the three old womyn can be seen approaching from the South. For their part, the Mauve Ones recognize the Alizarin Ones immediately. It is clear that the young ones are quite competent to take on the burdens the old ones are ready to lay down. Both groups reach the Landing and without a single word begin the ritual with a communal hug. Instantly, all nature rings forth as the Alizarinity and Mauvety Ceremonies blend, each woman taking her time to become and to be herself in radiant age and sisterhood. The world reverberates with joy.

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(With thanks to my Lesbian Blocked Writers Group for the characters in this utopian fantasy)

Martha Courtot***When You Become the Rain***

*when you become the rain
things get easier
your hands grow more able to touch
the dusky earth*

*of course your name changes
you choose you insist on your choice*

*you move across the day
and light follows*

*having transformed dissolved alchemized
you have said good-bye
to the whine of time*

*to the clicks and snaps
of fate, clothing, ironies*

*good-bye to the teeth of dawns
and mid-night caverns*

*to politics, children, and the sadness
of old movies*

*as you fall from a great height
you are finally yourself*

*soaking into leaves
lingering in the fine edges of things
entering at last into the earth*

*your voice broken as it falls
in pieces down the glass of the day
lingers*

*your voice roots itself
and new flowers grow everywhere*

Martha Courtot

These Bodies Inhabit Us

*an ocean where life throbs and hums
maintaining itself
through billions of fish mouths
hiding the colorless and eyeless things deep
pushing to the surface the dramatic and colorful
we are striped wanderers who one day reach shore
and never return
these bodies of oceanic longing
lust and rage and a watery embracing love*

*there was a day on a Florida beach, 1944
I chased a jelly fish
it was a liquid eye that saw everything
through a thin invisible membrane
“Come back,” my parents called so I wouldn’t get stung
but I had already been poisoned in some other lifetime
even on that day it swirled through my body
toes that were sand harbors
torso a map spreading itself wide to the sun
millions of fish were swarming inside me
breathing out Atlantean melodies
my body hiding a pearl I had not yet discovered
I ran toward this eye of the world*

*these bodies, I write, on a rainy day amid trees
while snails crawl out of nowhere
to chew on anything green
these bodies inhabit us, I write
and because I want to tell the truth
these bodies which inhabit us
but what I really want is not to write
or sit at my window
watching the rain etch loss into the glass*

*but flinging all warnings away from me
I want to run as fast as I once did
toward that relentless fish eye
who knows my real name*

1998 Reprinted from *The Bird Escapes* by Martha Courtot (Earthy Mama Press, 2001, pp. 21-22) with permission from her daughter, Cynthia McCabe.



Oceanid: Salt Water Nymph who inhabits oceans and seas by Sudie Rakusin ©1985.
First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Chris Sitka

Ancient Lesbian Culture

I want to convince you that we lesbians are not an aberration. Being lesbian is no accident. We are the survivors of an ancient culture. A culture with a heritage, a language, a tradition. A tradition of resistance. We have ancestors. It is time to give this reality the recognition which it is due. It is time for a revival of lesbian culture.

There is a lesbian spirit or paradigm which has influenced the body of women from time immemorial. This ancient memory transcends all limitations. Like the fiery life blood of the earth it bubbles in great lava rivers beneath the body of woman and whenever it finds a vent it explodes out into existence. Thus we are breathed into existence by the earth Herself. Lesbianism is dormant in all women.

For thousands of generations lesbians have written their passion into the psychic realm of the earth's spiritual sphere. It vibrates, it trills, it moans, it calls out, it resonates. We, oh modern lesbians, though seemingly lost in a heterosexual jungle, hear this call. It resonates in our bodies. It vibrates in our wombs. It is for us to act out this ancient pattern. Woman touching woman, as intensely, as inevitably, as the wave touches the shore.

Knowing this: dare to feel great feelings, ancient knowings. Dare to envision lesbian visions. Energise each other with meeting and song and dance and loving. Dare to put your ear to the shell that whispers our ancient lesbian beingness. Dare to let your body sing in the thrilling crescendos that re-enact the lesbianly organismic creation of the universe.

So know that as a lesbian you have come to celebrate an ancient Mystery. Each passionate look, touch, feeling, vibrates in the psychic aura of the earth. It resonates through place and time. Each time one of us women loves another with this intensity, we create the precondition for another and yet another lesbian to be born and reborn into the quality of Lesbianism.

We are born with a gut memory of our common language; the symbolic language of emotion, of feeling, of touch. It is spoken whenever a woman touches a woman's deepest touch. It burns on our tongues in a flickering clitoral brogue. We gasp it in orgasm. It is never forgotten because it is embedded in our genes and in our psyche. Whenever like meets like a fire of recognition leaps. This touch, this tonguing, resonates throughout the world.

So remember; we are the proud survivors of an ancient lesbian culture.

Jean Taylor

Everyday Utopia

Utopia, according to the dictionaries I consulted, was the name of a political satire written by Sir Thomas More in 1516 which described an imaginary island that had developed socially and politically into a visionary paradise. The word Utopian has gone into our language to describe the impossible dream or the yearning for a perfect society that can't exist in any practical sense.

Google 'Utopia Australia', and on Aboriginal Art Online there is a description of a remote region of approximately 1800 square kilometres in the outback of the Northern Territory and about 240 kms north east of Alice Springs called Utopia. It's a dry dusty desert place and home to about 2000 people who live in twenty-five communities called 'Homelands'. The website goes on to explain how in 1978, in order to establish that they were financially self-sufficient and culturally connected to Utopia as the traditional owners of the land for their pending land claim case, the Aboriginal womyn created and produced vibrantly coloured batik designs on long pieces of silk. As a result, the community gained permanent legal title to their lands in 1981. The womyn of Utopia continued to exhibit their batiks but by the late 1980s, they began using acrylic paint on canvas as a more economically viable way to produce and sell their art work.

Like many Indigenous womyn round the world, what the Aboriginal womyn are doing in Utopia, as well as in other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities round the country to help maintain their communities is inspiring. They demonstrate that despite living in a country with some of the most racist government policies in the world which deny them access to the kind of living conditions, housing, education, health, that the rest of Australia takes for granted, they have continued not only to survive under harsh conditions in a remote area but have been able to creatively express themselves in ways that are an example to the rest of us.

Now, I'm as enthusiastic as the next lesbian in terms of having a safe, friendly, supportive and harmonious society in which to live. One that nourishes me completely, encourages my creativity, celebrates my lifestyle and gives me everything I need for my complete well-being without having to fight, beg or lie for it. But I'm far too practical or I've been around too long to expect that it's actually and seriously going to come from patriarchy.

I think one of the mistakes we feminist activists made back in the 1970s was to expect the patriarchy not only to embrace feminist politics, and thereby change its attitude towards the oppression of womyn, but to follow through on this radical world-view and collude in its own destruction. We now realise this was not going to happen in the short-term and it is nowhere near happening forty years on. In fact, the patriarchy has grown in its destructive tendencies (the arms trade and pornography alone are billion-dollar industries). We can't afford not to take all this into account as we go about our daily lesbian feminist activist business to do our bit to make the world a more liveable place for all of us.

This is not say that lesbians are any worse at building sustainable communities than anyone else. On the contrary, despite the oppression we continue to experience we've achieved a great deal. For example, there's no doubt that we lesbians over the past forty years in particular have developed and nurtured lesbian communities that have inspired and supported many of us to be ourselves. As lesbians we have contributed something to the world that is vibrantly distinctive and at the same time has nourished us and helped us to build a way of life that has also inspired others.

So, taking my inspiration from the Indigenous womyn, (who have far more to contend with than I do as they express their creativity in support of their self-sustaining communities), as well as my own lesbian feminist community, it seems to me that what we have been doing is establishing a way of life for ourselves that is as close to a Utopian ideal as anyone could possibly get under these brutally oppressive patriarchal circumstances.

For example, and despite the pollution, I choose to live with my lesbian partner in an inner urban environment close to where my great grandmother who immigrated from Scotland with her family back in 1882 used to live, with a great number of lesbians living not all that far away. I enjoy living in a big city because not only do I have access to any number of lesbian plays, just this week I went to the opening of Lou Bennett's musical *Show Us Ya Tiddas*, and enough lesbian events to keep me amused and satisfied, just recently a friend had her 60th birthday pirate party down by the beach, but I'm able to live in a way that gives me joy and fulfillment.

I do volunteer work at the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives and am on a collective which is writing a book about what we lesbians need to know about the legalities and emotional challenges of death and dying. I paint and knit and exhibit my occasional art work. Like many lesbians my age I am busy writing my memoirs in between writing the herstory of our lesbian feminist activities here in Victoria.

And there are many ways of going about promoting this best case scenario, from recycling to planting trees to cutting down on the use of fossil fuels to raising and educating children not to be sexist or racist or classist to showing respect for and acknowledging the Indigenous people who are usually the ones bearing the worse aspects of a capitalist patriarchal war-mongering system. And many more instances of sustainable living to make this planet a safer and healthier place for everyone.

None of this is what you'd call the Utopian ideal exactly. But if it's a choice between a Utopian ideal or something less idealistic, I'd rather go for the practical and achievable myself. Because if we're being honest, we only have to look into our own hearts and minds to appreciate just how far we're removed from the basis of a Utopian ideal. What it amounts to is, if we who want a Utopian society are unable within our own selves to manifest it in our own lives and with and for each other in the way we would very much like to experience, then it's unlikely to happen.

Taking the world-view, there are still countries where lesbians are tortured and killed for their sexual identity. Here in Australia, and I suspect in most of the westernised so-called developed countries, we lesbians still do not have all of the most basic human rights, lesbians are still closeted at work for fear of repercussions and lesbians still commit suicide. With all of that to contend with, it's difficult to see how we can even begin to imagine any kind of lesbian Utopia.

And yet we do. Or try to. If this life is all we have, and I believe it is, we need to just get on with living this very moment in all its difficulties and joyfulness and challenges and satisfactions. It won't be Utopian in the patriarchal sense but it certainly will be a lesbian life well lived in the practical down to earth and every day sense where many of us prefer to live anyway.

Sunlight

Once Upon a Time

*Once upon a time (and not so very long ago)
There was a community of women
Who yearned for a just and peaceful world.*

*For they saw in the lives around them,
the greed and the sadness, the anger and fear,
and the destruction all that wrought.*

*So the women gathered,
They sang and changed,
Prayed and visioned,
And worked politically,
trying to create the world they imagined,
But it seemed that little changed outside.*

*Then, simply by living from their hearts
Daily in their community
With gifts of time and money,
Prayer and hope to those in need of it,
There came a shift in energy,
A shift toward more and greater love.*

*And this love grew,
expanded,
dissolving the negative.*

*Thus gentle, loving communities arose
here and there,
And eventually began to coalesce and grow
until one day they reached a critical mass.
Then the whole world changed, became
(and not so very long from now)
that world of love and kindness
the women had envisioned
and tried to create by other means.*

*Thank you so very very much for your love and kindness
and the beginning of that world.*

*Reprinted from Women of Mendocino Bay (WOMB) With a View
Newsletter (Spring/Summer 2006, p. 11) with permission from
Sunlight.*



“Untitled” by Sudie Rakusin ©

Pat Parker

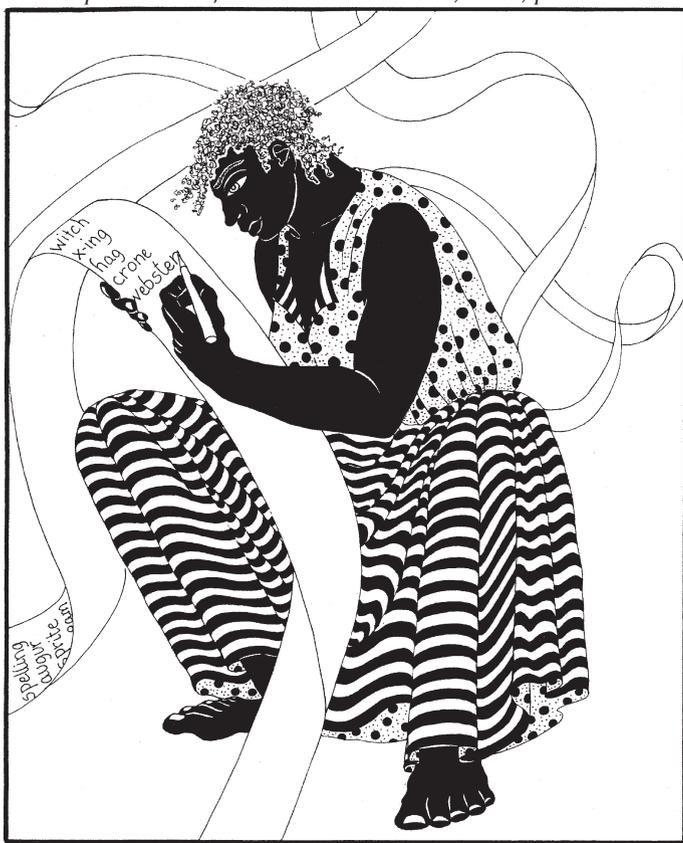
Excerpt from “There is a Woman in This Town”

Once upon a time there was a dream, a dream of women turning the world all over, and it still lives. It lives for those who would be sisters.

It lives for those who need a sister.

It lives for those who once upon a time had a dream.

Excerpt from “There is a Woman in This Town” in An Expanded Edition of Movement in Black by Pat Parker. Reprinted with permission from Firebrand Books, 1999, p. 186.



Webster: Unwinding the bindings of mummified/numbified words by Sudie Rakusin ©1985. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Kim Rivers

The Search for Utopia

I've been searching for Utopia for a long time. It has always felt elusive, as if like so many other fabled places it was to remain hidden only to be revealed to those who by some extraordinary measure on their part made themselves worthy to its revelation. As I emerged into my lesbian self the search for Utopia came with me. The desire for a place free from heteropatriarchy's influence where I and others could be completely outrageous courageous dykes has lived in me from my first naming myself as a lesbian to now where I call myself a dyke separatist. I have had the good fortune to have in my life many wonderful dyke separatists and radical lesbian feminists who have helped nurture me along this journey and continue to do so. I have talked with dykes struggling in cities and those living more freely on lesbian lands. Almost always there is both the spoken and unspoken dream among us for Utopia. The more I feel the possibility and presence of it now with my sisters the more I am beginning to know it is not so much a place, but rather a state of being that is both individually and collectively made.

