

MAMA BEARS

NEWS & NOTES

AUGUST
SEPTEMBER 1986

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 4



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NOTES and NEWS

Congratulations to Producer Robin Tyler and the crew putting on the 7th Annual West Coast Women's Music & Comedy Festival at Yosemite this Labor Day weekend (see details, page 27). And to the 3000-ish women planning to be there—you're backing your culture with your hard-earned bucks, and spreading it. To all of you we dedicate this issue of Mama Bears News & Notes.

When we (Carol & Alice) started by founding a Woman's Place some 16 years ago there was no "women's culture". It started all over the country with women's dreams, visions, energy & love. Women such as Judy Grahn, Del Marín & Phyllis Lyon, Alix Dobkin, Margaret Sloan-Hunter, who have been creating women's culture from the beginning, are being honored at this year's festival. There are many like us, and Robin Tyler, plying our trades for a decade or more, and to see all our labors bearing fruit is thrilling.

MB's Carol & I have been experiencing a kind of sheer joy, which no words or label exists for, that there is so much good reading being created, as it shows that our endless labor of the past 2 decades, the past 15 spend in selling women's books, has, indeed, been "worth it." We knew there was gold in them thar hills, worthy of our drive and spirit.

Our cover is a collage Susan made of the performers at the festival, including authors (see who's who on p 12), some of whom also have articles or fiction in this issue...and there is an amazing inter-relatedness. This...historical synchronicity... as B.S. Bull calls it, is one of the most telling aspects of the women's movement as we know it for the past almost two decades affirms our resolution. Women's movement is a symphony.

Mama Bears will be at Yosemite too—in the Craftswomen's area, with lots & lots of great books, including those of all the published authors performing at Yosemite. We'll have book signing parties with them too—look for posted schedule at our table. And come by and visit! We love exchanging notes about our geographically-separated communities; being in touch, so to speak, is as easy as that.

There are increasing numbers of books now that make crucial differences in our lives, and empower us, and further the development of our culture, which furthers the development of those books...and that's

how it all happens. Those are the books Mama Bears focusses on, as do all of us, and will bring to Yosemite.

With this calendar period, ending in September, Mama Bears completes 3 years as a women's bookstore and culture center. And a busy time it's been. Busy and wonderful, if sometimes nerve-wracking.

This expanded 28-page issue you're holding, bursting with nourishment, was made possible by our advertisers—who are also the women who socialize and buy women's books at Mama Bears and places like it, and are just as likely to turn up at women's festivals, or your next party. By supporting Mama Bears advertisers we develop community. Just the fact that we can put out a newspaper this large—supported by advertisers who let us know that our readers do support them & their businesses says a lot about our growth as a community/culture since 1970. Next issue you'll find a table of contents for all of our previous issues—back issues can be ordered at \$1.00 per copy!—(and we're bringing a collection of back issues with us to the festival! There have been some really exciting articles in these last 3 years by some of the hottest lesbian writers, speakers & thinkers in the nation & at Mama Bears!

MAMA BEARS USED BOOK SALE

The exciting thing coming up here at Mama Bears is a giant sale of used books—of all kinds, at bargain prices. Mass paperbacks will be 25 cents each (or 5/\$1.00), quality or trade paperbacks will be 60 cents each (or 2/\$1.00), and hardbacks for 1 dollar each (or 6/\$5.00).

This is an eclectic community, interested in everything under the sun (including some real quality trash, folks), and our used books reflect that richness. Many, of course, are things that fall outside what we want to use our serious book-buying budget for. So come in and buy armloads while the sale goes on—all August and September. (Besides what's at Mama Bears right now, we have many, many more boxes of books stashed away...which means new shipments every week!) Three cheers for random-access reading! It's every bit as necessary and rewarding as focussed, directed reading. Let that book you need find you.

(Continued on page 7)

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ART SEEN AROUND



IOWA
an exhibition of paintings
by Tina M. Rumbaugh

I've chosen 12 recent paintings for this show at Mama Bears. They are in three distinct categories: portraits of specific women in my life, images of women in my life transposed into what I call "Universal Women Symbols", and a series of portraits of woman musicians.

This exhibit is a good example of my current involvement in art with an alibi, finding phantom-like images, with some elements overlapping to give impression of movement, interesting visual textures and soft blending of shapes and colors. The central composition and the use of bright local color is also typical of my work.

My interest is primarily in painting the images and concerns of lesbians and our community—so my audience is of course those same women. Being from Iowa I feel the concerns for the Mother Earth and am doing many ritual paintings in my personal attempt to try and do some healing for the earth. I feel so strongly that she has been continually raped and stripped of her strength, beauty and power and we all must take the responsibility to see that this is stopped. So, my work has a political, social and ritualist meaning; I feel most comfortable working with images that take on a symbolic meaning and use color/vibration to extend even further the deep meaning of each work. I sincerely hope that one or more of my paintings touches you deeply, give you something positive, and leave you with the desire to return to drink from them again.

On display at Mama Bears through August.

SEPTEMBER

WITH AGE—IMAGES OF OUR ELDERS is a nationally curated show of 18 different women artists' interpretation of age. Juror Ann Meredith has chosen 35 pieces from 21 different artists from all over the country to pay homage and cast attention on the timely process of aging. These photographs, watercolors, paintings, collage and sculpture will be on display at Mama Bears from September 2 through September 30. Reception, 3:00 p.m. Sunday, September 7, 1986.



Photo by Ann Meredith

Some B.S. from B.S...

photo by Ann Meredith



HAPPINESS AS A POLITICAL EVENT

When my parents were fifty they had their dignity to keep and a stability that was never risked. They knew that each generation thought it was different and had the illusion that it would change the world. I was taught to respect my elders, as though wisdom automatically accrued with physical disintegration. My parents didn't believe in change and I hardly believe in anything else. It's hard to take being fifty seriously considering that I still get zits and put myself through changes with my foolish behavior, but I do appreciate having lived through such interesting times and having personal experience of the past by which to see the threads and currents playing with the future.

My first movie (in 1942) was about Tarzan fighting some evil Nazi spies. In a nation engaged in righteous war, the phrase "for the duration" applied to food rationing and it applied to a suspension of all personal morality as well. They were primitive times full of alcohol and copulation; a giving over to grief, greed, and heroism.

We came out of war a people who had no place they could understand—in the scheme of things. We were so clear and involved while it lasted that what we returned to was no longer enough. World-wide powers that were not nations started playing their games behind our backs. Television developed. Having a contained war in Korea, Joe McCarthy and etc., are periods I remember in black and white, drear and unreal. Romance, on the other hand, was being painted in full colors, in all those MGM movies. Being fifty means you went through an extra ten years not fitting into what seemed to be a totally dull and unreal world. It means something in you survived without validation or connection. We bred stamina in our stubbornness.

In the sixties we were called by music, changed by drugs and, when we found each other, irrevocably bound. It became a common faith to believe in change, to believe we had power and, for a moment, to believe in love. We evoked violence from the establishment. We were criminalized, made outlaws unto ourselves. We are people who meet outdoors and who assume that every phone is tapped. It's not paranoia, it's a simple fact of life to anyone who would choose how she will live her life.

I remember how vague and purpose-less the world seemed after the war. Materialism was like a new religion of booze and confusion that people who'd lost the other faiths could cling to.

The Primer for Adult Children of Alcoholics by Thomas Cermak, M.D., \$3.00., reports that most ACAs learned, as children: Not to Talk, Not to Feel, Not to Trust. Our parents hid themselves from the judging eyes of their children by choosing in favor of their favorite juice; whether it was booze, Jesus, or the blood of demented sea-serpents. I like the ACA Primer because it gives access to information about what was probably done to you and leaves you free to choose what fits. It's matter of fact and, best of all, asks no process of you.

I've heard from an amazing variety of people who've become happy for the first time in their lives because of the ACA Movement. From suddenly recovering heavy abusers, to my cousin Susie, who's a matron of Kansas City. There are some other contexts, such as *Women Who Love Too Much*, \$4.50, and *Co-Dependence: Misunderstood, Mistreated*, \$7.95, and it seems that some real change might be underway again. If people can get free of the childhood programming

that binds them, if people can discover happiness, and if it got popular...

The horror of change is the letting go, the grieving for a dream. Seeing what it really is, in fact, that we have been clinging to—is sometimes all it really takes.

Alchemists and anarchists; there are infinite revolutions to be made. None of us would really choose to be a prisoner, choose to be locked up in rituals of power and pain, if we weren't afraid. I was made to fear intimacy as an infant and it ruled me for 46 years. I wish I'd understood it decades earlier. Being fifty, etc., means we've endured that kind of crap at least 20 years too long. Being an anarchist means being pissed off that it's so difficult to be happy in this world. Why must we be oppressed, poisoned, penned, and patrolled just to live? Why must people spend their lives keeping track of used money, or destroying their health in needless labor, just to eat and have decent shelter? Why can't people leave each other alone? Why is there so much pain?

My parents were born into gas-lit homes run by servants and organized by the dictates of social position. They were good and fair people according to the traditions of the world as they knew it. Dignity and stability were corner stones of their self respect. They believed in the divine right of western nations and the sanctity of the adversarial American system. They were protected from it. They were not outraged that some human beings get away with radiating, oppressing, and legislating the lives of others. They adapted to automobiles, electricity, radio, depression, inhumane and evil war, television, and flying half-way around the world in an afternoon. They were born into a world in which people had beliefs they took for granted and which, in the end, left them nothing to believe. They couldn't adapt and they certainly couldn't talk about it.

Their generation had reason to be afraid of change and to run away from the vulnerability of love. I couldn't believe a thing they told me.

It wasn't until the late sixties, when everything began to change in and around me, that I had my first real taste of hope, joy, and meaning. Walls were breached in us that let in rushes of awe and a comprehension of beauty that could be shared among strangers. The old guard was roused to violence and sent in troops to stop us. The color leached out of the world and we ran away. To sex or drugs or rock & roll; we learned we couldn't change the world and we left town. We got organized and learned to do things. We spent a decade accomplishing steps and blowing it every way we could. Now there's nothing left for us to do except to do whatever is ours to do as best we can and nothing to believe in except ourselves. For fifty-year-old wildcards (as Alice Molloy calls us), perhaps it's taken us this long to wear our energy down to where we can control it.

In 1978, I wrote a poem titled 'The Winds of Change' in which I lamented the absence of the old excitement. In 1984 the bottom dropped out of my world and I was pushed into 'going through changes' again: Without the faith it was an interminable nightmare, a vicious ordeal for a rite of passage I did not choose to undertake. (See "Despair As A Rite of Passage," by B.S. Bull, in the Feb/March 1986 issue of *Mama Bears News & Notes*.) Others of my creaking sisters of the sixties have been sucked into the vortex of change, now, as well. There is no thread of dream left to ride along, as nothing remains for us beyond

(Continued on page 25)



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Astro-Logic

STORIES FOR OUR TIMES

By Elaine Blake



See Calendar: Aug. 13
& Sept. 17

If astrology is to be of any use to us as women remembering ourselves, we must find in it some stories that will make us whole through the living of them.