It seems pretty cliché to say that Utopia is more a state of mind and heart than of a place. I even wince a little at how trite it must come across to read it, but I'm beginning to feel there is some truth to this. I am finding that whenever I come together with other like-minded lesbians, if even for a short time we strive to create for that instant the Utopia we are all longing for. Every day any one of us chooses to venture out our doors fully present and obvious dykes, facing heteropatriarchy head on and not letting it steal from us our amazon power then too we have furthered our revolutionary emergence into Utopia. It is the continuing everyday and lifelong creation of our lesbian culture that I now believe is the Utopia I have been searching for.

I know I know, this smacks of that fluffy, new-age, positive thinking thing. Many of us have experienced intense isolation as lesbians, throw in all the heteropatriarchy has to offer and it's a wonder so many of us do indeed thrive. I can recall times of such pain, isolation, heartache, and hopelessness. In those moments death feels like an option. Damn hard to find Utopia in those moments. Living as lesbians, especially radical lesbians who don't wish to "be accepted" by the status quo has us traversing an edge that can leave us feeling lost and drained. So it is essential that we find ways to keep going, to create the world that we wish to truly LIVE in. Doing whatever

we can by very small acts and grand commotions that further affirms our lesbian-loving, gynocentric culture. We find ourselves strengthened whenever we can do this. Our strength is what allows us to let loose when we are in the company of our sisters and what sustains us when we must travel our ways alone. The times when we are together with friends or at large events or festivals are glorious. Any daily act we do, listening to womyn's music, reading lesbian journals/publications, writing, speaking, or even just be-ing is precious and self-affirming. Isn't that the promise that we hope Utopia holds for us?

I have just returned from an extraordinary event in New Mexico called A Feminist Hullabaloo. Here over 200 lesbians gathered in the city of Santa Fe to re-member our tremendous world-changing, life-affirming, womon-loving powers. We linked to our past by recalling the multitude of accomplishments of lesbians and feminists during the Second Wave of Feminism. We presided fully in our present by sensing around us how many then and now were still doing the work they had started. We dreamed and planned for our future by being willing to carry our commitments shared in that space back to our communities. I came away feeling like I had been fully centered in the place of Utopia. I'm sure it helped having such notable presenters like Sonia Johnson, Mary Daly, Cherríe Moraga, Shaba Barnes, and Hye Sook Hwang (to name only a few) spurring us on with words and ideas. It uplifted us to sing with Alix Dobkin, Margie Adams, Evelyn Green, and Afia Walking Tree music that reflected our values as lesbians and feminists. But it was even more that made this event feel for me like entering Utopia. It was knowing that I was with others who were there for so many of the same reasons I was, who wanted and believed in the values beyond heteropatriarchy's limited little world.

So this event was special yes, but although it occupied a place and time it was more about what we brought to it that made it Utopia than the place itself. It was the willingness and gynergy that we put into it. I came with an openness and excitement that allowed me to connect deeply with not just those who were presenting, but with so many others. I reconnected to long time friends and came away with new ones. My knowledge of lesbian positive energy in the world has expanded multifold. I am aware that not just myself, but many radical lesbian feminists and dyke separatists are out everywhere living, loving, and working for a better existence. Each one of us a micro Utopia unto ourselves, strengthened by each other when we come together for shared experiences in a common place. This is one of those remarkable experiences reminding me I am creating Utopia everyday.

Sure we have disagreements, sure we don't get along with everyone, and some dykes just don't plain like each other. Certainly for any feeling of Utopia to endure there must be some commonalities among those who consciously choose to live together in a more communal creation of Utopia. Even the most like-minded radical dykes are not always going to get on splendidly. That's when we have to really be committed to ourselves, each other, and the dream of Utopia, for we all know there is going to be some work and process involved. This is true any time folks share space. I am drawn to those who I can connect the most with and keep hanging out with them. The rest I try to let go of and not feed the drama, giving room for them to find their own connections. It definitely helps when I am inwardly centered and thus existing in an internalized Utopia. Each feeds the other. I feel more centered when I spend lots of time with other dykes and seek out other dykes when I feel more centered.

So here I am back at home. This is where all the dyke positive gynergy gets put to use. I am in the thick of the stupefying male-centric world, but still I am a dyke, so that's a good start. What's more, I am not willing unless purely for immediate safety to try to be invisible as such. Nearby within an hour or so are some other radical dykes whom I adore as friends. We talk of ways to bring some radical feminist, gynocentric vibrations outward into the world, to create what nurtures us and hopefully the whole planet. As I said, it can be the smallest things. Helping them move to a new place, writing for their publication, *Rain and Thunder*, writing here for *Sinister Wisdom*. All this makes Utopia NOW. It is not some far off distant place, nor is it even the Feminist Hullabaloo, which was Utopia, but it is the now of my own lesbian heart and mind. I think for us to truly be the change we want to see we have to live as much as possible by whatever means we can as if Utopia were upon our own doorstep.

So let it be cliché, let it be fluffy, new-age thinking. I know it feels right when we are together as small groups of friends or in the biggest waves of lesbians. I know I feel saner when I stop listening to the news and play some music with words that speak to me. I was once asked by a very conscious and radical dyke separatist about my lamenting on wishing to create lesbian community, wanting to feel a part of something that was lesbian affirming. "What are you waiting for?" At the time I had no inkling of an answer. It was a question I have since asked myself and offered to other sisters as well. It is at the heart of the desire to create/find Utopia and I finally think I have happened upon an answer so simple, yet so daunting. We are the ones we've been waiting for. Our Utopia is in our own hands, voices, minds, hearts, bodies, and spirits.

Alix Dobkin

The Woman in Your Life Is You

Words & music by Alix Dobkin ©1973

*The woman in your life will do what she must do
To comfort you and calm you down
And let you rest, now
The woman in your life she can rest so easily
She knows everything you do because
The woman in your life is you*

*The woman in your life knows simply what is true
She knows the simple way to touch
To make you whole, now
The woman in your life she can touch so easily
She knows everything you do because
The woman in your life is you*

*And who knows more about your story
About your struggles in the world
And who cares more to bless
your weary shoulders, than*

*The woman in your life is trying to come through
A woman's voice with messages
Of woman's feelings
The woman in your life she can feel so easily
She knows everything you do because
The woman in your life is you*

*And who is sure to give you courage
And who will surely make you strong
And who will bear all the joy
that is comin' to you, than*

*The woman in your life she's someone to pursue
She's patient and she's waiting and*

*She'll take you home, now
 The woman in your life she can wait so easily
 She knows everything you do because
 The woman in your life is you*

Amazon ABC
 lyrics by Alix Dobkin, ©1974

A you're an Amazon
B coming brave and strong
C-learly and Consciously you see
D you're so Dykey
E how you Excite me and
F is For Female Faculty, oh
G I Guess it's Good for me
H omosexuality
I never knew how "butchy" I could be
J for sweet Justice
K for sweet Kisses
L-E-S-B-I-A-N for Letting go of
M-e
N
O pression is no longer Over me, Oh
P is Political, Power to the Personal
Q for the Queer you fear you
R Remember you gotta Respect your
S ential Sensibility (Sexuality). Be
*T*ween us is a Tie, and it's
U terine empathy
V is for Vagina, the Virgin (your Vulva's vibration)
U can double your (U a Universe until you get through to)
X perience until you can do just
X actly what(where) you want to X ist
Y let them drive you cra- (not Y se up, but it's not eee-)
Z!

*Now I know my "ABC"'s
 Next time won't you sing with me*

Chris Sitka

The Labrys

The labrys is a very ancient symbol. It became popular as a lesbian symbol in the 1970s because it was associated with the Amazons of pre-history. It is believed they carried, and perhaps fought with, labrys shaped double axes. The symbol appears frequently on the ceramics of the Minoan Culture of Crete between 1000 & 3000 BC. The renowned archaeologist Marija Gimbutas wrote several books (“The Language of the Goddess,” “The Civilization of the Goddess,” etc.) in which she details the deeper spiritual meanings of the labrys in the Old European Goddess Civilization which thrived throughout Europe from 9000 BC till 1000 BC when it was overwhelmed by patriarchal cultures. Indeed there are goddess symbols 25,000 yrs old. The labrys was both double axe and butterfly; symbolising rebirth and regeneration from the cocoon of death. An apt symbol for the emergence of lesbianism from the deathly cocoon of the closet. I am happy to email lesbians a copy of articles I have written on the matriarchal, lesbian friendly cultures of European pre-history. It is a great way to expand your concept of who we are, and how long we have been thriving, on this mother earth. (Note: I have researched and written about my own white ancestral roots, but matriarchy was a worldwide reality in pre-patriarchal times.) sitka@jeack.com.au



Labrys: Photo by Tee. A. Corinne. Tee A. Corinne Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries.

Michelle Wing

The Good Day

*Your alarm sounds first. I hear shower water,
doze, then feel your soft lips on my cheek,
saying good-bye just for now, as you head off
for another round of belabored union talks.*

*In morning's filtered light, I make coffee,
scoop earth-dark grounds, add water,
fill the kitchen with aromas of two worlds,
home and a distant Guatemalan plantation.*

*Sipping from my cup, I gather three bowls,
serve breakfast to the other early risers in the house,
my knees bumped by wagging tails as dogs
circle, always famished, always fed.*

*I peel damp sheets off the bed
after summer night's heat, float new linens
softly through the air, smooth coolness
into each crisp corner, tuck and straighten.*

*Picking up pen and notepad, I sit down
with yesterday's perfect metaphor. It falls flat.
Scratch it out, roll new sounds around
on my tongue, picture the polished poem.*

*A blue belly lizard skitters under the couch
and across my toes, its tail sacrificed to the cat.
I can save this one, scoop the wriggling body up in warm hands
and release it to the relative safety of the rosemary bush.*

*The garden needs water. I pace between verdant rows,
touch thigh high corn, spy new potatoes poking
through rich soil, brush bugs off jalapeño plants,
watch the leaves unfurl as moisture seeps into the ground.*

*The dogs bark at the mail truck. We trot together
to the box at the end of the driveway.
I finger through bills, down to the surprise of a postcard
from Puerto Vallarta, friends on vacation, hola.*

*Back in the cool of my office, I escape to India,
taste chutney in the kitchen of a novel,
prepare for a Hindu wedding while parsing
each paragraph with the eyes of a poet.*

*The phone rings. A friend struggles with her marriage's end,
asking for answers. I make my words a mirror
of her own wisdom, know I cannot predict
what will grow in someone else's garden.*

*The mercury keeps rising. I fill the wading pool
with fresh water, call the dogs, take off my shoes and splash,
dodge and play, adding the outline of my feet
to the damp paw prints scattered across the deck.*

*Hungry, I open the crisper and pull out fresh
broccoli, asparagus, heirloom tomatoes.
I rinse soft tofu, slice and toss the medley into an iron skillet,
ready to sauté as you come in the door.*

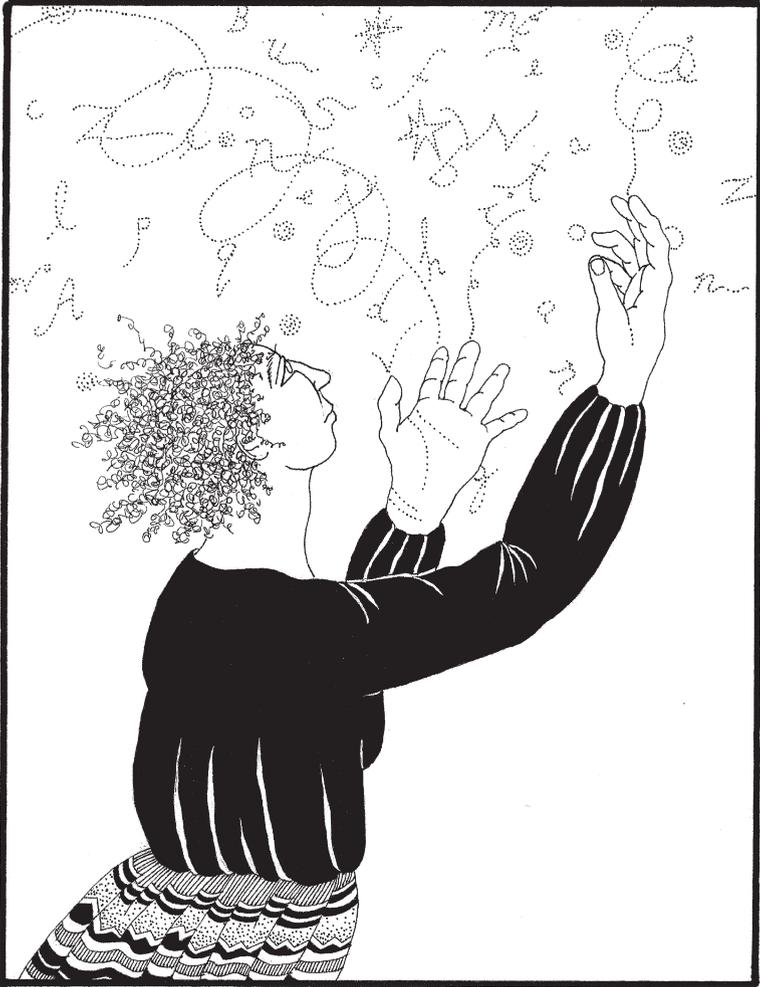
*You say the union may strike. With good food
and love, I try to soothe the day's tensions,
listen to the details of conflict with management,
provide a haven from the stress of the world.*

*We wash the dishes by hand, and move to separate corners
of the house. You unwind with a book about dragons,
and I open up the past in my journal, look for healing,
remind myself I am now safe and almost whole.*

*At day's end, you and I savor one more cup of coffee,
watch the full moon spotlight nearby vineyards,
bittersweet sphere that shone on my father's last night
two years ago, his hand in mine, my other hand in yours.*

*I turn back fresh sheets, snuggle in close to you.
Touch turns to passion, and we merge our two histories,
create a third that is ours, both bound and free.
When I cry out in my sleep, you will be right here.*

dedicated to Sabrina, with thanks to Anne Morrow Lindbergh



Be-Speilling: Dis-covering and releasing the Archimagical powers of words
by Sudie Rakusin ©1985. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Ruth Mountaingrove

My Utopia

Well, to begin with my Utopia would not have men. Consider *Herland*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman or *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ, the latter absence of men due to a disease only affecting men. While in *Herland* all is well until some men spot it from a plane and drop in. Then there is Sally Gearhart's *Wonderland* and her Kanschou series, where men are controlled in camps.

Sally Gearhart noticed long ago that testosterone was what caused war. The old men starting the war and sending the young men off to do the fighting. She suggested that if we had men just for procreation we would not need that many.

Of course men could learn to control their sex drives, that isn't inevitable. They just haven't seen any reason except in monasteries. When they are fighting, they harm civilians, read women and children and the old. They rape and pillage as other means to destroy a country as we can see in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So in my Utopia, no men in this fantasy world. Women in charge, responsible for every thing. I had a taste of that when I was in the Women's Movement in 1968-70 in Philadelphia, city of sisterly love. We had a house where we had no men. We were feminist separatists.

We did everything. I learned if it takes two men to move a refrigerator, four women cooperating can move one just as well. Women ran the office, as well as a store, kept the books, ordered supplies, counseled women about leaving abusive marriages.

In my Utopia women would have a decent income and work at a job they loved. In my Utopia money which has caused so much trouble would not exist nor would owning property—a European concept brought to this country when they first invaded the land. Instead there would be barter.

In my Utopia there would be no such thing as unwed mothers, illegitimate children. Nor would there be abortion—all children would be welcome. Women would choose to be pregnant or not. Some women might choose to never have children. That would be accepted too. Women could create in many ways as poets, artists, musicians, songwriters, sculptors,

In my Utopia menstruation would be honored for the sacred experience it is and time would be set aside for fully living those days. From this could come wisdom and direction for the woman and the group.

Birth by parthenogenesis, without male interference for women who desire pregnancy would be celebrated by all the women as the miracle it is. The child welcomed into the new life by loving women.

In my Utopia there would be peace, harmony with a council of wise old women deciding small disagreements among the young. There would be no such thing as only one way of living as in now in patriarchal society. There would be no military, no need for it. No hierarchical system. No guns, no police.

There would be no hunger, Food would be shared. No religion. Nothing that would maim or kill. Not that women would not die but they would die at a wise old age. Not at the hands of men. Not of man caused diseases.

What about sex? There would be women loving women, celibate women, women in couples, in trios or more combinations. There would be lots of cuddling and massages. Nobody no matter what her age would be left out of tenderness and caring.

Some women say that Utopia would be nine lesbians on the Supreme Court but in my Utopia there would be no lawyers or judges. That's a male concept, a patriarchal one.

There would be no doctors. There would be women healers like those wise women witches who understood the use of herbs for healing, and midwives for those women who choose to be pregnant.

The children would belong to every one since procreation would not be a casual event. The whole group of women would decide. The woman who requested pregnancy would need the agreement of the group since all would be responsible for the child's education and the raising of her.

In my Utopia you would be able to go for a walk at midnight if you wished. You would be safe at any time, day or night. Since there would be no guns and no police, no military, then the only things to fear would be hurricanes, tornadoes, fires started by lightning, droughts, floods all provided by nature.

No oil in my Utopia, so no electricity, cars, computers, radio, TV, phones. None of this last twentieth century. We would live like our grandmothers and great grandmothers lived. Raising our own food, as they did. Going to bed with the chickens. Electricity has done our bodies a lot of damage. We were not meant to stay up past sunset with artificial light.

Religion, as it is understood now, the binding (religio) of person to dogma would not be part of my Utopia. Women would create their own spirituality with a beneficent goddess or not as they wished.

In Sally Gearhart's world *Earthkeep* there is still the need for police

though they are women, because in her fantasy men still exist and are dangerous. They must be kept in compounds so they don't harm the earth.

In my Utopia there wouldn't be an eight hour structured day. There would be time for naps. Work would be shared between women. We would all be vegans, getting our protein from plants rather than animals.

Interestingly enough as I was getting ready to key-in the end of this article an event happened—a live wire down on the street spitting fire and taking down our electricity. I discovered this as I turned on my computer and nothing happened. So in my Utopia no computers, no internet. We will develop our own intuition, our own telepathy as Mary Daly suggests in *Quintessence*.

So this is my fantasy of what it would be like to live in my Utopia.
What's yours?

Beatrice Ilana Lieberman

*thanks to the sky
who weeps tonight
for me.
to a thousand birds
who sleep the bay
and to the gulls
who wait
on the long green grass.*

*thanks to the black sky
who comforts my mouth
and eye.
and thanks to the wild wet wind
who carries my heart
to heaven.*

Jeane Orjas

Circles of Women

*Knowing love, feeling love, loved deeply by friends and a lover, loving
Experiencing compassion, empathy, kindness, care, support, nurturing
Contentment, security, safety, trust, happiness, joy, ecstasy
are mine*

*Being a member of a circle of women, a group of close women friends,
belonging, included
Living, working, creating together in cooperative partnerships
Knowing, feeling, believing that I am wanted, cared about
Freely, unconditionally, without judgment, criticism, nor analysis,
validated
Accepted exactly as I am, being who I am, I am who I am
Expressing myself no matter what, my energy flowing through and out of me
My words move along unbroken pathways in my brain, out my hands
onto the paper, the keyboard, out my mouth in screams, shouts, crying,
laughter, my voice found
Maaa kaaa laaa hiii aaa! Wake Up!
My body and self, healed and strong, I spin, dance in joy, my arms flung out*

*Talking with women, taking my space, unselfconsciously, spontaneously,
naturally
Looking into eyes looking into mine, seeing, being seen
Being listened to, heard, listening, hearing, with understanding
Feeling comfortable, confident, calm*

*Telling our truths, our stories of suffering, grief, fear, anger,
happiness*

*Sharing our experiences, thoughts, opinions, small talk,
meaningful conversations*

Walking in each others shoes

Calling on the phone, being called, asking, being asked

*How are you? Would you like to get together? Can I help
you?*

*Going out to sip a chai latte, take a walk, in the park, by the
bay,*

on the beach, sitting on a bench watching life, together

*Going home to my apartment, clean, sparsely furnished,
splashed with warm sunlight*

*Decorated with my play art, spiritual symbols and
meaningful images*

A cat and women roommates wait for me

Sitting at table together, eating meals of healthy food

Talking, laughing, being angry, crying, nourishing each other

*Surrendering to sleep, healing, restful, refreshing sleep,
knowing that I am not alone*

Dreaming the light and shadow memories of my herstory

*Feeling relaxed, at peace, knowing friends are asleep in the
next room*

In my bed, beside me, a warm body touches me

*My right arm reaches out to lightly touch, tenderly caress
my lover's shoulder*

*Gathering her close to me, embracing her, being embraced by
her*

Feeling every inch of her body lined up with my body

*Holding each other gently, tightly, stroking each other's
backs, slowly*

Our fingertips dancing in the palms of each others' hand

Kissing her closed lips lightly, sucking on them

*Until our breaths catch, hardly move, hearts pound, blood
races,*

nerves light up on fire

Tasting, exploring, kneading, stroking our ripe abundant soft bodies

Juices drip down our chins and flow out our vaginas

Forgetting the world outside, rivulets of rain running down the window

Low sepia light from one candle flame fills the room

Being present with each other in a cozy warm bed covered with

flannel sheets

Plumbing the depths of passion, ecstasy, together

Exquisite physical sensations felt in my body, roaring emotional feelings

no longer contained

My nerves and skin burn exquisitely from the fire in my bones

Life's pulse throbs, energy radiates in waves, whirlwinds spiral in and out



“Stumps” by Nancy Nau © 2007

Alix Greenwood

Let All Be Well

*By the soft lucidity of equinox light,
Summer's colors transposed to a minor key,
By the red-limbed manzanita and the bee on the buckwheat,
The blush on the trees, the new moon in the deep blue sky,
Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By my sweetheart's courage as she prepares for her dying,
By the undocumented workers who dare to unionize,
By the unjustly imprisoned who campaign and agitate,
By every act of dignity in the worst of circumstances,
Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By every female who desires another,
Who says, I choose you, the unchosen,
Who gives her love where she is taught to betray
And daily chances contempt, hatred and death,
Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By everything that no one had to do –
Each penny given, each casual kindness,
Each tree planted, each bag re-used,
Each pound of tea fair-traded –
Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By everyone who's risked or lost their life –
Put their body before a bulldozer or rose in the Ghetto,
Ran into a burning tower, died for socialism in Chile –
Suffragettes on hunger strikes, civil rights workers lynched,
Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By the honesty of anyone who listens
To someone else's story, and holds it in their heart
Just as it is; who is present to the pain,
To the bitter and the sweet, and faces their own part,
Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By the power of life that tingles through me,
 By every agony I feel for all that is so wrong,
 By my wrenching love for this earth, my only home,
 By my searing need for justice for all beings,
 Let all be well, however that may be.*

*By all this beauty, by all this that is true,
 By the terrible luminous wonder of love,
 By the flower of peace that waits to burst from the bud,
 By water, by fire, by what is below and what is above,
 Let all be well, however that may be.*

October 2003

Alix Greenwood

On My 42nd Birthday

*The long slow pull of early evening,
 Like a boat rowed out on the westward sea—
 I would go too, where it goes.*

*The wave fingers that scroll the waters—
 I would so perfectly inscribe the world,
 With my words, my love, my actions.*

*The red cliffs, wind-patterned,
 Like the weave on cypress trunks;
 I would be so steadfast, and so eroded.*

April 2005

Andrea Nicki

Circle

*If women were in charge
we would make sure
everyone learned Native
languages
We would form a healing circle
that stretched through every single
building, church, prison
hospital, clinic, farm, store
library, house, school
that stretched for miles
of every single person
in the city
And every link would
be firm and strong
and no human or animal
would be left out*

Nicole M.

In Unison

Community is the order of the day, and communal living is the foundation.

It is extremely common for many lesbians to live together in any of a variety of configurations: A group of lesbians in one large house. A collection of households sharing a common space such as a park or a recreation center. A daily front porch or front stoop society. An apartment building that's more like a college dormitory, with lesbians constantly visiting each other and enjoying common space in a yard or a comfortably furnished basement.

Public spaces are also fundamental. Neighborhood meeting places such as parks, recreation centers, libraries, playgrounds, and coffee shops act as local government spaces. Everybody has access to them. They are where people get to know each other over time, and where they decide what their collective needs are and how those needs will be met.

Most neighborhoods are blended, but communities who want to live separately are respected. No one is invaded by uninvited outsiders demanding entrance. Lesbian households, enclaves, villages, and cities preserve their sovereignty. However, each community maintains many ties with other communities. No group is completely outside of the larger social network. Country, rural, and other physically distant lesbians maintain ties with each other and with city lesbians. Pen pal relationships are very common.

Each public space is made comfortable and unique by the women who frequent it: A lesbian who likes a certain type of music, food, or newsletter will likely bring some to share. A woman who is fascinated by a certain subject might start a discussion, study group, or workshop. A lesbian who likes to dance or sing can schedule a performance, teach a class, or hold a friendly contest.

Lesbians of widely different ages spend a lot of time with each other. Disabled lesbians, disfigured lesbians, chronically ill lesbians are not separated from others. All are mingled together, helping each other, hanging out. Old, sick, and disabled lesbians teach young, healthy, able-bodied lesbians delicious things about dance and intimacy and sex.

Lesbian companionship and love are easy to find, easy to get, easy to give. Girls and women of all ages are embraced and listened to. Some desire solitude and that desire is always respected... but no one is excluded. There

is no such thing as a woman in a prison, mental institution, or juvenile detention. There is no judicial system, and anyway, a lesbian's emotional upset is always addressed long before she does anything that might hurt herself or anyone else. All of our physical and social needs are met, and feelings of emotional desperation are dealt with by talking to others or by spending time alone. No lesbian ever wonders whether she is "good enough." No lesbian is dominated by her personality flaws. We try to understand and learn from the negative feelings that pass through us. When we freak out, it's not destructive. It's healing. We grow.

Certain lesbians are the very spirit of the community. They are the community hearts—women of extraordinary personal connection. They see and hear and love the lesbians who surround them. By instinct, they are always socially active, always involved. These women are advisors, peacekeepers, adept in conflict resolution. These are the lesbians who help guide others through growing pains, disputes, and other emotional trauma. It is common practice to take a painful, difficult problem to such a community heart, who, perhaps in conjunction with several other lesbians in the group, will aid in determining how the situation might best be handled. It is also typically a community heart who will represent her people during the occasional inter-community disagreement.

The lesbian social net is well-woven. When you don't feel good, you can go to a healing woman. There are a lot of them, and they know what to do. When you need to talk, you can go to your preferred public space. Someone will be there to listen and provide support and counsel. When you need skills, you can supplement your self-education with guidance or apprenticeship from one or more mentors. When you need information, you can go to a griot or an archivist or a strange, watchful lesbian who tends not to talk much. These women know things.

Lesbians help each other, work together, do chores together, advise and encourage each other. Lesbians share time, resources, labor, recreation, and ourselves. Information, skills, and abilities—such as food production, gardening, and construction work—are shared. Objects such as tools, books, and vehicles are also shared. Silliness and laughter are shared. Emotions are shared.

There is very, very little pollution. We live so cleanly that the lesbian with multiple chemical sensitivities can live anywhere she pleases. All food is comfort food and there are no chemicals in it. Any technology that does not suit us is discarded. There are parks, bicycle paths, clean and extremely accessible public transportation and public bathrooms, comfortable chairs

and benches, and community gardens all over the place. The concrete has been pulled up to reveal the streams and rivers that flow beneath every city. Our paths are wide and clear. We live so broadly, so smoothly, that the disabled lesbian can travel (or rest) anywhere she wants.

When a girl in a heterosexual family discovers her lesbianism, she will be embraced and warmly socialized by a lesbian household. While maintaining friendly ties with her family, she will likely settle into her lesbian community when she becomes independent.

The girls among us are raised and educated collectively by the lesbian household. Education has little to do with school; it's a part of every day. No one is overwhelmed or mystified by the challenges of raising and educating children. There is always someone around who knows what to do and who has the energy to do it.