The Greek/Roman mythology represented by the well-known names of the signs and planets offers stories that fragment us and cut us off from our memory of matrifocal times. Its deities are remote and judgmental, and (no surprise here) mostly male. We get Mars, god of war; Aries the Ram; Jupiter, King of the gods, etc. The only goddess directly acknowledged by astrological symbolism, Roman-style, is Venus as "Goddess of love and beauty." The sign Virgo has a female picture, always with long blond hair and a negative connotation. I mean, that's all, folks. Not much, but enough...as a symbolic and magical tool, astrology's presentation of these images powerfully reinforces our concept of ourselves as patriarchal women.

To reclaim our heritage and our identity as women of power, we need to repopulate the Zodiac/chart/psyche. And, fortunately for us, several dedicated researchers and writers (such as Barbara Walker, Merlin Stone, Max Dashu, etc.) are now providing us with glimpses of pre-patriarchal archetypes. Webster's defines archetype as "original pattern or model," and these predecessors of the Greek/Roman gods have much to offer us, as you will see from the notes below. (You Taurans need no longer identify with that bull...)

It's been tremendously exciting and empowering to begin to use these new/old archetypes in the chart, seeing in each sign its ceremonial role and magical function.

I have applied these images in my own life and offered them to clients, and they have been eagerly welcomed as meaningful and useful. To live these memories is to heal ourselves, and it is my great hope that astrology can reclaim its own role as a healing art.

You can help! I have a vision of a book being born from this work, and for this I need a lot of feedback. Please write me (c/o Mama Bears): Do you recognize these beings/stories in your life? How are they alive for you? Do you recognize in yourself a need to live them?

If you make some changes in your life based on this information, let me know what happens. Keep in mind that your Sun and Rising Signs are signs of apprenticeship, not roles that are already familiar. Include your birth date (and time and place, if possible). This project is necessarily a shared one, for only together can we bring in the goddess.

Aries/Mars ♈

The Fallopiian tubes/uterus/vagina as the Path of Emergence. The bloods, the power of the life force, sexual energy. Spirit/Thought becoming manifest, creating a body. Persephone, the return of Spring, renewal: Initiation.

The courage/bravery/aggression/violence (cutting, peircing, blood-letting, etc.) necessary to get born, hatch. Amazons, warriors who fight for life, to live, to awaken, to manifest themselves, to come into being.

Taurus/Venus ♉

The Sacred Cow (yes, they have horns) as source of abundance. Pandora who brought gifts of the Earth Goddess for the people. White Buffalo Woman who brought her gift (the Sacred Pipe) to the people. Fruit. The accumulation of matter, wealth, gifts, things of value—as resources to be shared, seeds to be distributed. Self-worth, what is of value because it is a gift. The Path of Abundance. Manifest energy. Cornucopia (horn of plenty) that pours forth all the fruits of the earth.

*Isis, Hathor, Egyptian goddess of abundance,

whose body is the earth, but she also appeared as Heavenly Cow and daily birthed the Golden Calf (Sun). Her milk is the Milky Way. Mother Earth, Gaia, Earth Woman, Corn Woman, Rhea, etc.

Gemini/Mercury ♊

The Sacred Twins who represent the relationship between the two aspects of a duality. The androgyne, hermaphrodite; Coyote, the trickster. A double person, and therefore magical; one who unites with her spirit double and who thus sees into more than one world. She often takes on different forms, as the situation requires, including appearing as completely "normal" (a variable state!). Information gathering and communicating; storytelling. The Messenger. Seshat (Egypt) goddess of writing, measuring, recording. Multiplicity.

Light-and-dark; Innana-and-Erishkigal; Naotsete-and-Uretsete; twin daughters of Thought Woman (Pueblo); the katsinas, magical spirit messengers; Iris, Greek messenger goddess between heaven and earth, rainbow.

Great Moon ♀

The Great Mother as womb, cave. She who gives birth and she who is hungry and eats/devours/receives the dead and nurtures them into rebirth. Memory. Container of creative power, immortality. The breasts as source. Food. Self-nurturing for the purpose of maintaining a fruitful, nurturing and protective womb state. Pregnancy, fulfillment.

Artemis of the many breasts, nurturer and protector, especially in birth of animals; Ix Chel (Mayan Moon goddess); Ala (Ibo/Nigeria) and Durga (India), providers of life and Mother who receives in death; Ma; Hera, pre-Hellenic goddess of women and fecundity and of moon cycles.



Leo/Sun ♌

She who is reborn with the will to express her own worth, the gift of her being. The Sun goddess, the Child, the Star of the Show, the Actor/Performer, radiating light and warmth, vitality. The Center, the Hub, the Heart, she who vitalizes the circle around her so that it remains whole. Demonstration of the life force; play.

Amaterasu (Japanese), Akewa (Argentine), Sulis (Celtic), Sol (Norwegian), all Sun goddesses; the Dreamer (in Pomo and other Indian tribes) and White Buffalo Woman as central tribal figure; Ishtar as Lioness, Shining One. Bastet (Egypt) the cat goddess and Sekhmet (Egypt); lion goddess, the Mighty One.

(Continued on page 25)

INTERVIEW WITH
ROBIN TYLER
(pictured here
with Lisa
Ulrich-marsh)

Photo by Stephen Stewart



PUTTING ON THE FESTIVAL

MB's: What is the most difficult thing about putting on a Festival?

RT: Getting and keeping land. This year, the East Coast Festival (NEWMR) lost their land because the scouts wanted the word 'lesbian' taken out of the program... along with other unreasonable requests. NEWMR refused, lost the land, and had to cancel this year. This was not the first time they lost land. Sisterfire, the Festival (although not for women only) lost their land in Washington this year and had to cancel. One of the reasons the Michigan Festival bought land is that for the last 2 years in Hysperia they had increasing trouble from the man they rented from. The National Women's Music Festival was thrown off the campus at Champaign, Urbana, because it was a lesbian festival.

MB's: Are you sure that was the reason?

RT: Yes. I was the Production manager the last year and went to the Dean who made the decision, and he told us that.

MB's: But it's been held at Bloomington, on campus with no problems.

RT: Because they rent the facilities and pay high prices. But the one in Champaign was sponsored by the student union, and therefore, far less costly.

MB's: Has this ever happened to the Festivals you produce?

RT: Absolutely. We rented a campground in Georgia for the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival —because it was owned and operated by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Begin Jewish, I knew these were supposed to be liberal Jews. Many of the gay synagogues belong to U.A.H.C. They have a policy of non-discrimination toward gays.

MB's: So, what happened?

RT: After the 2nd year, a Baptist newspaper reporter wrote an article about 'extreme feminists' at the camp going around, holding hands etc. Then one of the county councilmen decided to raise the camp's taxes because we were not a 'religious group'. Instead of fighting the county, which has a history of extreme anti-semitism in addition to racism—the county had

allowed the KKK to meet there—the camp chose to try to get rid of us. Although the last year board voted to have us back last year, this year, with increased pressure, they got scared.

MB's: Are you going back there next year?

RT: Yes. Our attorney, Kay Tsennin, and I went to Susan McCreivy of the A.C.L.U. in L.A., who got in touch with Nan Hunter, the attorney for the newly formed A.C.L.U. National Lesbian Gay Rights Project in N.Y. They got in touch with both the U.A.H.C. and the camp. One month ago, they said we could not come back and they had the right to rent to whom they wanted. Today, I found out, after A.C.L.U. intervening, that we are going back there for our 4th Festival. But it was quite a struggle...

MB's: What about here in California? Has there been any trouble?

RT: Yes. The city of San Francisco owns Camp Mather. The West Coast Women's Music Festival was the first group they rented the camp out to 7 years ago. We had the camp 2 year. A few local people complained that we had too many people for the camp (3500). The City of San Francisco threw us out. Last year I found out that the Strawberry Festival, a 'straight' Festival, had 6000 people at Camp Mather. Not only that...they were allowed to do it on Labor Day, which we were refused 7 years ago, and they have a long term contract. Which we were refused. We're trying to rent the camp for a different weekend next year, and Parks and Rec. Department told our attorney they didn't know if this event was 'appropriate' for Camp Mather. In California gays and lesbians are supposed to be protected with regards to renting, and yet, here is the city of San Francisco, openly and blatantly discriminating.

MB's: Do you intend to pursue it? RT: You bet. Our attorney had been in touch with them... and we have informed the A.C.L.U. Recently, a lesbian won a case against Magic Mountain in L.A. because

they did not want to rent to gays...for a gay night. If San Francisco Parks and Rec continues to discriminate against lesbians...we will sue for our rights.

MB's: Any other camps throw this Festival out?

RT: Yes, the Boy Scout camp in Willits also threw us out.

MB's: But you've managed to keep the Festival going for 7 years now...and it has grown back up to the original numbers of women. What's the best thing for you and your staff?

RT: The best thing is the letters we get from lesbians saying that they feel free and safe... a lot of them for the first time in their lives. In the South...women came on the land and broke down crying...because they had never 'come out' before, and had never been with other lesbians—where they were in the majority. Even here, on the West Coast, we get the same response.

MB's: Who produces the Festival?

RT: I do, along with Lisa Ulrich-March and Pat Harrison. Plus the most terrific crew of co-ordinators and workers.

MB's: How has the Festival changed in the past years?

RT: Well, we've added a film festival, a disco dance every night, and although we have always sponsored political speakers, this year we're also sponsoring lesbian authors as well as the political speakers. And, we are having a rally against the LaRouche amendment on Saturday night on the Main Stage. We have never done this before, but feel that it is the most oppressive initiative...and the most dangerous to the gay and lesbian movement in recent years. Couple that with the Supreme Court decision on sodomy...and we felt it was time for a main stage political rally. We also book many more performers than we originally did.

MB's: What's the hardest thing for you at the Festival?

RT: The most difficult thing is that by the time I get to the Festival, I'm burnt out... from the constant battle to get and keep land, as well as all the work involved. I am very thankful for the wonderfully dedicated women who work with us on the land. Without them, we could never do it.

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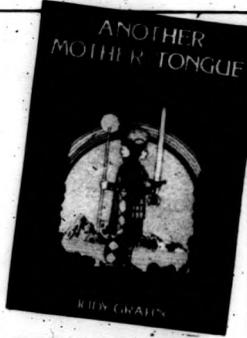
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AMAZON RISING FROM THE DUST

an excerpt from
The Queen of Swords

By Judy Grahn



AT YOSEMITE

Photo by Irene Young

GATE SIX (Helen believing she is alone in the bar)

HELEN: What dreadful thing is lying there as though growing from the floor.

(Corpse of Pen [Penthesilea] in the dust)

PEN:
I am not graceful in the first movement.

HELEN: You—who are you?

PEN:
I have been the Amazon in the dust.
From dust all things arise.
The arm up first, fist clenched and then the first shoulder while the other hand braces, teeth over the tongue wrenched flesh pulled tight over the skull to form a human face.
I'm a little awkward getting up.

HELEN:
Don't bother, then.
Just sit where you are, at least until you have your face on.
You look like a pile of bones from some garbage pit.

PEN:
The last time we met was during the great war, not that one, the earliest one, at famous Troy the seven-levelled city of three thousand years ago. You had gone there to be with Paris of your own choosing. What bitterness of life in hard mouthed Sparta drove the queen of sexual intelligence and beauty to go so far away we guessed: it was that Sparta took a vow of deprivation. Then they could not rest until they forced you back, stripped of your protectors. Just the day before we Amazons arrived, they had killed Hector, your best warrior, next to me. "Able to make men mourn," my name signifies, supreme Amazon speeding to the neediness of Troy, leader of twelve good maiden, battle scarred and with fierce reputation. We were the last hope that queenly Troy could keep intact and reachable, the greatest beauty in the world.

HELEN:
I remember that day.
The sky was a sheet of crystal and the wind was still.
I ran to see your arrival from my windowsill.
You were like Artemis to us, you arrow-carrying Bear-dikes. I could tell how Hector and the other men had learnt some of their skill from you, and then too, what can confuse a man more than a naked female breast with a bloody ax behind it?

PEN:
You and I met before the fight. I strode into the hall—on the great long-legged stride my mother prized me for.

You turned almost at once to look me up and down. My cheeks burned with pride though inside I felt more like a clown.

HELEN:
The Amazons were coming! To fight on our side! We women were electrified. You looked strange to us—but exhilarating. I was especially electrified by you.

PEN:
I knew it too, that moment at least, when our eyes met across room. I was your last battle ax and you threw it.
By then, with the war in its tenth year I don't think you cared much whether you stayed with Paris or your husband won and took you home. You had no way of knowing he would be master from then on, and would accomplish it by letting the patriarchal children murder you. You flew into a cloud of dust, Helen, you withdrew.
We didn't know what slavery stood on the other side of my downfall.
We put up the hardest fight they ever saw, carved their gullets and split their craws, set them mewling in their own fear, pinned to the ground with their own spears. I had never seen men die of terror.

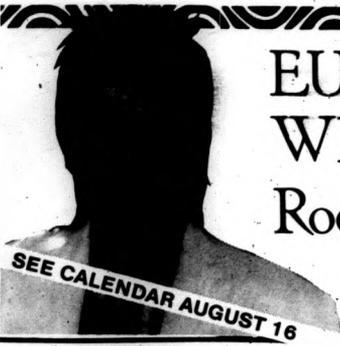
HELEN:
I remember that day. During the fight some of us thought we should run outside to help you, stand beside with shield and mace and other weapons. Someone reminded us, you trained all your life for this—we are different, we carry a different burden, stand in a different place.

PEN:
I know you were watching when Achilles killed me.

HELEN:
I wanted to turn my face and couldn't. I was transfixed. No one imagined you could ever be beaten, let alone raped and dragged around like a dishrag.

(Continued on page 23)

Photo by Fran Roccaforte



EUROPEAN WITCHCRAFT: Roots of our Past

BY Z BUDAPEST

Ever since the sixties, it has been fashionable to see everything of white race origin as evil. We carry the scars of racism with us into our everyday lives, even into our spirituality. To deal with racism is our duty, but so is our acknowledgement of a past before the time of racism, when Europeans and Native Americans, Blacks and Asians all worshipped the goddess of life under many names and celebrated her with all their talents and love.

In this all embracing reality of female deity who is there for us as mother, friend and lover, roots a mighty strength for women as psychic carriers of the tradition. We are not orphans who have been abandoned by a capricious god, after creation, but we are organic parts of this female god as her children.

You may ask, "So where is the proof of all this, Z? How can I trust a spirituality that is from Europe?" We of the white skinned daughters share this tradition with all our sisters around the world. Being white is no longer the point. Shedding the guilt that makes us wish we were Indians, or Blacks, or Asians, is an important step in dealing with racism. Claiming the pride of our own spiritual tradition whatever we are is getting rid of racism in our daily lives.

The Goddess Movement did an ingenious turn, and we became eclectic, incorporating all the elements we could from many traditions for ourselves, without giving up our own. Because the women's community is multi racial, multi rooted, it is natural for new women's traditions, such as the Dianic (Women's Mysteries), to be a tapestry of what has survived.

Much has survived! The ugly hand of the Christian Inquisition didn't reach far enough to destroy the women in Latvia, and today we have literally millions of poems to the Dearest Goddess written in those burning times, when the rest of Europe was tortured and dying.

The Dearest Goddess folk poetry is a proud measure of what is possible when the hand of wrath doesn't threaten women. Daily, they wrote poems, songs, and passed them down to each other. On the shores of the Baltic Sea these gentle ladies busied themselves with their art, living with the Dearest Goddess as their family.

I started memorizing these poems and planned a dialogue with these women of old, with a modern woman from the Bay Area perspective. The dianas perform well, sound very natural, and I even started writing some from my life perspective as well. I am excited to present it first at Mama Bears. It is a type of work that is new to me; not a lecture, not an informational gathering, but something from the hearts and lives of women in Europe, and my own experience. I shall mingle improvisations with the poems, and discuss life and death, love and hate, all with the Dearest Goddess, and we shall see what she shall say.

—by Z Budapest

Many thanks to Eso Benjamins for the translations, and Current Wine Publishing who put these poems out. Please come and partake in the treasures on August 16th at Mama Bears,

make their living from the community and/or spend their income on it, financially liberating ourselves. And our culture is a powerful tool of liberation if for no other reason than that its major focus is on healing, that which heals.

Community is as community does. Can be oppressive, become ingrown, feel exclusive. Our personal relationships—as mothers, lovers, teachers, sisters, business partners, housemates, etc.—are the ties that bind us. Our interwoven sexuality, through which we seek each other out across all identity barriers, is a counterforce that neutralizes tendencies to exclude because of such things as race, class, size, age, fitness, etc. (It is bureaucracy that nepotism is anathema to, not community.) We are not isolated individuals in community. We are in families within tribes within this community...developing our own economic base.

Will the women's community grow until it absorbs everyone in the world in it? Probably not. But will our "culture" gradually replace the patriarchal cultural imperatives? I don't see why not. Overwhelmingly, Americans want to feel good physically and emo-

tionally (and know AMA medicine can't do it), want out from their own alcohol & drug dependencies, and believe in live and let live, fair play, honor & integrity, and the necessity for spiritual nourishment. Overwhelmingly, the mass political movement of this time is being able to be in control of, and responsible for, one's own life. And to feel good about it. This political movement has not yet found its voices, style, and approach in mass politics.

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(Continued on page 20)

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NOTES & NEWS

Continued from page 2

Community is as community does. First We said *Women's Liberation Movement*. Then we said *Women's Movement*. Then it became *Women's Community* and for some, *Women's Movement Community*.

Liberation, movement, and community...a continually interacting flow. The movement toward women's liberation (and gay liberation) resulted in women's community...And mainly who started this movement were women of the community created by black civil rights, anti-war, and drug/music liberation movements, who were moved in those movements to awareness of the need for women's liberation...and who then meshed with the steadfast few carriers of the torch from the earlier century's women's movement and with the tiny band that stood for lesbian rights. And with mad housewife Betty Friedan, she who looks like a dyke but is not a lesbian, whose 1968 book *The Feminine Mystique*, electrified and activated a whole nation of women.

Now we also say *Women's Culture* or *Women's Community Culture*. This means that lots and lots of women buy from and sell to each other;

Z BUDAPEST



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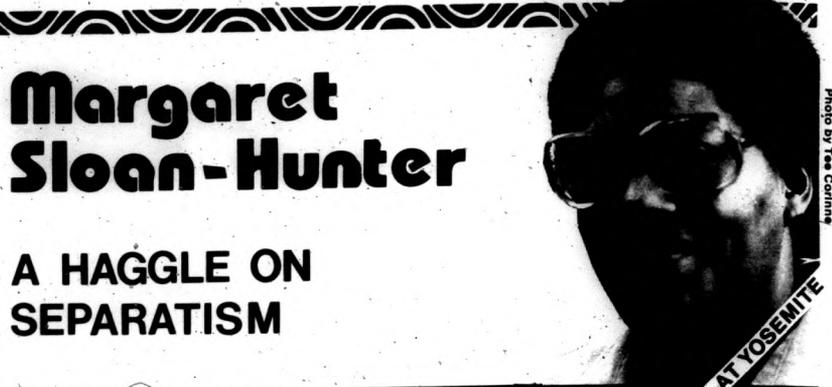
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Margaret Sloan-Hunter

A HAGGLE ON SEPARATISM

When I came out of seclusion recently (I'd been in seclusion for three years) one of the things I decided what to do was to own my contribution to the women's movement. And so I'm going to give a little bit of history and talk about how I developed my separatist politics.

I'm from Chicago. I began writing when I was very young and I was published at 11 in the now (thank Goddess) defunct magazine called *Ingenua*, which was like a 'baby Seventeen. At fourteen years old I began my political activism in the Black Civil Rights Movement in Chicago. I worked in CORE and SNCC and SCLC and the Peace Movement throughout high school. At 19 I became pregnant. I was an unwed mother and I married heterosexually. During that time I started to get frustrated by the contradictions in the Civil Rights Movement and the Left. I did not appreciate that my function, my importance, was judged by the male I attached myself to, no matter what work I did. When we questioned these things we got the standard response that we were supposed "to have babies for the revolution" and "fuck for the revolution"...all this for the revolution and meanwhile we were feeling that something was wrong here, but we really didn't know how to articulate it. It was actually the women in the south, SNCC (Ruby Doris Robinson), who posed the question to Stokely Carmichael at that time, "what is the position of women in the Black Civil Rights Movement?". His response was "Prone". What he meant was suppine. Ruby and those women coined the expression, Women's Liberation Movement. And that paper trickled down to a lot of us and we started questioning and examining. If Black people suddenly got all of our rights and were free in this society, just what would our position as women be? Most of us felt it would be taking care of the babies and cooking grits for the revolutionaries. Nothing about our lives as Black females in a racist and sexist society would change.

I got involved in the Feminist movement that was growing in Chicago. The first conference on Women's Liberation was held in this country just outside of Chicago. I made a very conscious decision to become involved in the feminist movement. It wasn't a difficult decision but I knew that there would be sacrifices. The choice was either to commit my life to a struggle and deal with the sexism of Black men or commit myself to a movement and deal with the racism of White women. What made it easier for me was that I came out.

I then got involved in Gay Liberation, with our brothers. My lover, myself and a few other women in Chicago founded the paper the LAVENDER WOMAN. We were a part of Chicago's Gay liberation and we became very frustrated at the sexism among our brothers and so we chose to pull away from CGL and formed the Gay Women's Caucus and out of that grew a lot of things.

Michal Brody recently published a book, *Are We There Yet*, \$8.95, documenting our experience in Chicago during those painful and growing days.

I came out in 1970, August 1, in West Des Moines, Iowa.