Each girl is named according to a quality she exhibits or the personality she manifests when very small. She might be named collectively by her community. She might be re-named more than once as she grows and changes. Each woman is encouraged to re-name herself in a self-naming ceremony (either community-based or private) whenever she feels the need. She also decides what her relationship to her previous names will be. She may be called by a former name under certain circumstances. A lesbian is not summed up in a few adjectives. It is not assumed that you will continue to be the same type of person all of your life. Your sense of self may shift over time. You can change and still be accepted by the ones who love you.

In order to name ourselves well and describe the world around us truthfully, we have developed multiple lesbian languages. They are constantly being influenced and shaped by lesbians to conform to the needs and circumstances of all types of lesbians. Lesbian languages are warmer, more detailed, and more fluid than heterosexual languages.

Although the concepts are taken extremely seriously, words such as "friends" or "marriage" are not used in lesbian languages because they are too vague. Instead, each member of a relationship defines that relationship in her own way. There is no specific template to follow (such as "best friends," or a "white wedding"). Each relationship is instead personalized in this way: it is described with a unique, compound "created word," which is made up by the participants of the relationship in order to describe that relationship precisely. These "created words" are composed of any of a huge number of well-known prefixes, roots, and suffixes. Each prefix, root, and suffix has its own subtle meaning. When strung together (like words in a sentence), they form a richly descriptive word.

These “created words” also help to emphasize that the participants of a relationship are engaged in a dynamic process. A relationship is not simply something someone is “in.” It is something that the participants actively do. The “created word” used to describe a relationship is noun and adjective and verb and it will change over time as the relationship changes. It can also change according to who a lesbian is talking to and what she wants to reveal or keep private. Each of these “created words” is a poetry. Some “created words” might mean:

“we share a nonsexual relationship with mutual hobbies and a foundation of laughter”

“we are no longer lovers but maintain strong emotional ties based on our shared history”

“we live far apart and see each other rarely, but have been developing a spiritual bond over the years”

“we love each other’s intellect and philosophy”

“we’ve been arguing lately, we’re in pain, and we need some time to regain our equilibrium”

“we are new to each other, fascinated with each other, and consumed with discovering each other, sexually and otherwise”

“we are multiple generations apart in chronological age, we have overlapping interests, and we love learning from each other”

Work—all work—makes sense. There are no military jobs, no telemarketers, no administrative assistants. No bathroom attendants, store greeters, or sex workers. No priests, no lawyers, no politicians. All work produces something that is needed or desired by women. All working conditions are safe and dignified. Women routinely enjoy the products of their own work.

Work cooperatives are extremely common. Work and responsibility are distributed such that everyone gets plenty of leisure time. Unpleasant jobs are handled by everyone during a period of their youth. For example, you may get recycling or sewage system duty for a year or so when you’re in your late teens. This is not a class issue. There are no classes. Everyone has to do their share of that kind of thing.

Social organization is kept small and low to the ground. There’s no such thing as welfare, politics, banking, religion, police, a judicial system, or the military. There is no national, federal, state, or city government anywhere in the world. There’s no capitalism. There’s not much barter, either. If you

know that whenever you need or crave something, you can get it, what's the point in demanding compensation for the things you do?

Paper is no longer used as a trap. Money, birth certificates, adoption papers, identification cards, bills, personal checks, government checks, paychecks, insurance, licenses, tax forms, deeds, money orders, executive orders, court orders, police records, liens, warrants, tickets, diplomas, wills, social security paperwork, working papers, passports, visas, registrations, warranties, treaties, promissory notes, bonds, stocks, mutual funds, notarized documents... no longer exist.

People accept each other. There's no such thing as unwanted isolation, homelessness, pornography, professional therapy, prescription sedatives, or weight-loss programs and products. There are no jails, no courtrooms, no rehab, no juvenile detention, no mental institutions, no nursing homes, no orphanages, no maternity wards, and no hospice. There are no crisis hotlines. No 911. We take care of each other.

There are still men—what can I tell you?—but they are castrated as soon as they are old enough to provide a semen sample (in case children are desired later), so they're not violent, predatory, domineering, or competitive anymore.

There are no weapons, crime, or violence. No slapping, beating, or neglect of children—ever. No abuse of women—ever. No one is raped. There is no humiliation, intimidation, or contempt. No one is alienated, trapped, or broken. And although it took a few generations to wash out, sex is no longer associated with degradation and terror. Sex is never used as a tactic, weapon, or shield. Some lesbians are more sexual, some less so, but sex is beautiful and we are fearless.

Clothes, hairstyles, and body language mean what we intend for them to mean. No one makes negative judgments about what kind of people we are based on what we look like. The way a lesbian dresses or talks or laughs or walks or dances is never a target for attack. Big or small breasts or backsides or hips or thighs or stomachs or lips or hair or muscles don't mean anything in particular, and although many lesbians make a point of remembering and celebrating their racial and cultural heritage, no one really attends to skin color anymore. It's kind of incidental by now.

Holidays are not celebrated on a standardized schedule. Holidays float. They are celebrated anytime, as often as desired, whenever a community, household, or individual feels the craving or need. Celebration periods are not limited to:

- Festival in Memory of the Dead
- Old Woman Day
- Relationship Ceremonies
- Conflict Resolution Rituals
- Self-naming or Re-naming Ceremonies
- Coming of Age/Change of Life Commemorations (celebrating milestones such as menstruation, first lesbian love, menopause, and gray hair)
- Appreciation Day
- Help Parties (helping a neighbor with a large task such as building a house)
- Nature Festivals
- Culture Festivals
- Sex Day
- Carnival (during which each lesbian makes an effort to meet at least one lesbian she didn't previously know)
- Sound Day (we listen to everything, not just human voices and music)
- Maturity Day (we reflect on the growth and goals of our community, our loved ones, and ourselves)
- Ridiculous Day (we are encouraged to behave like fools)

An individual may choose not to participate in a certain celebration period being enjoyed by her community, but no woman or girl is ever excluded under any circumstances.

We generate most of our own entertainment with drawings, music, and poetry that we create, as well as conversation, storytelling, dance, games, romance, sex, and the sports that we have invented. We sculpt clay and we carve wood. We play tag and jump rope. We cook for fun. Nature also provides entertainment for us to observe or participate in. We try to notice something new every time we go outside.

What “intellectualism” there is left these days is never conducted in think tanks or universities, but at home or in public spaces, engaging all interested members of the household and community. Old lesbians are listened to and seriously considered, and so are mentally disabled lesbians. So are young girls. Everyone contributes to discourse and philosophy. New ideas are seen as fascinating, not threatening. “Small” ideas are heard and valued as much as “big” ones. Oral traditions are taken seriously.

Learning is valued, but it is rarely done in schools. Healing women, farmers, archivists, construction women, conflict resolution specialists, and

craftswomen learn not in school but by observation and apprenticeship. Books and periodicals are widely and eagerly read, but information is not thought to be stored exclusively in texts. Knowledge, history, and culture belong to women.



"Untitled" by Sudie Rakusin ©

Mary Meriam

Girl Guide

*Eat the Soup of Courage
Learn to Pray*

*Love the Lonely
Accept Nourishment*

*Let Your Natural Feelings Fly
Linger Less in Wonderland*

*Ask Yourself
Picture Outing 1968*

*Bite This
Reject Your Self Bigot*

*Love Your Most Faithful Lover
Love Your Own Lesbian Body*

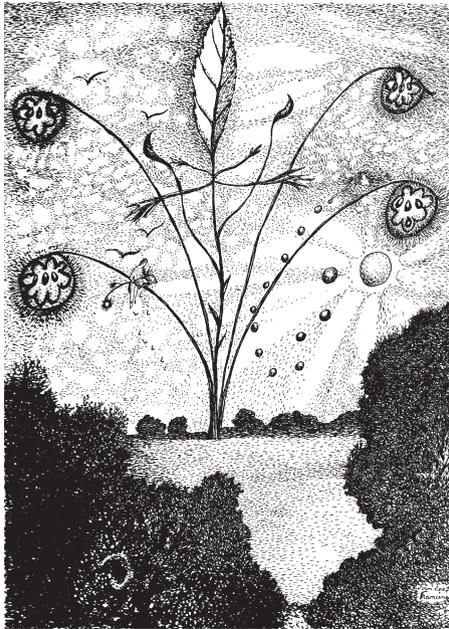
*Answer Yes
Say a Slow Hello*

*Let Your Deep Feelings Breathe
Use Fruit and Moon to Seduce*

Mary Meriam

Something Good

*I waltz with Julie Andrews in her blue
 desire dress one summer night, and we
 are floating from the castle garden through
 the edelweiss and falling dreamily
 in love in the gazebo. "Nothing comes
 from nothing. Nothing ever will," she sings
 to me alone, while silky darkness hums
 along in harmony with lovely things.
 For here you are, you're standing there, in truth
 you're loving me and touching me with your
 soft womanhood. So somewhere in my youth
 inside of Julie's sound of music, pure
 confusion slowly melts, and any doubt
 dissolves as Julie guides my coming out.*



"Untitled" by Francine

Natasha Carthew

Home

*I will give you a home
built of wood and stone
with these hands
digging
food and flowers for the table
home grown.*

*I will sit you a porch
swinging on the tropical breeze
barefoot and tipsy
kicking sand
singing songs that only you have heard.*

*I will kiss you a second at a time
from the sunset to the sunrise
chasing you into the sea
confident with the swim you taught me.*

*I will hold you a million years
to be like this
as native to the sun as to the stars
time to bury the watches
drown the clocks
now all the world's time is ours.*

Tide Turned Pebble

*My love
from the sea
a gift for you from me
a stone's throw
chanced down around the world
tide turned pebble
in hand
to let you know*

*that I will love you
 from the breaking horizon
 down deep into the silver lining
 the beautiful blue belly
 and the shoreline rising
 a gift from me
 my love
 and all the beauty of a wave to greet you
 from the sea
 the world for you
 my love
 a tide turned pebble.*

Night Swimming

*She is one head bobbing
 perhaps smiling
 laughing over fields of green
 she is the stars in a halo
 the moon in a trance
 hanging on to the dear dark sky
 night swimming.*

*She is two feet splashing
 perhaps dancing
 about the silver darts of fish
 she is the horizon closing
 the cliff face rising
 following
 further than a stone throw from the shore.*

*She is two arms moving
 perhaps waving
 drawing me in by a thread
 she is the warm salt water
 the cold night air
 gathering me about her
 turning me under
 night swimming.*



Pelican Lee

Santa Fe in 2028

The fairy appeared in front of me as I was walking through the New Mexico woods, all depressed about the state of the world. The fairies, as well as elves, trolls and leprechauns, had come along with the Europeans wherever they went. The fairy told me that she had something to show me. She took my hand, and suddenly I was walking down my street in Santa Fe on a sunny afternoon.

The newspaper in my driveway caught my eye. Since the next person who drove in would run over it, I picked it up to throw it to the side. I noticed the date was July 17, 2028. Ah... the fairy wanted me to see into the future. OK, let's see.

The biggest headline was WORLD PEACE DAY CELEBRATED. The article mentioned that when the Middle East blew up in the summer of 2008, people worldwide finally became so disgusted with war and violence and religious conflict, that there was a huge momentum to create peace and justice. Militaristic governments fell everywhere. Now twenty years of world peace and cooperation was being celebrated.

Something looked different, and when I looked up, I saw that the high fence that separated my apartment complex from the neighbors was gone. In fact all of the "privacy fences" in the neighborhood were gone. People were in their yards and on the sidewalk, talking with each other, all up and down the street.

It was then that I noticed my next-door neighbor Antonia, but she was all grown up now, in her yard weeding the flowers. She was excited to see me, came over to talk. She told me that when the Great Peace had begun, a young organizer had gathered together all the folks in the neighborhood at a potluck. People were so desiring an end to conflict at that time, that they came, even though many didn't know each other, and there were years of mistrust between some families who had lived in the neighborhood for generations. At that potluck, they agreed to participate in the program that the young organizer outlined, of weekly sessions in which they learned and experienced many new things that would lead to neighborhood peace. They were so grateful that there was something concrete that they could do, to create connection and understanding and trust among the neighborhood folks.

Antonia said that she learned a lot about not only her own culture and heritage as a New Mexico Chicana from the community elders, she also

learned about the cultures and heritage of everyone else in the neighborhood, including the white newcomers like me. And I saw there were lots of new folks in the neighborhood now—a couple of black kids were riding their bikes in circles in the street with some Asian kids. She said that everyone appreciated others' cultures and they wanted more different kinds of folks in the neighborhood because they were excited by the possibilities. Now, everyone attends the quinceañeras, the Pow Wows, the Kwanzaa celebrations, the Bat Mitzvahs, the Beltane May Poles, the Chinese New Year parades, the feast that ends Ramadan. Life is so much more fun, she said, with so much more to celebrate!

She said it wasn't easy at first, because they all had a lot of emotional work to do, to heal the traumas of growing up and living in a violent racist sexist world. But once the government changed and withdrew funding from the military, there was funding for all sorts of programs to help the people. Everyone got as much help as they needed, both individually and in groups, and bodywork too. She laughed and said that they didn't call it therapy, but that's what it was, though therapists got a lot of new training for how to better deal with the issues folks had. And they learned all sorts of new skills such as how to communicate better and resolve conflicts. There are mediators and conflict-resolution specialists available to help folks when they need it, even now. She said that conflicts still happen, that it's a natural part of life, but that it's no big deal, they get worked out and everyone grows as a result.

There was lots of new education too. Men attended classes to learn about institutionalized sexism and male dominance and how to better deal with emotions and let go of ego, among other things. White folks had a lot of work to do in their classes, to learn about white privilege and the history of racism, and to become aware of and how to let go of entitlement and arrogance, among other things. Everyone learned about compulsory heterosexuality.

Folks learned how to change generations of patterns of thinking. She said that when folks started softening and opening to each other, many more became open to same-sex relationships. She said that life was so much easier now for the women on the male end of the female spectrum, like her, and the men on the female end of male spectrum. Social ideas of what is male and what is female had expanded to include those on the extreme ends, so they no longer felt like they had been born in the wrong body. She said she had been feeling that before the Great Change.

Antonia took me into her house to meet her woman partner, Pema, who is a Tibetan Buddhist. They were married several years ago, and have all the

same legal rights as heterosexual couples. They showed me pictures of their wedding, which was a lovely combination of Tibetan Buddhist and Spanish Catholic ceremony. Pema said that although gay and lesbian marriages are now normal and legal, that single people have the same privileges that married people have, too. And that being single is as easy and as honored as being in a couple. In fact, more people were single now because of that.

When the governments changed worldwide to serve the people rather than the greed of the wealthy, poverty disappeared. That changed everything. Re-education that ended racism was essential to eliminating poverty, too, they said. People no longer got addicted to alcohol and drugs, because they no longer lived in such despair, and the cartels and governments that pushed the drugs were also gone. Drugs disappeared from the streets, and folks went into treatment programs that were expanded to have enough space for everyone.

The corporations were broken up and small businesses were nurtured. Antonia said that she could now walk to neighborhood stores that had just about everything that she needed. Advertising had disappeared from the media, so people no longer felt that they needed so much. Free health care was available for everyone, not only medical, but herbal and acupuncture and many other traditions that I had never heard of. The neighborhood health clinic was just a few blocks away.

Antonia and Pema told me that the scientists finally were listened to and heeded, when their funding changed and they were freed from the wishes of corporations and corrupt governments. Research about how Native Americans lived densely in the landscape by working with it inspired people to look into those ways. Pema told me that a book, "Tending the Wild," about how California Indians had tended the land for food, had become a best-seller. People were learning how to grow and eat local foods, so that there wasn't the need for world-wide transportation of food.

Antonia showed me the solar panels and the solar water heaters on the roof, and told me that everyone had them. Their house, which had been her great grandmother's, had been remodeled so that there were large windows on the south side for the warmth of solar gain in the winter. There were more trees in the neighborhood now, positioned just right for cooling shade in the summer, but not to block the sunlight in winter. Pema told me how, as a child, she had been so afraid that the world would end because of global warming. But that had been turned around when the oil-based economy was phased out. It had to happen fast, and it did. She said that all the knowledge about how to have a sustainable economy already existed by 2006, and it got implemented quickly when everything changed.

Antonia and Pema had to get ready to go to a lesbian party. They said that even though all different kinds of people now knew each other and did lots of things together, everyone still honored their roots and ethnicities and cultures. Lesbians still enjoyed getting together, as well as everyone else in their own groups, from time to time. They invited me to come along, but the fairy was sitting on my shoulder whispering in my ear that it was time to go back. I guess that Antonia and Pema couldn't see the fairy, because they didn't say anything. So we hugged good-bye and I left and suddenly I was back in the woods, so happy that I'd seen such a good future for my neighborhood and my planet.

Beatrice Ilana Lieberman

*green waters
 have brought me here-
 placed me upon
 this pebbled shore-
 my body
 a brown branch
 tossed
 in the brilliant
 and terrible tides
 of time-
 an ancient vessel
 i am-
 wood and stone
 carved rough
 and smooth
 by the cold hands
 of days
 or warm
 as some bright glass
 buried
 and brought again
 to light-
 beneath my broken bark
 the golden grape ripens
 inside my soul
 a rare delicious wine
 is waiting*

Cheryl J. Moore

Notes on a Momentous Anti-Utopia, 2007

Prologue

Damn the conformist shrinks
 And established medication,
 Masking my loins' wildfire libido.
 If mine is a fantasy
 Let me imagine love in peace.
 Doctors don't know what they do
 To the many sexes, not straight.
 I'm recovering from the system.

I

*What is this coldness flaming,
 Yes, at my center,
 Making me want to cry?
 So many are wrong about me.
 Lord, spare me from myself —
 Spare me from need.
 When I need one thing
 I need everything. Perversely,
 I need understanding
 And I know when
 I do not have it.
 Need makes me want to kill
 And I can't pretend
 I don't need others anymore.
 I'm dying; we all are,
 Everyday,
 As my real feelings
 Aren't "acceptable" —
 I cannot do this anymore.
 I can't. I cannot
 Wait for beauty and kindness.
 I have pretended self-possession*

*In my heart,
While my poor mind screams,
I want your love, woman.*

*I'm particular, and love my-other
Just so; I love femininity's
Blush and svelte scent.
I want a woman's woman, and
Her tender tug on my shirt.
I dress for her, my best
For her.
I want to give her roses,
Three at least, to please her.*

II

*Now a woman is so true, I say.
Heterosexual mores and folkways
Exhaust me.
I don't want to marry anyone —
I don't want a family.
I'm the utopian lesbian.
(Even my doctors are women).
I no longer read male poets —
Dylan Thomas was the last
Sensitive for me.*

*Lord, let me protect a woman
So I won't lose my way.
Mary told me I was strong
And I nearly passed out
With happiness.
Dear, dear Janice — I loved her
Even when twice she said,
"Get away from me."
She was my worst vine of pain.
She slayed me,
Soft in her pretty hairstyle
And she just —Left me swinging in the wind.*

*I've been long alone —
 No one but I would do this.
 I had to think,
 Or remember
 To trust my heart.
 Love has become a careful risk
 Of any courage tempered in me.
 I fall with my soul
 Like an intricate hybrid of heat
 And consciousness, of love that dares
 To say again,
 "We sat and talked for hours."*

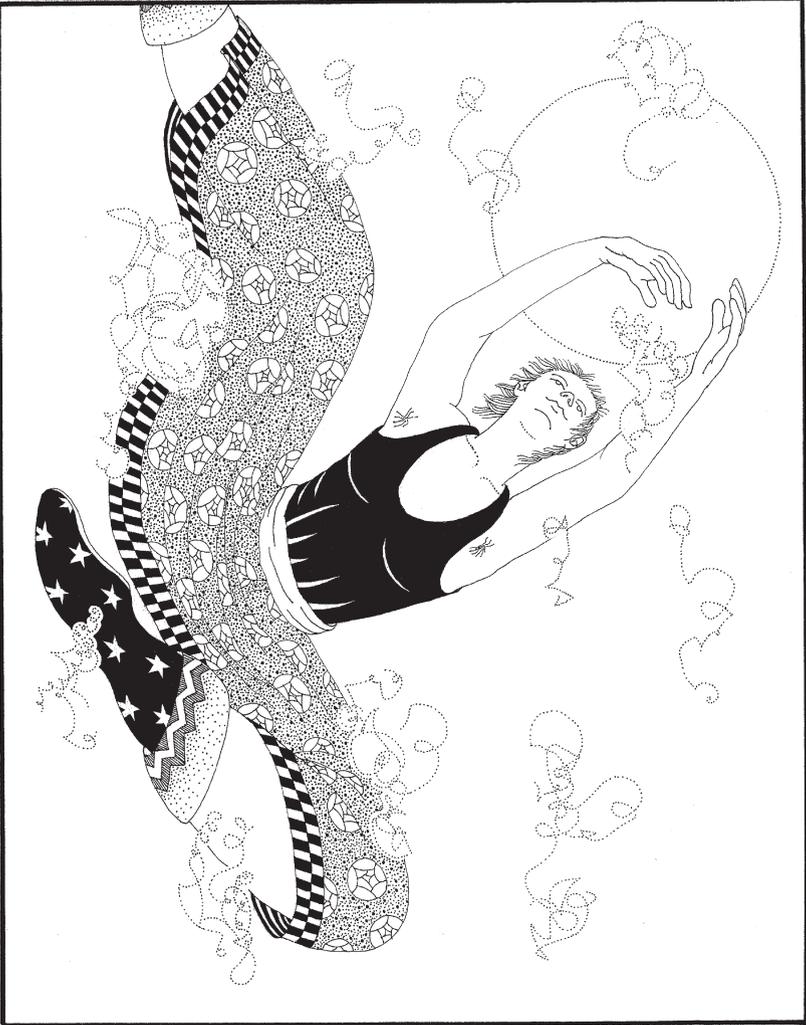
Correction: In Sinister Wisdom #71 Open Issue, we omitted the word "the" from the last line. Our apologies.

Mona Oikawa

Manitoba Winter

*Wishful desire for a woman's breath returns.
 Weekly rendezvous, 10 p.m., beyond the perimeter.
 Yearning fulfilled forestalled until light disappears.
 The cold clear Manitoba night cannot come too soon.
 Lust cuts across the flatline of past retreats.
 Somewhere in a prairie town where an ever crimson sky
 outlasts the wavering sun.*

"Spinning Beyond the Compass --Widdershins" by Sude Rakusin 1985. First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.



Batya Weinbaum

Novel Excerpt: And the Women Take Over Jerusalem

After Haya turned in, Sasha took advantage of the moonlight and walked all around the outskirts of the Old City on the wall, something one could never even think one could do before the women took over. She wandered between the statuettes of goddesses the women artists had erected in the first throes of liberation. She walked past Hecate, Ishtar, Inanna, the long row of goddesses between Jaffo and Damascus Gate. The short crooked streets composed of ancient houses with reconstructed facades suggested the layers of dwellers these streets had sheltered over centuries: the laborers, vendors, Bedouins, families and tradesmen. In the moonlight she reflected how the shops were not very prosperous now; the cafes were few and far between. Sasha remembered how the need for polarization with Sabrita, her pet name for the folk singer, had been met. Sabrita on one pole had been the knowledgeable and world-wise Israeli, the Sabra, and she, Sasha, on the other, the eager learner, the Americanit, the listener. With Haya because of the language, because of the common intellectual history they shared as Jews with roots in the more recent European tradition, parts began to emerge that were more authentically her, Sasha felt. She found she could resist, fight, speak up, be herself. The parts of herself that were lost in the process of being drawn to Sabrita who reflected something much deeper back to herself had come up again. Sasha realized she was fully reemerging. She came full circle, winding up the stone white steps. Her steps traced the shadow cast on the old stone walk by the dramatic statue of Zenobia. She made herself quite comfortable sitting for a bit in the shrine erected to Arabian queens such as Hatshepsut, replete with her false assumed beard; Sobekneferu, the female pharaoh of the Twelfth Dynasty; and sultanas whom she hadn't recognized at first when they first began to appear. Her eyes cast around under the stars and over the details of the brass columns with complicated entwined decorations. The romantic landscape and the three upside-down women's symbols representing the beauties of Sobek represented how she felt. Inside, Sasha was storming with a flash of lightening, illuminating the ruins both of the city and of her hope she had once harbored that she would be able to remain permanently in love with Haya. Her mind was like a deep trench which water carved on the shore when she felt like this. Beyond the channels and dikes, the ocean released its hissing whirlpool of monsters ticked off. Resigned, she re-entered the quarters that she shared with Haya off to the left. The kitchen shutters

were closed tight, but she could see a faint light still filtering through the slats behind her as she closed the door after walking through with calculated movements so as not to waken the woman who was still her partner. Over her ambivalence, Sasha slipped back to sleep under the peacock, their ancestral bird, along side Haya. After the long walk, she took with her the discarded Amazon shield in order not to get hurt.

Sasha lay this shield like a protective barrier between them, under the peacock, shimmering above them on the ceiling, thinking how things took their course, how good it was the Greek women learned to make such things. Thinking, as Haya half-asleep reached out for her, and turned over, that it wasn't totally fair to accuse the Jews of bringing their loves with them from Europe. Sasha sighed, imagining the two of them arguing again, as she knew they inevitably would. After all, Eichmann had paid for all the shipments, wanting to purify Germany and Austria before the final solution in which the Nazis had already planned to murder all of them. This couldn't be an excuse for violence, but she couldn't be quite so blasé about these minor facts of history. She lost the clearing of starlight and her mind became cloudy again. Sasha pushed Haya's arm off, still brooding. She found herself wishing they had at least gotten a design to reconstruct one of the Egyptian instruments they had seen in the professor's office, so she could go to the roof and play after getting a woman in the wood shop to rebuild one of them. Sasha missed her harp. She almost wanted to go back to Isaac's, find Ofra who would always take comfort in listening, and play for her.

Sasha didn't know what to do. At times she felt she still loved Haya, she really did. Even when she did not, since both their heads rested on such beautiful shoulders, physical temptation was always enough to spin them off together for awhile again. Before the women had taken over the Old City, Haya's leather-bound volumes of Mao, Marx, Heidigger, Bergson, and Freud had lined her bookshelves. Haya had gone along with the ban on all books on or by men (the mid twentieth century American Lionel Tiger's scholarship on collective male belligerence was only referred to, third, fourth or fifth hand). From other parts of the world, Sasha had never met a woman with intellectual interests such as Haya's. Sasha had taken an interest not only in her books, but also in the mind and body and heart and soul behind the great books Haya had over her lifetime so avidly collected. Haya had activated a hunger which had inhabited Sasha's entire being, which had thickened her blood, transfused throughout her bones, setting off ripples which separated the roots of her hair, giving a charged sensitivity to her skin which never entirely disappeared again. This synaesthetic seizure had marked Sasha's whole being, her sensibilities, and

her eyes with an indelible movement, changing her life and fulfilling every desire within her irrevocably. She discovered that the hunger would linger and return again. It was as if her being had received no sun, no food, no air, no warmth, no excitement, no real exposure to life until Haya came along. In this relationship Sasha had only too eagerly discovered that her very being housed open pores of yearning, misty spongy cells of absorption, something glowing, something mysterious, between her longings and the hunger of her eyes, skin, body, entire spirit. Whatever she felt had been missing, she then became. She became the nourishment and communication with which they replenished each other. Sasha remembered she had fallen in love with Haya the day Haya had had her grand piano from Haifa delivered, right to the heart of the city. Haya had given instructions for this miniature grand to be installed on a large public balcony, so any woman could play whenever she wanted, whatever she wanted, to her singular heart's content. And Haya in the same moment had left her light blue Porsche outside the walls of the reclaimed city for any woman who wanted to drive anywhere, keys left in the ignition, reducing herself to the use of a bright pink motorcycle. Sasha turned over to reach for the woman whose arm she had just pushed off, remembering why she loved Haya so much.