I continued to be involved politically. We lived in a collective household in Chicago and we did not define or use the term 'separatist household', but it was. Men were not a part of any of our lives, but we did not define it. It wasn't that we were afraid to define it. We just thought that we were living as Lesbians lived.

As I continued to write I met Flo Kennedy. She introduced me, at that point, to Gloria Steinem. Actually Gloria and I met on the phone in the snow. I was supposed to do a lecture with her and I flew to Wisconsin and got snowed in and she couldn't get in and so we met via phone. I was supposed to fill in for Flo. And from that meeting and relationship, we talked about the frustration of writing for magazines that we were afraid to read, or too embarrassed to read. At that time, 1971, many of us were writing stories for the traditional women's magazines and we'd be sandwiched between "how to cook hamburgers 30 different ways." And so several of us talked about that and, to make a very long story short, we founded *Ms.* magazine in 1971, and I moved to New York.

At that point I was still not living, what I would call, a separatist life. I had come out as a Lesbian and had been on talk shows. In fact, I came out to my mother by telling her to listen to a radio program. I told her it was about Women's Liberation. It was a five hour talk show about Lesbianism and me. I had been on David Suskind and David Frost and other shows. I was coming out as a Lesbian. I was reading some of the stuff that was coming out on the separatist politic. Specifically the paper that was written by The Gorgons. It was the first separatist paper that I had ever read, it might have been the first one ever published. I read it and thought, wow, but I didn't feel that it really affected my life. I had developed a relationship with Alix Dobkin and I loved her and I thought—I can't be separatist because I don't want to live in upstate New York on land. I didn't want to raise my daughter, Kathy, up in the country. But everything about it appealed to me.

Ironically, my separatism became pretty solidified by going around for three years lecturing with Gloria Steinem on sexism and racism. And my consciousness became raised by that. We lectured in every state except two, Canada, Europe and Mexico. And after awhile the pattern became very predictable. She would rap, I would rap and we'd open up a questions and answers period, and a man would ask the first question. She would deal with the Lesbian issues and I would deal with the heterosexual issues. She would be much harder than I. I would think I wouldn't want to say this too much because they would say, "well that is what a dyke says." So we had this whole thing we'd worked out and invariable a guy would get up and talk about man-hating Lesbians. And at one point Gloria said, "I've thought about that expression, it's like one key on the typewriter, and the reality is that it is not Lesbians who hate men, it's us Heterosexual women who are dependent upon them emotionally. Lesbians could take them or leave them." I thought a lot about that. I thought about how women would always want to meet with us after we lectured and every place we went there would be this half an hour discussion on whether or not men could be present. The arguments would be, "well this is their first chance to see outside feminists and certainly what you have to say will raise their consciousness." It would always be women taking care of the guys and if we'd say well we're here for you and if you want them here fine, but understand what is going on. And the women would take care of the men. This happened always. I did over 400 lectures and this conversation went on every fucking time.

(Continued on page 21)

The Gynosophic Gathering

a hagggle by
Paula Gunn Allen



SOME UNDERLYING VALUES: AUTONOMY & VULNERABILITY

In the western world, after several thousand years of underground community (a community that often seemed to be composed of only two women or even only one), and after nearly a century of a larger community, lesbians have developed a stunning array of customs, opinions, moral values, and beliefs about how the world of women in general, and the world of lesbians in particular should conduct itself.

These prescriptions for behavior are expressed in terms that refer to political awareness of the community or to personal love relationships; as in: don't be racist, don't be sexist, don't be classist, don't be sizist, don't be speciesist, don't be...what did I forget?...ageist. For heaven's sake, don't be ageist, because if you are, it's you you're calling names. That one gets real personal real quick. Or in love relationships: don't steal another woman's girlfriend.

And while these rules, or rules of this sort, are explicit, they are not particularly embedded in a value matrix and so aren't easily understood or easily followed except in mechanical and often punitive, guilt-producing, blame-laden ways. White man ways. Today I want to meditate with you on some underlying values that I think must be the fundamental basis upon which a feminist, a lesbian ethic must be based.

The Gynosophic Gathering is, as you know, devoted to the black aspect of the triple goddess Wisdom, Sophia. I was at a conference this weekend on the dark Madonna. One of the things that one of the speakers mentioned was that the black aspect of the goddess in ancient times—in Europe, in Mesopotamia, in the Middle East, etc.—was wisdom, wisdom itself, which is precisely what this poem you've heard gets to. Wisdom arises from experience consciously blended with knowledge, choice, and understanding. It seems to me that knowledge, understanding, and choices depend on two characteristics: autonomy and honesty. Autonomy and honesty depend on vulnerability, on fragility.

Truth, acceptance of the truth, is a shattering experience. It shatters the binding shroud of culture trance. It rips apart smugness, arrogance, superiority,

and self-importance. It requires acknowledgement of responsibility for the nature and quality of each of our own lives, our own inner lives as well as the life of the world. Truth, inwardly accepted, humbling truth, makes one vulnerable. You can't be right, self-righteous, and truthful at the same time. You can't recognize the fragility of others, when you are being true, without accepting that their fragilities are your own.

An ethic based on this kind of truth is compassionate and strong. It is supportive of autonomy and of a sense of self based on affirmation of reality rather than on fantasy, because it recognizes the power of vulnerability, the power of fragility, and the danger of denial. Consciousness, which is the midwife of wisdom, the helper of Sophia, requires vulnerability. The invulnerable, the controlling, the tyrannical, the brutal are as far from consciousness as being can be. Consciousness begins in vulnerability. It grows through autonomy and its blossoms are truth, its fruit is wisdom. Externalized knowledge, projected morality, blaming, and guilt lead away from Sophia because they lead away from truth, from understanding, and from self-generated choice.

And what is vulnerability? Just this: the ability to be wrong, to be foolish, to be weak and silly, to be an idiot. It is the ability to accept one's unworthiness, to accept one's vanity for what it is. It's the ability to be whatever and whoever you are—recognizing that you, like the world, like the earth, are fragile, and that in your fragility lies all possibility of growth and of death, and that the two are one and the same.

Are you ashamed of eating? Are you ashamed of being afraid? Are you ashamed of being open to hurt or loss? Are you ashamed of being alive? Are you ashamed of rotting? Do you have to be perfect—slim and youthful and handsome and popular? Supermom. Superdyke. Superwoman. Probably you can be those things for a time, but not for long. On the other hand, if you intend to walk in the shadow of the Great Mother, you can recognize and come to terms with your inability to be god, enjoy the fragility—the fragility that alone will take you home.

© by Paula Gunn Allen

REVIEW

Journey To Mount Tamalpais, a prose meditation by Etel Adnan, with illustrations by the author, Post-Apollo Press, \$10.95.

Etel Adnan is a nature sprite now in her 6th decade who emerged from a childhood steeped in the remnants of the Ottoman Empire into the World War II of the Nazi-fighting French intellectuals and diplomats of Beirut, afterwards hanging out

with the likes of novelist-philosopher Marguerite Yourcenour, and has taught philosophy in the United States for many years. She lives in Sausalito and is the author of *Sitt Marie-Rose*, a novel, \$6.95, a number of poetry books, the most recent of which is "The Indian Never Had A Horse," Post-Apollo Press, \$9.95. Since, as Etel tells us, Mount Tamalpais is at the center of her being ("Who is the most important person you ever met" and I remember answering: "A mountain?"), she draws her heart felt thoughts through it—a process of 10 years—and out into the love-wrought poetry of her prose.

Noting that to the Indians Mount Tamalpais was "Tamal-Pa," "the One close to the Sea," while to the Spanish conqueror it was "Mal-Pais," "Bad Country," she points out that "The differ-

ence between the native and the conqueror is readable in these two different perceptions of the same reality." History flows in and out of Etel's musings, her history, European history, American history, as she gazes at Tamalpais whether indoors or on the road, at any time of day or night, awake and in dreams, and Tamalpais resonates with her: "For years Tamalpais is speaking itself into dreams, telling about the past and the present, or, rather, transcending any notion of ordinary time."

Truly, a person of Etel Adnan's spiritual depth and delight requires a mountain, at least, from which to summon a matching spirit, nourish her painter's eye, and be the matter of her song. And having heard her poetry readings, I know that for Etel, to speak is to sing.

review by Alice Molloy

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INANNA

In The Poetry of Sumer

By Betty Meador



In the excavations in the Near East, archeologists have uncovered a body of literary work by a woman who is the first poet in history. Her name is Enheduanna. She was the high priestess in Sumer around 2300 B.C. and held this office for about 40 years.

Enheduanna's position as high priestess of the country was influential and powerful. Her father, Sargon of Agade, had for the first time united northern and southern Mesopotamia. He appointed his brilliant daughter the religious leader of the land. She ruled the temple as he ruled the palace. Her writing apparently had great impact in shaping the theology of Sumer. Her work was read for generations after her death, and she received adulation as a divine personage.

Enheduanna was priestess, poet, and also performed oracular functions such as dream interpretation. She started a tradition which was to last for 500 years, in which the daughter of the king became the high priestess, poet, and oracle.

This period of history saw the gradual encroachment by the patriarchy. Enheduanna's poems reflect women's struggle to maintain images of potency in the religious literature of the day. These images of powerful female gods were soon lost altogether, but in Enheduanna's day they were common in every person's belief and thought as a natural component of life. Now they are gone from our culture. They have been forgotten for 3000 years.

My hope is to reclaim this beautiful imagery as a reflection of our deepest selves, as it once mirrored womanliness to the women of Sumer. The renditions of the poems which follow I have created from a word-for-word translation by a Sumerian specialist. The excerpts are from two long poems to the goddess Inanna. In the poems Inanna is portrayed primarily as fierce, ruthless, and all powerful. Still Enheduanna captures her precious beauty.

This excerpt is from a poem in which Inanna overpowers a great mountain which would not "wipe its nose on the ground nor flatten its lips in the dust" for her. She throws the full weight of her force against it.

and hurricane winds
swift-piercing, stinging
fly with Inanna's fury
suck loosened earth into sweet air

dust chokes every blink and breath
broken bits and fiery chips
swirl in the dust dark air

...

with stones from its own slopes
she pelts she pounds
thud dub thud dub
storms of stones crack its sides

damp and writhing snakes
tangled in branches
drop at her drear bidding
spitting deadly venom

and her tongue's poison
hurls a green-wilting curse
over forest and fruit-bearing trees

This poem ends with a line of thanksgiving to the goddess of writing:

and praise be to Nisaba
goddess of writing

Inanna has a special relationship to the ceremonial dyke*, blessing her with particular gifts as seen in the worship of the goddess. In one poem she establishes a new temple and calls certain attendants for the "head-overturning rite."

priest to become woman
priestess to become man

In another poem Enheduanna tells us in great detail about the "head-overturning" of a maiden.

Inanna
dressing a young maiden
within the women's rooms
declares her beautiful

a young man's handsome grace
the countenance she wears
the maiden takes into her heart

she a woman evilly spurned
taunted to her face
would sway beneath the bitter wrath
thrown on her everywhere

her only path
a wanderer
in dim and lonely streets
her only rest
a narrow spot
in the jostling market place
where from a nearby window
a mother holds a child
and stares

this dreadful state
the Lady would undo
take this scourge
from her burdened flesh

over the maiden's head
she makes a sign of prayer
hands then folded at her nose
she declares her
pili, pili/dyke

in sacred rite she takes
the broach
which pins a woman's robe
breaks the needle, silver thin
consecrates the maiden's heart as male
gives to her a mace

for this one dear to her
she shifts
a god's curse
a blight reversed
out of nothing
shapes
what has never been

her sharp wit
splits the door
where cleverness resides
and there displays
what lives inside

The rich imagery of Enheduanna's poetry is challenging in its complexity. So long have we been separated from the divine sanction of powerful warrior women that we may be jolted by its harshness as much as we are deeply touched by its brilliance and beauty. For this poetry we can only join Enheduanna in gratitude and praise to Nisaba, goddess of writing.

—©by Betty Meador, 1986

*Ed. Note: see *Another Mother Tongue*, by Judy Grahn, \$9.95, for information about ceremonial dykes.

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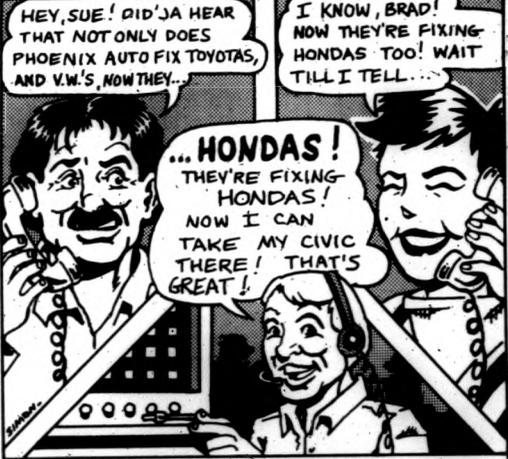
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Coming From The Heart

BY JANE SIPE

Probably artists have always known that their best work came through their hands, but originated somewhere in the center of their beings. Probably they knew that every piece they did was a self portrait, an expression of themselves somehow more revealing than the persona they presented to the world with their bodies; and that the deeper inside they went to bring forth their art, the more they and others responded to the finished piece. Probably they knew all this, and maybe they even tried to pass it on, but I didn't hear it; I had to rediscover it for myself.

My first inkling came several years ago when two friends and I took a basic drawing class at the Junior College. It was something apart from 'my' usual form (which is jewelry), so it was a little easier for me to detach from the product and focus on the process. The three of us noticed early on that we had three very different 'styles' and that even a sketch of an apple was really more of an expression of our selves than it was an apple. We knew each other well enough to recognize us, and the self in each apple was unmistakable.

Not long after, I started to take notice that the jewelry pieces that I designed that I liked best, and that others responded to the strongest, were the ones that came from my heart. They were pieces that symbolized some process that I was working with internally, and their creation had a lot to do with my growing. There is a sense of purpose when I am carving such a wax that doesn't happen on pieces that come from the brain. Once my heart's information has been given form outside my self, it then becomes accessible to my brain. The process of working with these images somehow helps me know my own inner self. When the idea is coming from that center place, the emergence is like a birthing. Carving a wax is making a small, very detailed sculpture; it takes time, close attention and involvement. Every scrape with the tiny tip of the dentist's tool over the wax is an affirmation; and as the piece nears completion, I begin to see before me, in a tangible form, something that was

previously inside me; known, but unknown.

The casting process of the wax, which burns up and is 'lost,' changing places with metal, which is of this earth, is another step in bringing the image to a reality of its own. That the metals used are called "precious" seems no coincidence and adds to the impact of the piece. The symbolism then is closely aligned with the value of the substance used to carry it. These are not new or original ideas; one has only to look at the talismans and power pieces of the ancient Egyptians and Aztecs to see that it is information which has long been present on the planet.

Coming from the heart is about creativity and vice versa. It's about how we express ourselves in the world, especially as women, since the heart is the domain of the female (as distinguished from the male coming-from-the-brain way of being). By virtue of being born female, there is in us a powerful instinct to create: we are the embodiment of the creative, generative forces of the universe. We manifest this urge in many ways, and I believe we all have the instinct and can express it in whatever it is we are doing with our lives. In other words, I don't think that creativity belongs solely to the artists. Whatever one's "occupation", from potter to plumber to real estate broker, I believe that the job can be done either without tremendous personal involvement, or with creativity, enthusiasm; love, HEART. Show me a woman who loves her work, and I will show you a woman who has found a way to express her self, to put her heart into it.

The heart is the center, the core, Kore. It is at the center of the body and is the middle of the chakras. To me, this implies that it is the point of merging of the earthier parts of our being with the etheric parts. It reminds me of the hexagram or a glyph of two moons, one upturned and one down. (The upward pointing triangle and the up-open moon draw the energy from the etheric; the downward pointing triangle and the down-open moon draw energy from the earth.) In these bodies, so long as our physical heart beats, we are held in suspension between these two facets of reality. Thus suspended, we can experience the heart as symbolic of where we are in relation to both our spirit and our form.

There is something very vulnerable, as in exposed, and at the same time very powerful, about bringing images out from that deep place. It's a little like parading naked down Main Street. In that vulnerability though, there is the exhilaration of power: that kind of power wherein we choose to be exactly who we are; secure in the knowledge that we are perfect and we each have a message inside us to share with others.

—© Jane Sipe, 1986

Jane has been a silver and goldsmith for 12 years; she has focussed on spiritual and personal growth images for women since 1980. Her work is available at Mama Bears year round, and she is represented by Mulberry at the Yosemite West Coast Women's Music Festival Crafts Area. Jane has several new designs being featured this year, some of which are being shown for the first time at the festival.

REVIEW

Lesbian Letters by Christine Heron Stockton, \$8.95.

The only bad thing about this book is that it wasn't written years ago! *Lesbian Letters* is different, necessary, enlightening, caring, original, well done—quite simply, a find.

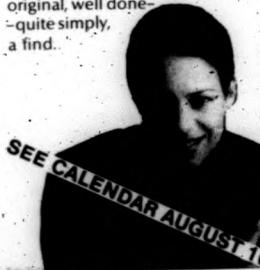
By way of a series of predominantly unrelated letters and journal excerpts, we are offered views of lives reflecting our own. Though the author notes *Lesbian Letters* is a work of fiction, there is no questioning the reality of the women involved. The courage it takes to be ourselves and the often lonely paths we individually follow are beautifully portrayed.

Because this book is so encompassing, i.e., about our lives, feelings, concerns, relationships, community, it seems to me to present a beautifully fashioned bridge—from us to those who care about us and who do know us, and for those who want to understand.

Lesbian Letters is a book to own, to lend, to give. It's a jewel.

—Review by D. R. Harding

Come in and meet Christine Stockton at Mama Bears on August 10, at 3 p.m., for a booksigning and reception.



ON THE COVER

Kate Clinton
Rhiannon
Lucie Blue Tremblay
Judy Grahn
Dei Martin
Phyllis Lyon
Mary Watkins
Diedre McCalla
JoAnn Loulan
Over Our Heads:

Teresa Chandler
Karen Ripley
Annie Larson
Marion Damon
Hunter Davis
Judy Fjell
Teresa Trull
Bonnie Hayes
Paula Gunn Allen

* all photos by Irene Young (including Irene Young)

except:
Lee Lynch—by Tee Corinne
Katherine Forrest—by Tee Corinne
Margaret Sloan-Hunter—by Tee Corinne
Ginny Foat—by Russ Flachella
Max Dashu—by Nava Mizrahi
Robin Tyler—by Stephen Stewart
Lisa Ulrich-Marsh—by Stephen Stewart
Pat Bond—by Anonymous
SDiane Bogus—by Anonymous
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Last Year This Time



Photo by Ann Meredith

By Sandy Boucher

On his desk sits the flowered expresso cup I am so familiar with, a few brown drips down its side. On the file cabinet stands the photo of his children, fixed in early childhood just as they were when I first came here.

Lifting his moist dark eyes to mine, he asks, "Do you have insurance?"

This man I've been coming to see every six months for ten years to check my cystic breasts. This Italian-American surgeon with his plump face, his expensive grey suit. In these ten years he has told me about the rash afflicting his broad pink hands, caused by the wearing of surgical gloves, and I was sympathetic; he has told me about the open heart surgery he endured, and I commiserated with him. Now he wants me to feel sorry for him because, as he says, "It is so difficult to have to tell women about these things," and he gazes tragically to the side.

Now, telling me, does he offer sympathy, support? Does he say he hopes it will be all right?

No. "The biopsy will cost two thousand dollars," he announces.

Two thousand dollars!
"We will have to do the operation under full anesthetic. I can't stand to have the woman go through this under local."

He slips the mammograms back into the X-ray envelope, lays it flat on the desk and spreads his hands.

"Well, and how will you manage this?"
"Really, I don't know." I can hardly breathe. He looks, at once, sorrowful, kindly, and worried about me.

"Good luck," he says to me as he escorts me to the door.

I walk down the hall with its shiny marble floors and out onto the sidewalk.

In the years I have been coming here, the buildings of this university hospital and medical school have multiplied. They loom above me now, many-windowed towers flashing signals from their panes.

Once when I was four or so my mom took me to the barbershop on Route 40. After the barber had sat me in the chair and tied the cloth around me, Mom said she had to go do an errand, and would be back soon to pick me up. The barber was a silent man, who did not converse with children. As he clipped away, I stared anxiously at the door. Finally he brushed off my neck with his little soft brush, and lifted the cloth off me. I got down from the chair and went to stand by the door, waiting. Soon a man came in and the barber got busy with him, and I waited. She didn't come, and still she didn't come. And I gave up. She would never come. It was a deep and wracking realization. I hung my head to hide my tears from the barber, and then I pushed open the door and went out. Trucks roared by on Route 40, shaking the earth. As I stumbled down the gravel apron of the road, fans of wind from the speeding cars were like giant, brutal hands hurting me. Tears blurred my eyes. Somewhere out here was my home, but this world of freeway was so stark, so violent, the distance so vast, that I realized I would never find it. I was utterly alone.

In front of the university hospital I stand, not able to cross the street, walk down the hill to my car. Maybe I have cancer in my breast, and this man who has examined me and taken my money for ten years, who has exchanged pleasantries with me and told me his troubles, has sent me out on the street with nowhere to go.

My lover finds me curled on my side in bed, staring out the window at the tree hung with its red berries, like clots of blood.

"I'm going to die," I say. All strength has gone from me. I have sunk deep into a dark place.

This night two friends are to come to dinner. "No, I'm not getting up. I can't. Nothing matters."

But when they come, after they have sat on the bed and heard my story, after they have expressed their outrage and given me hugs, I begin to be tired of my despair.