All along, even before the liberation, Haya had been talking about organizing a parliament of women alongside the state. Haya used to pace up and down her long shady street in Haifa, down the center of a double row of fir trees closing in a circle at the end of her block with a view of the sea. Actually when she and Sasha became lovers, Haya came thoroughly out to Sasha, not just half. In Israel, that means more than just admitting one's sexual orientation, it also means open and total confession of one's relation to world history. Originally Clara Zetkin had sent Haya's mother, the daughter of Rosa Luxembourg, that German socialist heroine, in a boat that looked like a basket down the Elba—or was it the Danube? Just before the Weimar Republic fell. An Egyptian princess raised Haya's mother. Haya herself was raised to be a slave, but a German philosophy student came to Cairo researching the concept of time in Egyptian culture and spotted her. Haya also, Sasha believed, even then, had had a job as some kind of tourist officer. Haya and the student fell in love and married, neither one confessing the true identity to the other (they were both Jewish). At the formative meeting of the Red Alliance in Haifa, Haya's husband had left her on Carmel to organize recognition of invisible Arabic districts while he went back to Germany to teach (it was difficult for young academics in Israel). At that meeting, Sasha had suggested the Women in Black wear red and orange, to

stimulate love and passion and birth rather than to honor the dead. Their eyes had met; their souls had sparked; they became connected. Haya had laughed. Sasha had laughed with her. This was the first time either had truly felt that power of absorption, this sponge of receptivity that Haya also felt. Then when Sasha announced that she had decided the name of her daughter-to-be would be Erva, feminine force, Cous Cous Nasheet, Haya made up her mind. Right there and then she decided inside, that she and Sasha, who had already been several months pregnant at that first meeting, should become officially committed to each other no matter what it would take. Haya had felt herself increasingly attracted to Sasha's passionate streak, Haya explained later. Usually she just fantasized about lovers, rather than approaching any woman that she actually dreamed of, resigning herself to the feeling that the whole business was less painful that way. But here was Sasha, whom Haya had begun to visit in the hospital in her time of labor, as a way of courting her. Haya became enamoured of the way they laughed together, making eye contact across the room at meetings and then at her bedside in the middle of the rush of the hospital. She secretly had brought the baby grand down to the Old City at her ex-husband's expense expressly for Sasha's enjoyment, after Sasha and her baby got out. Yet this Haya never told Sasha, or anyone. One meeting that first spring, the women in the take-over were trying to figure out and plan what holiday they were in, having the opportunity to create new ones, if they felt like it. Haya pointed out that the seasonal holiday of March 8th—International Women's Day—was actually a celebration of Isis. Sasha asked her how she knew this delectable fact. Haya confessed as to how her mother had gotten down the river and out of Europe in the basket with the help of Isis's white wings, so her whole family had become rather intimate with such details of Egyptian existence.

Once when Haya and Sasha were walking hand in hand in the deepest contact and communication with themselves by the site of the Western Wall, now a children's finger-painting spot together they had heard the spirit of Henry Kissinger talking. Either that or they shared the same gift of wild imagination. Kissinger was making a fist, and yelling that the Soviets would never make a victory in the Middle East. Before Kissinger realized that the Dome of the Rock as had been re-established as an Arabic women's center, he went in, dressed in turquoise turban and robe dress. Since he thought this is what one wore in Jerusalem, Kissinger had been willing to come wearing what was necessary in order to get in. Believe me, Kissinger said to Haya and Sasha whom he passed at the door on his way out, for the first time in years we are in dialogue now with the Arab world.

To this Haya and Sasha responded in a manner that one might have called cold. First they laughed. Then they warned the other women that their hold on Jerusalem might not last, and that they all better do something to solidify themselves quickly. Airplanes were circling around threateningly, backed by helicopters. “Typical male behavior,” Haya said walking away, unmoved by Kissinger’s obsequiousness to power once having sensed that power had changed, and they grasped hands again recognizing their deep need for each other.

Sasha rolled over, closer to Haya, away from the night table, not wanting to upset the woman whom at least a part of her still dearly loved any further. On the one hand, she didn’t want to divulge secrets about the folksinger with whom she had been intimately involved; on the other, she didn’t want to jeopardize her important relationship with Haya either. Some of her own lightening and anger and rebellion had surfaced at her lover having placed her in this position of split loyalties, not having been 100% behind the movement in the first place. She had missed a lot during the women’s take over because her waters had broken and some women had taken her to a hospital. Sasha hadn’t realized she was actually giving birth, thinking she would regain consciousness pretty soon again. Instead she found herself coming to in a room hollering and screaming in Bikur Cholem, the Jewish charity hospital down the street from Isaac’s hotel. The first thing Sasha remembered was a sore throat from all the tubular breathing. And then the unexpected tear between her legs, or was it a cut? Just a gaping pain down there and 50 stitches. As her baby was laid on her stomach to rest, Sasha cooed, and licked her. Haya who had come to visit her in the hospital—they were just friends then—told her of the women from New York bringing manufactured Astarte relics. They brought these to sell to religious pilgrims as soon as the international media had reported the women won their take over of the Old City of Jerusalem. And Haya had reported how the new pilgrims had begun descending, creating a new kind of tourism. The women were attacked with so much sexual energy on the way that Jerusalem advised the pilgrims to the newly declared Women’s City to come over the borders dressed as Arab men, in long traditional dress. Apparently while Sasha was screaming, thinking her baby was killing her as her contractions got closer and closer, Aphrodite, Goddess of Desire, had arisen naked from the foam of the sea in front of the Ramada Hotel in Tel Aviv. Aphrodite had gotten out of the way of six boats of so-called terrorists that were landing, and rode on a scalloped shell into the midst of Israeli folk dancing around a fountain and hotfooted it to Jerusalem. The soldiers, still trying to protect the Old City while Sasha was

in labor, stopped the goddess at the gate and asked Aphrodite for a passport. “Why,” Aphrodite said, “I have a right—I was worshipped here as Ishtar and in Syria too.” “But are you Jewish?” brandishing an Uzi one of them asked her. “That doesn’t matter anymore,” Aphrodite endeavored to explain to the rather dense Israeli soldiers, “don’t you get it? Jerusalem belongs to the women.” Or so went the new folklore, as Haya opening the trap door to her limitless imagination related the incident to Sasha still swathed securely in her Bikur Cholem maternity bedding and blankets.



“Twisted” by Nancy Nau © 2007

Judith Rodriguez and Suzanne Bellamy

Review of *The Butterfly Effect* by Susan Hawthorne.
Spinifex Press, 2005.

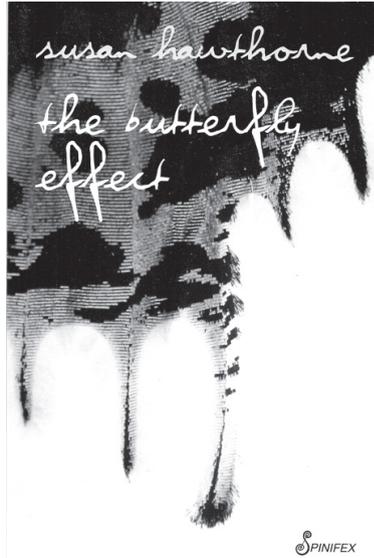
www.spinifexpress.com.au

There is poetry that seizes life, and poetry that merely inspects life. Susan Hawthorne's muse asked which road she will take, answers: all roads. In *The Butterfly Effect*, Hawthorne presents an open world richly peopled from legend, literature, family and travels, but it is the forthright voice and the singular free play of energy and will, memory and perception that hold the reader. — Judith Rodriguez

I already loved Susan Hawthorne's poetry, her critical theory works, her experimental aerials, her lesbian energy in the world. But you could have knocked me over with a butterfly when I read this book. Here she has opened up the mosaic form to all levels of lived experience with new confidence and fragility, moving in all ways to the heart of the matter, the edge of experience and the breath of tomorrow. This intense new collection gathers the accelerating parts and shoots through. More love coming.
— Suzanne Bellamy

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

— Fran Day



Julie R. Enszer

Reading Lesbian Poetry: Contemporary and Collected

Books Reviewed:

Becker, Robin. *Domain of Perfect Affection*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. ISBN 0-8229-5931-3 Paperback, \$14, 88 pp.

Clarke, Cheryl. *The Days of Good Looks: The Prose and Poetry of Cheryl Clarke, 1980 to 2005*. New York, NY: Carroll & Graf, 2006. ISBN 0-7867-1675-4 Paperback, \$16.95, 419 pp.

Healy, Eloise Klein. *The Islands Project: Poems for Sappho*. Los Angeles, CA: Red Hen Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-59709-085-8 Paperback, \$17.95, 115 pp.

Larkin, Joan. *My Body: New and Selected Poems*. Brooklyn, NY: Hanging Loose Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-931236-74-4 Paperback, \$16.00, 150 pp.

Patterson, Juliet. *The Truant Lover*. Beacon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2006. ISBN 0-9767185-2-9 Paperback, \$14.95, 74 pp.

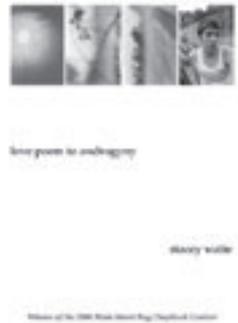
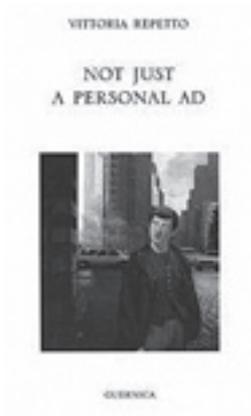
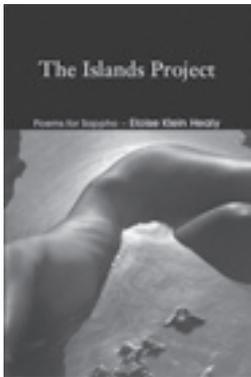
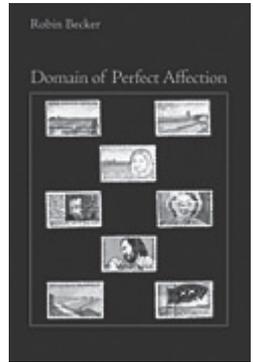
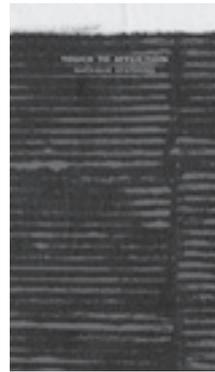
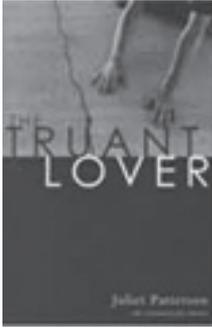
Queyras, Sina. *Lemon Hound*. Toronto, ON: Coach House Books, 2006. ISBN 1-55245-167-4 Paperback, \$13.95, 103 pp.

repetto, Vittoria. *Not Just a Personal Ad*. Toronto, ON: Guernica Editions Inc., 2006. ISBN 1-55071-244-6 Paperback, \$13, 82 pp.

Stephens, Nathalie. *Touch to Affliction*. Toronto, ON: Coach House Books, 2006. ISBN 1-55245175-5 Paperback, \$13.95, 79 pp.

Waite, Stacey. *Love Poem to Androgyny*. Charlotte, NC: Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2006. ISBN 1-59948-038-7 Paperback, \$7.00, 37 pp.

Lesbian poets continue to delight us with their words and images. This review is a round-up of nine new books of poetry by Lesbians. Collectively, these books demonstrate the breadth and depth of poetry written



Love poems for anology

Wally Waller

Member of the 1984 Book Award Jury (Special Edition)

by lesbians today; sit back and enjoy the spin through the best new words by wimmin.

Domain of Perfect Affection is the sixth book of poetry by Lambda award-winning poet Robin Becker. *Domain of Perfect Affection* takes its title from the home of artist Rosa Bonheur near Fontainebleau in France. Bonheur lived there with her lover and their animals. This new volume demonstrates Robin Becker's poetic vision at it's strongest: blending family history with artistic allusions that are grounded in the specifics of daily life. Becker's artistry is mature and in full form. This book is a perfect affection in which to relax and recreate; it is a home in which to spend a weekend.

Organized chronologically, Cheryl Clarke's new book, *The Days of Good Looks*, gathers twenty-five years of her writing. It is divided into five sections; the first four sections take their titles from Clarke's previously published collections of poetry; the fifth section, titled "The Days of Good Looks," brings together nine new poems by Clarke. In addition to poetry, each of the sections ends with two to four essays written during the same period as the poetry; the essays are gathered here for the first time from disparate publications. Reading through the entire collection of *The Days of Good Looks* allows one to revisit the lived history of the Black, queer, and feminist movements of the past twenty-five years and to remember the power and importance of Clarke's voice.

The Truant Lover is Juliet Patterson's first full-length book of poetry and the winner of the Nightboat Books Poetry Prize. Patterson's work turns on fragments and montage collected together with attention to sound and feeling. For instance at the conclusion of "Homage to Francesca Woodman," one of the strongest poems of the collection, Patterson writes,

We cannot say anything.

She is also breathing heavily.

She was found naked
trembling with cold, waiting

for the proper exposure.

Patterson's work may be new to many readers and some may find it oblique, but her concerns with writing the body as well as exploring passion and injustice will delight those who take the time to explore fully her poems.

Nathalie Stephens is an exciting Canadian writer who blends and bends genres in her native languages English and French. *Touch to Affliction* is her newest book of poetry, and it is a meditation on contemporary language and philosophy. Provocative and beautiful as well as dense and complex in its construction, this is a fine book of poetry by an established poet who should be better known among Lesbians in the U.S. and around the world.

All four of these books were nominated for the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Poetry. They are indeed among the best books published in 2006. The fifth nomination, Sina Queyras' collection *Lemon Hound*, won and rightly so. If you can only read one of these books, which would be a shame, *Lemon Hound* is the one to read. This collection of six prose poems is Queyras' reading and reworking of much work by Virginia Woolf. Queyras' language is dense, layered, and gorgeous. Her lesbian-feminist sensibility shines throughout the text. *Lemon Hound* is one of the best books I read this year and a book to treasure.

In addition to these five books, all nominated for the Lambda Literary Award, there are four other new books deserving of your attention.

Eloise Klein Healy's fifth book of poetry, *The Islands Project: Poems for Sappho*, is the sort of book that lesbians pass to one another saying, urgently, "Here, you must read this." The poems of *The Islands Project* are important for the stories that they tell and for the history that they explore. Immediately, *The Islands Project* is an exploration of Sappho as a historical progenitor for Healy as a poet. Beneath the surface, *The Islands Project* is an intimate exploration of contemporary lesbian life and the historical conditions that allow us to live it. The fifty-one poems in *The Islands Project* woven together become Healy's most powerful book to date. It is a book certain to become a treasured classic in the canons of Lesbian poetry.