I am fully clothed. I can easily get up. My long sobbing with my lover has cleaned out the worst of the pain. Just as the sight of my mother's car stopping next to me on Route 40 brought comfort. I saw her face, frightened and angry. But her fury was directed at the barber, who had let me go, and when she gathered me up into the seat next to her she gave me a short strong hug. As we drove home I sat choking back tears, and she said, "You're all right now, you're all right now." I'm all right now and if I'm going to die anyway, why not get up and have a good time!

So I crawl out of bed and join the three women in the kitchen. I let them know it is all right to talk about something else now, and we proceed to have an excellent evening.

Last year my friend Terry had a mastectomy. Having no money she wound up in Highland Hospital in Oakland, the only hospital in the East Bay that accepts MIA's, otherwise known as "medically indigent adults." Jesus God, a mastectomy! I visited her there, small pale woman, her chest bound, with bandages, her blue eyes calm.

"The pain isn't bad so far today," she said.

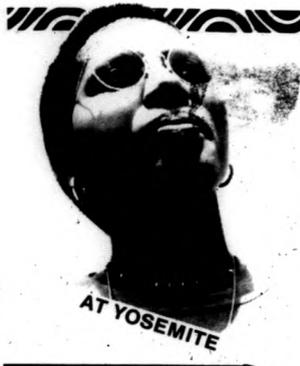
We had been lovers once, five years ago. I knew her body, and was filled with sorrowing tenderness as I held her hand. Before I left, we walked down the hall, she wheeling the IV bottle on its high stand, and she asked the nurse at the desk for a painkiller, and as we came to the bend in the hallway she said, "I realize that after we broke up we never talked. You were so hurt, and you tried. I just couldn't then, I had my own struggles. But I want us to talk now, to work it out, what we both felt. Can we meet someday when I get out of the hospital?"

Terry had told me that the hardest part of the experience of the mastectomy had been figuring out how to get it done without having the money. Harder than the fear of death, than the physical pain. Because there is so much shame in it, so much self-blame. "Here I am, an adult, and I can't afford to go to a doctor." Terry is an artist, a performer and teacher who gives much joy and empowerment to her community. She is a proud, independent person.

Along with the humiliation comes rage and terror. I feel dark and clotted inside, and I am obsessed with myself. My friends' concerns and problems fade. Apartheid, the nuclear threat, the situation in Nicaragua and at Big Mountain are so many abstractions. What is substantial is my threatened body. I spend hours on the phone calling hospitals and clinics. I leave a message on Terry's phone machine, asking her to call me.

In the interim I buy and begin to read Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals*, thinking I may find in it some word or perspective to give me strength. Instead—and perhaps because it takes me to the heart of what I most want to avoid—it sends me to a hot

(Continued on page 24)



Notes On The Black Lesbian Aesthetic In Literature

By SDiane Bogus

Not a set theory nor a constitution of articles and amendments, the Black lesbian/feminist aesthetic is a yet unsolidified ideology whose precepts are scattered throughout the writings of Black women, lesbian and/or feminist. That aesthetic, meant to "name" and "define" the ethics and issues that affect writing by and about Black lesbians has, in the recent past, served to strike back at those who perpetuate sexist, racist, heterosexist, or homophobic appraisals of the work by Black lesbian women. Today, although uncollected, the aesthetic's business is to guide, instruct, inform, and solidify the focus of the creative and critical efforts of each of the Black lesbians writing within the community itself.

Many thought-provoking articles and essays by writers and scholars the community has come to know and respect have been written, some of which brought the tenets and concerns of the aesthetic to the forefront. Among early lesbian-feminists who helped shape "Black feminist criticism" within the Afro-American tradition of the study of American literature are Barbara Smith, Gloria Hull, and Audre Lorde. Smith's salient articles, "Doing Research on Black Women," and "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism," Hull's "Rewriting Afro-American Literature: A Case for Black Women Writers," and Lorde's collected essays in *Sister Outsider* have done much to forward the diffuse but very perceivable Black lesbian aesthetic. There is a common ground of being.

The mandates that grow out of that aesthetic, especially its understood ground-of-being, I have culled from these sources as well as others, the most engaging of which are Jewell Gomez's "A Cultural Legacy Denied and Discovered: Black Lesbians in Fiction by Women," Ann Allen Shockley's "The Black Lesbian in American Literature," and the pentolog from *Conditions Nine*, Black Women on Black Women Writers: Conversations and Questions, which was conducted by Cheryl Clarke, Jewell Gomez, Bonnie Johnson, Linda Powell, and Evelyn Hammonds. I have also made use of Alice Walker's various essays in *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden*.

The "ground of being"—the underlying assumptions and understandings upon which the aesthetic is predicated—is as follows:

- (a) to promote and preserve consciousness about the past achievements and work by Black women
- (b) to maintain the revitalized herstory of Black women
- (c) to fight against male domination, especially oppressive and repressive handling of Black female creative work by unjust critics
- (d) to rectify false or uncomplimentary fictional images of Black women
- (e) to explore under-depicted or never-depicted fictional portraits of Black women
- (f) to try to define, outside of white feminist and white male traditions, the nature, scope and direction of contemporary writings by Black women
- (g) to fight "anti-lesbian-hysteria" wherever it rears its head, especially in the Black community
- (h) to form a Black, lesbian, critical community.

The last of these intentions has revealed a host of Black lesbian poets, scholars, and writers who, in-

spired by the collective consciousness of all concerned, are singularly carving out the terms of the aesthetic. Among them—and this list cannot be all-inclusive, only indicative of the burgeoning growth of our political numbers and the level of participation in the community—are such figures as Anita Cornwell, Audre Lorde, Gayle Jones, Wilmette Brown, Beverly Smith, Becky Birtha, Margaret Sloan-Hunter, Julia Blackwomon, Bernice Reagan Johnson, Stephanie Byrd, Pat Parker, Patti Suncircle, Adrienne Stanford, Terri Jewell, Joan Gibbs, Linda Brown, Michele Cliff, Jewell Gomez, flying' thunda cloud, Doris Davenport, Lynne Reynolds and Alex DeVeaux. Then there are participants who may not be lesbian, but are feminist, such as Ann Allen Shockley, Rita Dandridge, Mab Segrest, Sondra O'Neale, Evelyn C. White, Gloria Wade-Gayles, or Alice Walker. These scholars and writers, by virtue of their commitment to Black woman's herstory and scholarship, willingly grapple with the issues and conflicts inherent in the dialog that is forming the "aesthetic," contributing to it directly and indirectly (for better or for worse).

So, what are the terms, values, assumptions, assertions, and tenets of this nebulous aesthetic? Generally, it addresses three areas of concern, mandating the various responsibilities thought crucial to the Black lesbian as (a) writer, (b) critic and (c) creator of fictional portraits of Black lesbians.

What follows is an eclectic sampling of some of the components of the dialectic, excerpted or paraphrased from their original sources. You may note that some of the ideas are mutually inclusive and supportive, while some are not. These, unresolved by the dialog because they've never before been grouped as I group them here, disclose subtle and overt conflicts in the considered purpose, direction, and vision of the differing perspectives of the Black women writers who voice them.

MANDATES FOR BLACK LESBIAN WRITERS

"It is our duty as artists and as witnesses for the future to collect what we can for the future."—Alice Walker, 1971, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View"

"If we want a new, egalitarian society, we are going to have to join together with womyn of all races, and build it ourselves, plank by plank, and brick by brick...It's a job we must do if we are to survive as free human beings."—Anita Cornwell, 1972, "Some Notes on the Black Lesbian and the Womyn-Identified-Womyn Concept"

"Black feminists [should] merge with other Black feminist individuals to utilize their talents and intelligence in shaping a better society."—Ann Allen Shockley, 1974, "The New Black Feminists"

"Black lesbian writers need to be "perceived, read, studied, taught, researched, and written about..."—Gloria T. Hull, 1977, "Rewriting Afro-American Literature..."

"If no one will, the Black woman artist [must] reverse the Black woman."—Renita Weems, 1979, "Artists Without Art Forms"

(Continued on page 22)

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THURSDAYS

We stay open after 7 p.m. for **WOMEN-ONLY SOCIALIZING** until 11 p.m. During August and first half of September, **SUZANNE JUDITH** will be on hand doing mini-tarot readings. (See Thurs., Aug. 7 Calendar entry for details.) During second half of September, **ELIZABETH BIRD** will do readings. (See Thurs., Sept. 18 calendar entry for details.)

SUNDAYS



GYNOSPHERIC GATHERING WOMEN-CENTERED WORSHIP—“Celebrating the bond of womanhood among ourselves and in connection with our sisters on every continent, island, sea and sky”—*Paula Gunn Allen*. Spirituality, feasting and gossiping in the marketplace, Mama Bears, as we did in past women centered cultures. **NOTE:** The Gatherings will not be held in August, and will resume first Sunday of September. **ALSO ON SUNDAYS:** Every 4th Sunday the Motherpluckers & Friends jam; beginning Sept. 21, **SUZANNE JUDITH** does readings Sunday afternoons. **WOMEN ONLY** 10:30 a.m.

AUGUST 7 Thursday

WOMEN'S SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING **AND** **SUZANNE JUDITH** does mini-tarot readings. **THE REALITY CHECK** Readings: What's going on, where you've been, and where you're going with yourself over a 3 month period. **THE LIFETIME PERSPECTIVES** Reading provides you with an interpretation of your two Life Cards—Personality Card and Soul Card—\$10.00 for either reading. Reservations suggested.

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OPEN MIKE WITH M.C. JEWEL ROBINSON. Performers should sign up in advance. (Jewel, M.C., will also sing; her friends have talked her out of kitchen-singing, and out onto a stage!) Mama Bears has a sound system and a piano—so come on out and play! **WOMEN ONLY** 8 p.m., \$2.00

AUGUST 9 Saturday



MIMI-FOX & ROBIN FLOWER in Concert—with Special Guests. A special event/benefit for the release of Mimi's new album, “*Textures of Loving*” (available now on tape at Mama Bears.) Mimi and Robin create dazzling acoustic guitar and mandolin music...especially with Robin's playful fusion sounds. (“*First Dibs*” is her most current album—available at Mama Bears.) **WOMEN ONLY** 8 p.m., \$5.00-\$7.00

AUGUST 10 Sunday



Book party, reception and book signing by **CHRISTINE STOCKTON**, author of *Lesbian Letters*. \$8.95. **3 p.m.**

AUGUST 12 Tuesday



INANNA READING BY BETTY MEADOR. Researcher-writer and Jungian scholar Betty Meador has wrought long-concealed powerful woman images out of recent word-for-word translations of ancient Sumerian goddess poetry. (See her article, page 10 in this issue.) **WOMEN ONLY** 7:30 p.m., \$3.00-\$5.00

Friday

AUGUST 13

Wednesday



ELAINE BLAKE TALKS ON LEO: The Way of the Child. **WOMEN ONLY** 7:00 p.m., \$5.00

AUGUST 14 Thursday

WOMEN ONLY SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING—with SUZANNE JUDITH doing mini-tarot readings. (See Thurs. Aug. 7 Calendar entry for details.)