Vittoria repetto describes herself as "the hardest working guinea butch dyke poet on NYC's lower east side." Her hard work has paid off with the publication of *Not Just a Personal Ad*. The collection of forty-nine poems by repetto is staggering in its attention to story, image, and identity. From the first poem, repetto's work grabs you with its plain diction and style coupled with its emotional directness and honesty. The real reward for Lesbian readers begin with the poem "The size of it" and continues through the end of the book. These poems are erotic and sexy. There won't be a dry hand in the house after reading them.

Joan Larkin began publishing in 1975. Her first collection of poetry, *Housework*, was published by the women's independent press Out & Out Books, as was the iconic first anthology of lesbian poetry, *Amazon Poetry*,

which Larkin co-edited with Elly Bulkin. In 1981, *Amazon Poetry* was updated, expanded, and published by Persephone Press as *Lesbian Poetry*. Both anthologies are out of print and are indispensable to Lesbian literature as Larkin is an indispensable Lesbian poet. For the past three decades, Larkin has continued to publish poetry, prose, and translations as well as edit anthologies. *My Body: New and Selected Poems* gathers Larkin's newest poems with selections from three of her earlier books. *My Body* begins with thirty-two new poems. They are poems of life and death, celebration and grief. Larkin's new poems are expansive in their subject matter and their location in time and place. They also are grounded in the things that make poetry strong: images, new and startling observations, like the consistence of a person's ashes, and the excavation of significant relationships – families, caregivers, lovers, and friends. Among the old favorites collected in *My Body* is the delightful "Vagina" Sonnet.' It begins,

Is "vagina" suitable for use
in a sonnet? I don't suppose so.

A famous poet told me, "Vagina's ugly."

Meaning of course, the sound of it. In poems.

"Vagina" Sonnet' concludes with this couplet, "a waste of brains—to be concerned about/this minor issue of my cunt's good name." This sonnet is a classic in Lesbian-feminist literature, and it is lovely to have it available in print to readers again.

Finally, check out the chapbook *Love Poem to Androgyny* by Stacey Waite. The twenty-two poems in this collection, the winner of the 2006 Main Street Rag Chapbook Contest, are dense and provocative. Waite's earlier chapbook, *Choke*, won the 2004 Frank O'Hara Award. Hopefully her full collection of poetry will be published soon.

This slew of new good books by Lesbian poets is an indication that a Lesbian writing renaissance is at hand. As readers, that makes us very lucky.

**The author acknowledges The Lambda Book Review in which some portions of this review appeared earlier.*



“Augur: Soothsayer, a Diviner by the flight and cries of birds/words” by Sudie Rakusin 1985.
First published in *Wickedary* by Mary Daly.

Contributors' Notes

Corina Abouaf has had twenty-five years in the dental field, from assisting to management and sales. She has been a special services coordinator for the Renaissance Pleasure Fair creating programs for the physically and mentally challenged. She has also been program coordinator for a prestigious arts and education agency, and is now retired.

Margie Adam is a singer/songwriter/pianist who joined with other women in the mid-1970s to create and expand Women's Music as a cultural and political phenomenon. Her music, performance and activism continue to be informed by an irrepressible belief in the vision she first encountered in 1973 in "Sappho Was A Right-On Woman" by Sydney Abbott & Barbara Love: "To transcend her circumstances, [the lesbian feminist] may defy the reality of the present and purposely live openly as though the present were the future. By envisioning and demonstrating a new reality for and with lesbians, she also creates it." Margie has released nine recordings of music intended for healing and empowering women while building community. Her most recent work, *PORTAL*, is a contemplative solo piano CD and a short meditation DVD featuring ancient Scottish megalithic imagery set to Margie's gentle jazz score. www.margieadam.com

Shaba A. Barnes has been a community activist most of her adult life. After moving to the West Coast in 1969, from New York City, Shaba joined the National Organization for Women and quickly became the secretary of the Los Angeles Chapter. She also joined the Feminist Theatre which was active doing guerrilla theatre or street theatre as well as performances at Universities in California. Shaba has been active in theater, acting, and producing. She was instrumental in achieving Domestic Partner Rights for all members via the Lesbian and Gay Association at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Los Angeles. She is a CO-Director for Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC), the only organization of its kind dedicated to combating Ageism; OLOC was founded by and for Lesbians over 60 years old. Shaba presently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico with her partner of 38 years. She enjoys poetry readings as she continues to seek avenues of expression by sharing insights on the spiritual and the power of being an Old Lesbian. She is still available to teach workshops and classes with a spiritual theme.

Dean Brittingham: Award-winning photographer Dean Brittingham is a longtime radical lesbian feminist living in Sonoma County, California and finding peace and love in the natural world.

Lynn Brown has always been a poet and lover of language, the creation of gardens, vision and touch with the intention towards friendship and healing.

Natasha Carthew is a young lesbian writer from Cornwall in the UK. She has been published in numerous National magazines, has won awards for poetry and has had three books of poetry published; her latest book *Flash Reckless* having been published by the internationally acclaimed lesbian/feminist publisher Onlywomen Press (www.onlywomenpress.com).

Natasha lives in the country with her girlfriend of ten years, where she is currently working on a new body of country poetry.

Chicago Women's Liberation Union: Out of the upheavals of the 1960s came a group of Windy City women determined to challenge the suffocating male supremacy of the time. They joined the growing women's liberation movement and organized the **Chicago Women's Liberation Union** (CWLU) which touched the lives of thousands of women through its many organizing projects from 1969-1977. We say that a small group of women can make mountains move. That was the lesson of CWLU workgroups in health, education, employment, and gay rights, to name a few. There we created the ideas and actions that helped women liberate each other from oppressive beliefs and old social habits. Now we are sharing our history on the Internet to inspire new generations to continue the struggle for justice and equality. www.cwluherstory.org

Chrystos, writer and Native Rights activist, won the Audre Lorde International Poetry competition in 1994 and the Sappho Award of Distinction from the Astraea National Action Foundation in 1995.

Tee A. Corinne (1943 – 2006): A regular contributor to *Sinister Wisdom*, Tee Corinne's artwork has been identified with the journal since her cover and poster for issue #3 in 1977. Tee was the author of one novel, three collections of short stories, and several poetry chapbooks. Her most recent book of art, *Intimacies: Photos by Tee A. Corinne*, published by Last Gasp of San Francisco, was a Lambda Literary Award finalist. A gifted and versatile artist, Tee worked with photography, line drawing, paint, sculpture, ceramics

and printing, and she also published erotic fiction and poetry and reviews. Favorite cover artist for lesbian publisher Naiad, Corinne's work is found on bookshelves across the Lesbian Nation.

Martha Courtot (1941- 2000) was an activist and a prolific poet. A native of Cincinnati, she spent twenty years in Sonoma County, California. She once wrote, "I write to keep the ghosts in the corner happy."

Billie Dee is the former National Library Service Poet Laureate (2000-2001). She earned her Doctorate from the University of California at Irvine. Her poetry has appeared in both print and online journals, most recently in haiku-related publications. Her latest chapbook, *Hooves of the Wild White Mare*, was published by Burning House Press in 2005. She lives in Southern California with her long-term partner and a batch of strays. You can visit Billie's website at <http://www.geocities.com/billiedee2000>

Alix Dobkin, raised in Philadelphia, was a guitar-teenager in the 1950s. Immediately after graduating from the Tyler School of Fine Arts, Alix headed north to NYC's world-famous Gaslight Cafe, and from that rich, heady, heart of Greenwich Village culture, launched her full-time, professional folk singing career in the early 60's. Focusing during the first decade on an international and contemporary/ protest repertoire, she came out as a Lesbian in 1972 and turned to writing and singing for women in general and to building Lesbian Culture in particular. Over the last 25 years, Alix has traveled to hundreds of women's communities in the USA and abroad.

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

Roxanna N. Fiamma: I live in northern California with my landmate, Fran. I have been a Lesbian Separatist since the mid 70s. My Utopia is nature.

Francine, born in 1957, lives on land in France with another Lesbian. She is a plant and cat lover. She has Multiple Chemical Sensitivities. Never het, she is interested in Lesbian culture, especially separatist, organic gardening, and connecting with other Lesbian Separatists and Lesbian Feminists.

Diane F. Germain is a French-American Feminist-Lesbian psychiatric social worker who created and conducted a strength group for Women Survivors of Incest and/or Childhood Molest for five years. She was arrested and jailed for

protesting the objectification of women in the “Myth CaliPORNia Kontest” in 1986. She was a staff cartoonist for *Hot Wire: The Journal of Women’s Music and Culture* of Chicago and for *Lesbian News* of Los Angeles from 1987 to 1995. She was a collective member of Califia Community, a feminist education retreat. She creates humor as a hedge against the heterosexist phallogentric patriarchy and to tickle the Lesbians.

Alix Greenwood: I am an english lesbian, white, middle-class, 44 years old; I came out at 25.

Jae Haggard: 25 years ago when I left my first Homestead I looked for a name I could grow into--Haggard, she who is strong, independent and makes her life with wimmin. Our Lesbian community and the Earth have provided the opportunities to do that and more. I’ve also learned about Connection. I am a blessed woman.

Susan Hawthorne is a novelist, poet, theorist, aerialist, academic, activist and publisher. Her books include *The Falling Woman* (novel, 1992; reprinted 2003); *Bird* (poetry, 1999); and *Wild Politics* (non-fiction, 2002). Her books have won awards and been listed among the year’s best books on several occasions. Her latest book *The Butterfly Effect* (poetry, 2005) is a collection of poems about lesbian culture. Her poem “Strange Tractors” from *The Butterfly Effect* is included in the anthology *Best Australian Poems 2006*. In 1996, she was the Winner of a Hall of Fame Award, in The Rainbow Awards for her contribution to the Gay and Lesbian Community. Susan is also a member of the Coalition of Activist Lesbians and over the past four years she has written articles for numerous publications including for the *Journal of Hate Studies* on the torture of lesbians internationally. She is a Research Associate and supervisor of PhDs in Creative Writing at Victoria University, Melbourne. She is also a performer who combines aeriels and text and in 2005, she was invited to perform *Eye of a Needle* at the 10th International Women’s Health Meeting in Delhi, India. She is the co-founder, with Renate Klein, of Spinifex Press. She is currently working on a new novel and another collection of poems.

Shevy Healey was born in 1922 in Poland, immigrated at age two, and grew up an atheist/communist/Jewish/only child of a single mother. She was a union activist. Married with one daughter, she went to school and worked as a social worker and psychologist. Coming out as a lesbian at age 50, she

was mentored by Barbara Macdonald. She conducted workshops on sexism/alcoholism/sexuality/gay identity, and was a conference speaker. Founder of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change in 1989, she and her partner, Ruth Silver, traveled and lived at Apache Junction. Shevy died in 2001.

Shawn Helmen: I am a Black Lesbian, a poet, currently incarcerated.

jody jewdyke: proudly obvious big Jewish Dyke Separatist, 36, currently living and working in Vancouver B.C. Canada. For now, I share my home with a wild and wonderful fat orange cat named Matza. Am passionate about Lesbian cultures and communities and am so appreciative for all the great Dykes then and now, near and far who help make our Lesbian dreams come true.

Sonia Johnson, 71-year-old author, activist, presidential candidate, says, “When the ERA died, so did my early naive hopes of reforming patriarchy. I knew then that not only was another world necessary and possible, but that she was on her way. She’s very near now and I intend to be here to welcome her!”

Pelican Lee was a pioneer of the lesbian land movement and women’s spirituality in the 1970’s, and is a white anti-racism activist. She has lived on lesbian land in Oregon, California, and New Mexico. She currently lives part-time at West Wind Women’s Land and in Santa Fe, New Mexico with her partner of 17 years. She has self-published *The Owl Farm Stories* and *Circle Songs from Lesbian Lands*.

Bea Lieberman: I am... mother, teacher of children, folksinger, lifelong poet, lover of high mountains....member of Mothertongue Feminist Theatre Collective, a link in a long line of dedicated idealists and great skeptics.

Jacqueline Elizabeth Letalien: After living in the urbaness of Oakland and San Francisco for twenty years, she now resides with the cat Fur in the wilderness of Humboldt County, California. She writes a monthly column Kulture Klatch for the L-Word (The Lesbian Voice of the Northcoast). L-Word website:www.lword.mamajudy.com/index.htm

Frances Lorraine is an old Dyke artist, writer and daydreamer who enjoys living in Honolulu and loves life but never takes it too seriously.

Mary Meriam's poems and essays are published (or forthcoming) in *Literary Imagination*, *Light*, *The Barefoot Muse*, *Wicked Alice*, *Poetic Diversity*, *So to Speak*, *Lodestar Quarterly*, *Sinister Wisdom*, *Street Spirit*, and *HLLQ*, among others. Her first book of poems, *The Countess of Flatbroke* (Modern Metrics, 2006) features an afterword by Lillian Faderman.

Cheryl J. Moore: I began writing poetry in 1980 after being hospitalized for anxiety and I believe poetry saved my life. My manuscript is called "Waterpaths" and I have written three lesbian short stories, the second of which was published in *Sinister Wisdom* #49. Other publications include *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*, *Sojourner*, *The River*, and *Sensations Magazine*. I haven't written enough yet about my black and lesbian consciousness. "A Winter Poem" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2005.

Ruth Mountaingrove: I am always a visionary. part of being a pisces I suppose. I'd like to live in my Utopia. It would be quite a difference from the world I live in, always aware of who is around that might mean me harm and I don't mean women. If you want to know more you can google me Ruth Mountaingrove. If you want to e-mail me my e-mail address is ruth3@humboldt1.com.

Nancy Nau grew up in Southern California, where she earned two Master's degrees, both in Fine Arts, taught for a living and raised three children. Then Nau moved to Minnesota where she worked in pastoral care, penned two poetry books, and three children's books and where she is earning her doctorate in education and the arts (ABD – all but the dissertation). Now that Nau is living in northern California, she states that she "...recollects in tranquility..." and at last, has enough time to paint, write, and submit her work to publishers.

Andrea Nicki: I am a professional writer and poet, and have published in several journals and anthologies, such as *Feminisms* and *Stories of Women and Healing: Women Write Their Bodies*.

Nicole M.: I'm Black, 37, irreligious. I'm naively obsessed with figuring out how we might get to Utopia. I can be reached at P.O. Box 1481, Oakland, CA 94604 if you want to share ideas with me or if you just feel like writing to me. I'm also interested in lesbian cultures and perspectives (especially Separatist analysis), community-mindedness, personality, listening, intuition, imagination, and how you've been doing lately—because I'm always worried

about you. Please take care of yourself as best you can, and never forget your own power and creativity.

Marjorie Norris is an ardent writer who belongs to two writing groups: Women of the Crooked Circle and Spiral Sirens. She was “Just Buffalo Poet-in-Residence” in 1999, and has taught creative writing at State University of Buffalo’s Women’s Studies Department and Chautauqua Institute, as well as participating in Feminist Women’s Writing Workshop in Ithaca, New York and Southern Lesbian Writers’ Conference outside Atlanta. She has been published in *Arizona Mandala Quarterly* and other national publications.

Mona Oikawa is a Toronto-based writer, teacher, and researcher. She is Assistant Professor of Social Science in the Atkinson Faculty at York University and Coordinator of the Certificate in Anti-Racist Research and Practice, and the Race, Ethnicity, Indigeneity Program. Her book *Cartographies of Violence: Women, Memory and the Subject(s) of the “Internment”* is forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press.

Jeane Orjas: I am 66, single, never married, have no children, and retired after 35 years of doing non-skilled paperwork in San Francisco’s clerical army and being an administrative secretary. I am disabled with chronic health conditions and injuries. My passions are feminism, feminist spirituality, paganism, magic, mysticism and my spiritual quest. I have written in my journals on and off for 30 years. I am in a women writers’ group. Having a computer for three plus years has made it easier for me to try writing essays, poetry and my autobiography. This is my first published writing.

Pat Parker (1944-1989): African American Lesbian poet who often presented her poetry, performing with other women writers, musicians, and activists. She wrote about loving women, the legacy of her African American heritage, the lives of ordinary Black people. Both in her personal life and as a political activist, she eloquently linked the struggles for racial, sexual orientation and class equality.

Doreen Perrine has been published in various anthologies and literary e-zines including *Sapphic Voices*, *Raving Dove*, *GayFlashFiction*, *Harrington Lesbian Literary Quarterly*, *The Queer Collection*, and *All Ways A Woman*. Her playwriting has been performed at Here Arts Center, WOW, Under St. Marks Theatres, and Manhattan Theatre Source. A member of the International Women Writer’s Guild, Doreen has presented her writing through the Pen

& Brush Club and Snug Harbor Cultural Center in New York and her short fiction was accepted for regional program, *Story Time Live*. Also an artist, Doreen coordinates a writer's opportunity where she resides with her beloved and three black and white cats in upstate New York.

Sudie Rakusin's love and concern for the Earth and Her creatures influences all of her choices and permeates her work. Rakusin's art has been widely reproduced in newspapers, magazines, and calendars and can be found in such books as *The Once and Future Goddess* by Elinor Gadon, *Seasons of the Witch* by Patricia Monaghan, and *Wickedary, Outercourse, and Quintessence* by Mary Daly. She lives outside Hillsborough, North Carolina, on the edge of a meadow with her Great Danes, surrounded by her gardens and a forest. View her work at www.sudierakusin.com.

Ida VSW Red still dreams of a lesbian feminist utopia as she enters her 75th year.

Kim Rivers: I am a 40-year-old dyke separatist of western European ancestry, living in western Massachusetts, currently abled-bodied, but legally blind. Dianic witch. Troublemaker to the heteropatriarchy I teach self-defense and aikido.

Betsy Rose is a singer, songwriter and community song leader, and was a pioneering voice in the emerging Women's Cultural Movement of the 70s and 80s, singing at national and international festivals, and joining voices with artists such as Holly Near, Bernice Reagan, Cathy Winter, Malvina Reynolds, and others. Her songs have been sung or recorded by Pete Seeger, Ronnie Gilbert, Meg Christian and Cris Williamson, and Bobbi McFerron, as well as women's choirs and choruses. "Coming Into My Years" is recorded on two of her CDs; her most recent recording, "Welcome to The Circle", is a collection of songs from her Womansong Circles, participatory singing circles for any woman's voice. You can order her music from www.betsyrosemusic.org <<http://www.betsyrosemusic.org> or from www.Ladyslipper.org.

Chris Sitka has been an Australian lesbian community activist, writer, researcher, and creative thinker for the last 35 years. Her writings have been widely published in Australia, and internationally, in lesbian and feminist publications and she has given many inspiring talks and workshops. Currently she and her pup are writing "The Canine Manual For Training Humans."

Sharon Stewart: 47 year old incarcerated Lesbian feminist, active in womyn's and environmental causes for 35 years, currently advocating for improvements in healthcare for prisoners. An avid outdoorswomyn, I have lived in the mountains in Washington state, hiked the canyonlands in the southwest and kayaked extensively in Florida.

Sunlight: I have long dreamed of an ideal world of peace and love, seeing Lesbians blazing the trail by living it. *WOMONSEED* was my vision of that trail and where it leads. As the years unfold, I see glimpses even now as we move always closer to that dream becoming the reality. I have learned at last that to change the world, we need to change ourselves, and bit by bit, we are doing so. Let's celebrate that!

Tanager is a Dyke Separatist Connectionist working to build Lesbian Nation. As an activist, she is dedicating her life to nurturing Lesbian culture, community and friendships. She is passionate about Lesbian feminist literature, animals and the Earth. She treasures Lesbian-only space.

Jean Taylor: As well as being a radical lesbian feminist activist, Jean Taylor also identifies as a working class, non-Indigenous, Celtic Australian who has just been granted the Old Age Pension, much to her immense satisfaction.

Batya Weinbaum is the founding editor and editor in chief of *Femspec*, a feminist speculative journal. She has written psychoanalytic theory about women's liberation and socialism, work place relations, and oral history with women in Israel as well as Jungian explorations of islands of women and Amazons, and contemporary science fiction. She has published poetry, fiction and theory widely as well as numerous reviews, and is working on a play now as well as painting from goddess archetypes and finishing the novel excerpted here.

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

Michelle Wing is an urban writer and poet who has spent much of her adult life in Seattle, Osaka, Kyoto and San Francisco, but now lives in the country in northern California with her partner Sabrina, her faithful dog Ripley, and a houseful of other animals. She has been published previously in *Sinister Wisdom* and *Sonoma County Women's Voices*, and works as a columnist and reporter for the *Calistoga Tribune* in Napa Valley.

Amy E. Winter is a radical lesbian feminist blogger and the webspinner of feminist-reprise.org, an online archive of radical feminist writing.

Susan Wiseheart and Jenna Weston are Aradians who moved from the Grand Rapids, Michigan area to rural lands in Southern Missouri. They are in the process of editing a book about Aradia. For more information e-mail susan@wiseheart.com.



Cottontail. Barr Lake, Colorado 2007. Photo by Roxanna N. Fiamma. This little Cottontail is about as tall as my hand. She did not run away but settled into the little hollow she had dug and watched me pass. Such a Magic Moment.

Books Received

Annie On My Mind (Commemorative Edition) by Nancy Garden. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1982. Interview with the author, 2007.

Calyx: A Journal of Art and Literature for Women. (Winter 2007).

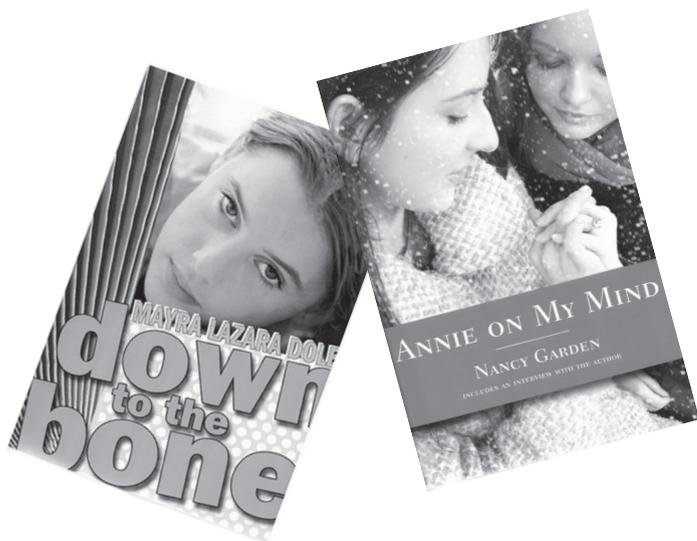
Canadian Woman Studies Journal / les cahiers de la femme: Ending Woman Abuse. Inanna Publications and Education, Inc. (Winter/Spring 2006).

Canadian Woman Studies Journal / les cahiers de la femme: Canadian Feminism in Action. Inanna Publications and Education, Inc. (Summer/Fall 2006).

Down to the Bone by Mayra Lazara Dole. HarperTeen, 2008

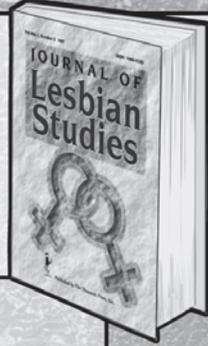
Erzulie's Skirt by Ana-Maurine Lara. Redbone Press, 2006.

Hear Us Out! Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggles, Progress, and Hope: 1950 to the Present by Nancy Garden. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007.



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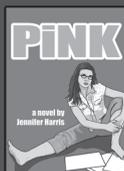
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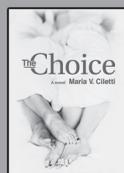
Dream on, dream big. *Pink* is the Walter Mitty-esque tale of a lesbian writer who fantasizes about her novel and the resulting complications the book presents in her life. Love, fame, and fortune all line up to do cartwheels in this rollicking satire about a woman suddenly faced with what MIGHT happen.



The Choice

A novel by Maria V. Ciletti

The Choice explores the difficult struggle Mina Thomas, a nurse with a loving husband and a successful career, endures after meeting Regan Martin, an attractive new nurse she is assigned to mentor. Long-buried desires are awakened within Mina, pushing her toward the need to finally make the choice that, in one way or another, will forever change her world.



Glamour Girls

Femme / Femme Erotica

Edited by Rachel Kramer Bussel

Glamour Girls is sexy and sensual while it explores issues of bisexuality, burgeoning desire, gender roles, appearance, and power—all within an erotic context. It gives voice to femme-loving femmes and acknowledges their well-deserved place within the queer community, showing that femme/femme desire is far more than a male-authored fantasy—it is an authentically lesbian experience.

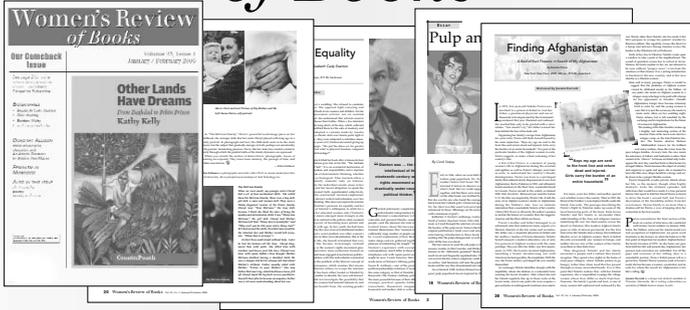


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Corrections

Credit information was missing about the artists of the covers of back issues of *Sinister Wisdom* printed in *Sinister Wisdom* #70. We apologize for this error. Here are the covers along with the names of the artists.



Jasmine Marah



Friends On Park Bench
by Terry Hauptman



Celia Rodriguez



Companionship by
Aly Kim



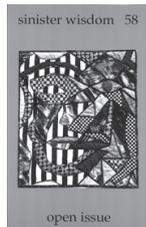
Old Lesbians/Dykes
Old Lesbians:
We Are Everywhere
by Nicky Spencer



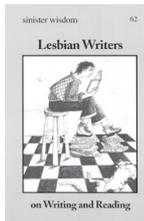
Sudie Rukusin



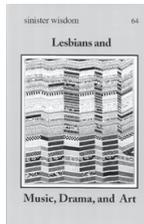
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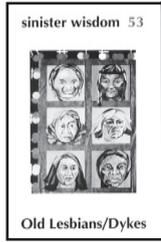


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 - #70 30th Anniversary Celebration*
 - #68/69 Death, Grief and Surviving
 - #67 Lesbians and Work
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Upcoming Issues: Call for Material

Please read the submission guidelines on the inside back cover before sending material.

Please check our website www.sinisterwisdom.org for updates and details.

#73 Two Spirit Women of First Nations Forthcoming
Guest Editors: Chrystos (Menominee) and Sunny Birdstone (Ktunaxa)
3250 S 77th #8 Tacoma, WA 98409. Email: creeptoes@yahoo.com.

#74 Activism Latina Lesbian Style! Forthcoming
Guest Editor: Juanita Ramos, P. O. Box 678 W.V.S., Binghamton, NY
13905-0678. Email: companeras1994@yahoo.com

#75 Visual Art Due: January 1, 2008

Editor: Fran Day

Artists should send B&W photos or drawings (duplicates) of their work (no slides). We prefer that you mail material to Fran Day, P. O. Box 1180, Sebastopol, CA 95473. Images sent electronically must have a resolution of 225 for photos and 600 for line drawings. TIFFs are preferred. Please do not send large files electronically – send each photo or drawing separately to fran@sonic.net.

#76 Lesbian Theories/Lesbian Controversies Due June 1, 2008

Guest Editor: Julie Enszer

Sinister Wisdom has always been a place for Lesbian theories to be created, expanded, evaluated, and discussed. What are the theories that are driving our lives today? What conditions in our lives do we need to think about, analyze and share with one another? What are the controversies within the Lesbian communities today? What controversies are spoken? What controversies are unspoken? How are we working to understand, share, and celebrate the controversies among us? Creative explorations of Lesbian Theories and Lesbian Controversies are sought for this theme issue of *Sinister Wisdom*. The guest editor is interested in current theories and controversies about Lesbian separatism, contemporary Lesbian culture, patriarchy, Lesbian identity, and Lesbian life. Especially welcome are submissions that challenge, incite, connect, and create new theories and new controversies as well as collaborative submissions by multiple writers, artists, activists, and thinkers. Send material for #76 only to Julie R. Enszer, 6910 Wells Parkway, University Park, MD 20782 with SASE for response or email JREnszer@aol.com

#77 Theme to be announced Due October 1, 2008

Editor: Fran Day fran@sonic.net.

#78 Call for Guest Editor(s) Contact Fran Day for information