AUGUST 15 Friday



“THE AWAKENING OF NANCY KAYE”, Ann Hershey's award-winning documentary video on a disabled woman approaching her death by cancer. Ms. Hershey will attend. “Most of all, we see a woman who, in the face of death, can give herself over to living. No longer is she afraid to feel the freedom of the unknown.”—from Denise Sherer Jacobson's review in the June-July, 1986 Mama Bears News & Notes. Please make reservations if you plan to come, so we'll have a sense of how many TV sets to get. 428-9694. **WOMEN ONLY** 8:30 p.m., \$4.00-\$6.00

AUGUST 16 Saturday



Z BUDAPEST IN “DEAREST GODDESS,” her new play based on newly translated Latvian goddess-poetry book, *Dearest Goddess*. A performance about love, hate, jealousy, and wisdom. Z incorporates recital of poems with improvisations around life and times in the Bay Area. Inspirational and funny at the same time. This is Z's debut as a performer...don't miss it! The witch is back! (See her article, p. 7) **WOMEN ONLY** 8:30 p.m., \$5.00-\$7.00

AUGUST 19

Tuesday



AROHANI: A concert by three lesbian feminists from Aotaroa (New Zealand): author/script writer/playwright Sandi Hall (*The Godmothers*, Women's Press, U.K.); singer/composer/actor Hilary King (Web Records, N.Z.); writer/activist/editor Cathie Dunsford (N.Z. Women's Fiction, N. Women's Press). **ONLY BAY AREA PERFORMANCE.** For more information call 658-7797. **WOMEN ONLY** 7:30 p.m., \$3.00-\$5.00

AUGUST 20 Wednesday

TALENT POTPOURRI EXTRAVAGANZA! Ane evening filled with laughter, music, improvisation, dance, readings and impersonation. Benefit for women on fixed incomes. Raffle with big prizes! With M. C., Sharona, and Lanza, Margaret Sloan-Hunter, Rainbeau, Sue Schloss, Dalila Jasmin, Chris Kammler, Judi Friedman, Billy Idol...and more! **WOMEN ONLY** 7:30 p.m., \$4.00-\$25.00

AUGUST 21 Thursday

WOMEN ONLY SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING—with SUZANNE JUDITH doing mini-tarot readings. (See Thurs. Aug. 7 Calendar entry for details.)

AUGUST 22 Friday

TAMI HALL with BEYOND DEFINITION. Excellent young singer-synthesist-keyboard performer Tami Hall finally steps out in front! ...with Beyond Definition, jazz-blues fusion band she's an integral part of. Band consists of Dee Harris (Bass), Tami Hall (Keyboard & Vocals), Yolanda Bush (Drums), and Joslyn Segal (Sax). **WOMEN ONLY** 8:30 p.m., \$4.00-\$6.00

AUGUST 23 Saturday



OVER OUR HEADS, always changing, always hilarious improv comedy and songs, by *Karen Ripley, Teresa Chandler, Annie Larson, and Marion Damson*. Need some belly laughs?—this is the place! **WOMEN ONLY** 8:30 p.m., \$5.00-7.00

AUGUST 24 Sunday

4th SUNDAY JAM Relaxed country-western, folk jamming by **The Motherpluckers and their friends.** You're invited to join in, or sit back and enjoy. Bookstore and coffeeshop remain open for regular business. 3-6 p.m., \$2.00 donation optional.

AUGUST 27 Wednesday



READING BY MAUREEN BRADY & VALERIE MINER, lesbian novelist Maureen Brady (*Folly*, \$7.95, and *Give Me Your Good Ear*, \$4.50), here in the Bay Area for a short visit, will read from her forthcoming collection of short stories. Novelist Valerie Miner is the author of *Movement*, \$6.95, *Blood Sisters*, \$2.95, *Winter's Edge*, \$7.95, and *Murder in the English Department*, \$2.95. **WOMEN ONLY** 7 p.m., \$3.00-\$5.00

AUGUST 28 Thursday



WOMEN ONLY SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING—with SUZANNE JUDITH doing mini-tarot readings. (See Thurs. Aug. 7 Calendar entry for details.)

AUGUST 29 Friday

READING, WRITING & RECLUSE NIGHT. Since all the party-goers, performers, and big-groups buffs will be at the Yosemite West Coast Women's Festival, this is the time for those of us who like to read and write and recluse or play cards in coffee houses. (No event.) **WOMEN ONLY** 7-9 p.m.

AUGUST 30 Saturday

READING, WRITING, & RECLUSE NIGHT. (See Friday, August 29, for details.) P.S.: Any piano players out there, feel free to come and do a little playing on our piano tonight. **WOMEN ONLY** 7-9 p.m.

S CALENDAR

SEPT.

SEPTEMBER 3 Wednesday

JEFFNER ALLEN BOOK PARTY, RECEPTION, & READING. The intense, delightful author of the new book, *Lesbian Philosophy: Exploration*, \$9.95, (see review p 16) will read from her book, take part in discussions, sign books, and generally party.

WOMEN ONLY
7:30 p.m., \$2.00-\$4.00

SEPTEMBER 4 Thursday

WOMEN-ONLY SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING. (See Thursdays, Ongoing, for details), with **SUZANNE JUDITH DOING MINI-TAROT READINGS** (see Thurs., Aug. 7 for details).

SEPTEMBER 5 Friday

GWEN AVERY SINGS! An evening with fabulous Gwen—singing and playing piano...so satisfying! Also performing will be guitarist, songwriter, and R&B artist **PAT WILDER.**

WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., 5.00

SEPTEMBER 6 Saturday

TINA FRISCO & JOELLEN HILTBRAND—A NIGHT OF SONG. Joellen's very entertaining—she's sung a few times at Sunday Gynosophic Gatherings—and Tina, a favorite headliner on Mama Bears stage, who writes some of the most beautiful, most moving songs around. Come and enjoy!

WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., \$3.00-\$5.00

SEPTEMBER 7 Sunday

GYNOSOPHIC GATHERINGS RESUME

RECEPTION FOR ART SHOW: "With Age-Images of Our Elders". We welcome you to a reception-buffet for our current art show (see description, p 2); Ann Meredith, who put the show together, will attend.

3-5 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 10 Wednesday



JUDY ERON SINGS
Come and welcome this fine singer to the Bay Area. See review of her work on page 17. (Mama Bears has her new album, "Reach Across the Miles".)

WOMEN ONLY
7:30 p.m., \$3.00-\$5.00

SEPTEMBER 11 Thursday

WOMEN'S SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING. (See Thursdays, Ongoing).

AND SUZANNE JUDITH DOES MINI-TAROT READINGS (see details on Tuesday, August 7 entry).
WOMEN ONLY
7-11 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 12 Friday



MELANIE DEMORE FROM TAOS ON WEST COAST TOUR. Goddess songs flowing out of blues, jazz rhythms, and gospel, and from what we've heard, great!

WOMEN ONLY
8:00 p.m., \$4.00-\$6.00

SEPTEMBER 13 Saturday



JENNIFER BEREZAN SINGS! with Laurie Mattioli and friends Avery touching singer, who writes deep-caring women's songs and has a wonderful voice. Lots of great moments!

WOMEN ONLY
8 p.m., \$5.00-\$7.00

SEPTEMBER 17 Wednesday

ELAINE BLAKE TALKS ON VIRGO: The Way of The Priestess. That sounds like a new look at Virgo! You can start thinking about it now by reading Elaine's info on Virgo, on p. 4 of this issue.

WOMEN ONLY
7:00 p.m., \$5.00

SEPTEMBER 18 Thursday

WOMEN ONLY SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING (see Thursdays, Ongoing).

AND ELIZABETH BIRD, Astrologer and seeress (back from summer tour) gives integrative astrological transit interpretations and mini-tarot card readings. 20 years experience. \$10-15 per consultation. Reservations suggested.

WOMEN ONLY
7-11 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 19 Friday

FORGOTTEN AMAZONS—A SLIDE SHOW. A slide show and talk on women of several nations in the military during World War II, presented by Pamela Barnes, who's doing a book on the subject. See her article on p. 16.

WOMEN ONLY
8:00 p.m., \$4.00-\$6.00

SEPTEMBER 20 Saturday



OVER OUR HEADS. Laughter heals, and that's a fact. Comedians **Karen Ripley, Annie Larson, Teresa Chandler, and Marlon Damson** entertain with comedy, routines, improv, and song.

WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., \$5.00

SEPTEMBER 21 Sunday

SUZANNE JUDITH, tarot reader on hand to do readings from 3 to 6 p.m. (For details, see calendar entry for Aug. 7). (Suzanne moved to Sundays when Elizabeth Bird came back from summer tour.)

SEPTEMBER 25 Thursday

WOMEN-ONLY SOCIALIZING ALL EVENING. (See Thursdays, Ongoing, for details).

AND ELIZABETH BIRD does astrological & mini-tarot readings. (See details in Thurs. Sept 18 calendar entry.)

SEPTEMBER 26 Friday



MARY GEMINI—SYNTHESIZER & PIANO. A rare chance to hear this fine synthesizer and piano artist—visiting from New York. Mary's one of the leading women innovators in this new form of music.

WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., \$4.00-\$6.00

SEPTEMBER 27 Saturday



DEBBIE FIER IN CONCERT. Debbie's a high intensity bundle of musical energy you're sure to enjoy! (Her records, "In Your Hands" and "Firelight" are available at Mama Bears.)

WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., \$5.00-\$7.00

SEPTEMBER 28 Sunday

4th SUNDAY JAM—COUNTRY-WESTERN AND FOLK—WITH THE MOTHERPLUCKERS & FRIENDS. Feel free to join in, or sit back and enjoy this afternoon event. Bookstore and coffeshop open for business as usual.

3-6 p.m., \$2.00 donation, optional.
—SIMULTANEOUSLY— SUZANNE JUDITH will be on hand between 3 and 6 p.m. to do tarot readings. (For details, see calendar entry for Aug. 7.)

OCTOBER 1 Wednesday



READING & BOOK SIGNING PARTY WITH ETEL ADNAN. Celebrating publication of her just-published book, *View From Mount Tamalpais* (see review on p. 9).

WOMEN ONLY
7:00 p.m.

OCTOBER 3 Friday

ELAINE BLAKE TALKS ON LIBRA: The Way of the Equalizer.
WOMEN ONLY
8:00 p.m., \$5.00

OCTOBER 4 Saturday



AMAZON DANCE THEATRE. A cabaret show of 'Interpretive Dance & Improv. Starring Rainbeau, Sharona and others. Featuring a post-nuclear fashion show.

WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., \$5.00

OCTOBER 5 Sunday

ART SHOW RECEPTION with October's Artist—Alysanne McGaffey.
3 p.m.

OCTOBER 8 Wednesday



NEPAL & CHINA—A SLIDE-SHOW. Carol Shapiro presents slides of her treks through these 2 countries. Proceeds will go towards needy children.

WOMEN ONLY
7:00 p.m., \$2.00-\$4.00

OCTOBER 10 Friday



JUDY FJELL SINGS. Great singer-songwriter of spiritual, love, and political songs. Always a treat!
WOMEN ONLY
8:30 p.m., \$5.00-7:00

OCTOBER 11 Saturday



GAYLE MARIE SINGS

OCTOBER 15 Wednesday

DEMETRE GEORGE, AUTHOR OF ASTEROID GODDESSES.

OCTOBER 17 Friday

DIANE STEIN—AUTHOR OF KWAN YIN BOOK OF CHANGES.

OCTOBER 18 Saturday



BECKY REARDON & JUDY MUNSON IN CONCERT.

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FORGOTTEN AMAZONS



SEE CALENDAR SEPT. 19

BY PAMELA BARNES

Women of the Armed Services in World War II.

This article is a brief introduction to an immense topic: the contribution of women serving under military orders during the largest and most monstrous war in the history of humankind: World War II. Over the years I have collected a great deal of related material—photographs, books, sound recordings, interviews, memorabilia and so forth—illustrating the wide range of activities women of numerous countries engaged in, under military orders, between 1939 and 1945, and have organized the visual material into a slide presentation, to be given at Mama Bears on Friday, September 19. See Calendar in centerfold for details. (I am now in the midst of writing a book-length history on this subject, and my research has included numerous interviews. I'd be delighted to hear from any women who were in the military during WW II (write to P. Barnes, Box 2652, Berkeley, CA 94702.)

In the main I have concentrated my research on women of the Western Allies, most of which were at a high level of crisis. I

include Servicewomen of the U.S.S.R., and women who served in partisan resistance groups. Taken together, the countries I have included provide a whole gamut of wartime occupations, some of which were, hitherto, inconceivable for a woman to do.

In the U.S., our most familiar wartime propaganda female figure was not the woman soldier, but Rosie the Riveter. She was as well-known as Olive Oil or Marlene Dietrich.

For Rosie's counterpart in the Armed Services—her military sister—there was no celebration in catchy nickname, jaunty poster or stylish personality; no jolly memorable phrase was credited to her, no meaningful entry made in our history books, and no memorial dedicated (though she died too); and she was among the darn lucky few if she saw full veteran's benefits (some began to trickle in a few years ago). This is why I name my slide show "Forgotten Amazons."

Women in the U.S. military could do everything but engage in combat—and many women believed this to be the proper attitude.

The exclusion from combat law resulted in some strange situation; women ferry pilots, for example, flew new or damaged planes from one location to another but the guns had to be sealed off. Too bad if she met with prowling enemy aircraft and got attacked, which did happen.

I use the issue of combat to stand for an extreme example of sexist attitudes in various societies and there are many more angles to this one issue.

A cherished American belief is that women should not fight, especially with guns.

When WW II ended a mass propaganda drive, run by each country in its own way, pushed women into a complete reversal of lifestyle by appealing to her nesting and nurturing abilities to re-make the world (from the home) and by creating guilt for occupying a returning (male) combat hero's job.

In the main, women accepted the general line with remarkable compliance. There were some protests, of course, but these were not difficult to quell. Some women committed suicide but that went unnoticed and unsupported by any sentiment of collective outrage.

Western women are exceedingly ambivalent about war. On the one hand we emphatically stress concern with peace-making and nurturing, on the other hand when a call to action or combat situation has presented itself, women have stepped forward, and proven ourselves highly capable in warfare.

In putting the slide show together my aim has been to demonstrate in the most straightforward way, without political, philosophical or nationalistic messages, the farthest reaches of attainment in action that women have achieved: This provides magnificent inspiration and who needs another war to know that we can do the same.

—*by Pamela Barnes, 1986

REVIEW

Lesbian Philosophy: Explorations
by Jeffner Allen, \$9.95.

"I gather myself in a time, space, and history that are shaped by the events of my life," says Jeffner Allen in her preface; a statement that is probably the principle underlying the stance of today's women, lesbian or not.

In section one, "Remembering: A Time I Will Be My Own Beginning" Jeffner begins by asserting: "Touching, feeling, imagining, fighting, thinking, caressing, I remember myself," as the opener to the various ways we remember who we are and what has been done to us (disrememberment). Having remembered, she then

looks, in section two: "Looking At Our Blood: A Lesbian Response to Men's Terrorization of Women," and faces the issue head-on by asserting that "The ideology of heterosexual virtue forms the cornerstone of the designation of women as nonviolent." In section three, "Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women," Jeffner muses coolly on the motherhood role, stating that "Identification and analysis of the multiple aspects of motherhood not only show what is wrong with motherhood, but also points a way out."

Finally, in section four, "The Naming of Difference: Truth and Female Friendship," she explores woman-bonding through friendship: "—liquid, freely flowing, watery and damp—" and examines our reclaiming of it

("the source of all waters") from its suppression under the male bonding ideal set by the ancient Greeks.

A thought-provoking book, one that brings the evocatively poetic to philosophy.

Come and join Jeffner Allen at Mama Bears in an evening of rich discussion, on September 3.



SEE CALENDAR SEPT. 3

Reviews

SEVEN WINDOWS, Stories of Women, by F. Zarod Rominski, \$7.95.

Seven stories written over the past 15 years depicting individual European and European-descent women in different times, from witchcraft burnings to the present, struggling in the war waged against women and women's medicine and healing powers, and passing legacies to each other through the generations, desperately keeping fragments of knowledge, and values, alive. These stories stir the blood and unite our passions across the centuries.

SEVEN WINDOWS Stories of Women



Woman at Point Zero, novel by Nawal El Saadawi, \$5.95.

Dr. Nawal El Saadawi, author of *The Hidden Face of Eve*, \$9.95, and other books and novels on women in the Arab world, based this novel on a woman she met while a psychiatrist studying women at Qanatir Women's Prison—and found unforgettable.

REVIEW

Reach Across The Miles, Judy Eron, Barleo Records, \$7.95.

Judy Eron's second album, *Reach Across The Miles*, is more of the same talent heard on her first album. And that's definitely good. This newly released album is a rich potpourri of emotion, thought and down-to-earth cleverness.

It has songs you can't resist singing along with, songs to make you think and feel, nostalgic songs of love, and songs which simply make you smile and chuckle.

Something Shady by Sarah Dreher, \$7.95.

A House. A Disappearance. An unexplained death. All combine to cause Stoner McTavish to become an inmate in a suspicious "rest home" on the coast of Maine—where she encounters mystery, terror, and some quirky characters.

Will Stoner discover what they did with Clair before Dr. Millicent Tunes exposes Stoner? What will Stoner really find in her search for a missing nurse?

There are those who don't want her lifting the shade on *Shady* yet.

Follow the continuing adventures of Stoner, her devoted lover, Gwen, her outrageous business partner, Marylou, and her delightful, but slightly eccentric Aunt Hermione.

Tender Warriors by Rachel Guido deVries, \$7.95.

A deeply moving, thoughtful story of an Italian-American working-class family caught in their struggles with each other and the world. This is a novel about outsiders—white, black, gay and straight, addicted and drug-free, down-guilt-out or on their way up—fighting for survival and the space for their tenderness to emerge.

Living As A Lesbian, poetry by Cheryl Clark, \$6.95.

The provocative author of *Narratives* writes on the themes of blackness, anger, violence, loss, loneliness, lesbianism, and sex—wanting it, fearing it, getting it. Her poetry is sophisticated, direct, and often startling, and her images are strong, with stunning impact.

The runaway execution and lyrical wittiness of "The Wedding" is sure to make you smile; its punch line may force you to laugh aloud. Eron's joy in singing "You Made The Moon Come Alive" rings clear and true. Her social conscience and understanding of life's sometimes tragic hurts are revealed just as clearly in songs such as "Explain That To A Child," "Aging Parents," and "My Fault."

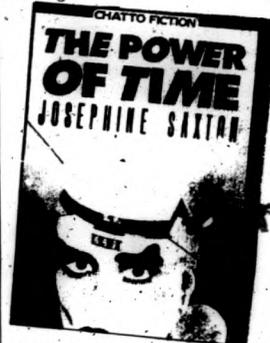
"The Female Farm" is always a favorite at Eron's live performances—including her concerts at the Tennessee State Men's Prison. She has even managed to get audience participation in this tune from the usually reserved and musically sophisticated audiences in Nashville's show-case nightclubs.

As a matter of fact, the only thing missing in this beautifully performed album is Eron's spontaneous warmth and humor which



Mothers and Shadows, a novel by Marta Traba, \$7.95.

A gripping tension is established on the very first page of this moving, suspenseful novel about women's lives in Latin America under terroristic governments. A remarkable book, about remarkable times; I strongly suggest reading it.



The Power of Time, Sci-Fi and fantasy short stories by Josephine Saxton, \$5.95.

Fourteen stories, ranging from the playful to the disturbing (and some both), written between 1966 and 1972, most first published in magazines and short story anthologies. The story called "No Coward Soul" is something else! P.S.: this writer is really into food.

can only be experienced when she's entertaining you in person.

Over the past decade, she has performed across the U.S. at an incredible variety of gatherings and clubs where folks appreciate songs with a social conscience along with those that make you tap your feet and sway your body. —reviewed by Carla Hall



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- Sept. 27 - Intro to Reichian Bodywork



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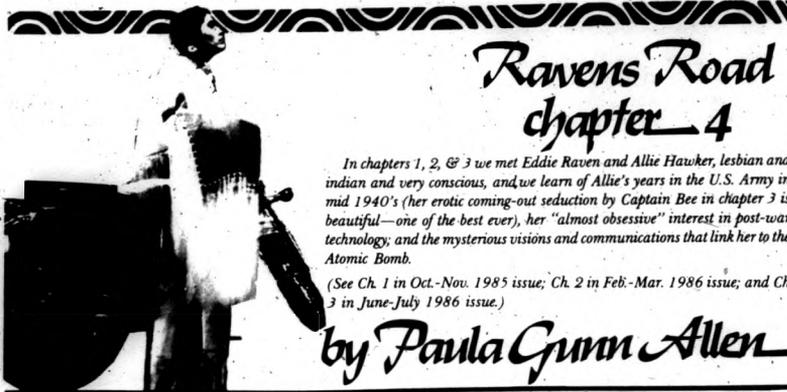
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Chronic Pain



Ravens Road
chapter 4

In chapters 1, 2, & 3 we met Eddie Raven and Allie Hawker, lesbian and indian and very conscious, and we learn of Allie's years in the U.S. Army in mid 1940's (her erotic coming-out seduction by Captain Bee in chapter 3 is beautiful—one of the best ever), her "almost obsessive" interest in post-war technology, and the mysterious visions and communications that link her to the Atomic Bomb.

(See Ch. 1 in Oct.-Nov. 1985 issue; Ch. 2 in Feb.-Mar. 1986 issue; and Ch. 3 in June-July 1986 issue.)

by **Paula Gunn Allen**

1947—late Oct. 1961

During the next few years, Allie drifted away from most of the old gang who'd stayed in Seattle, still seeing Bee occasionally, though. Their work with the first computers, Mark I and then, for a few months before they left the army, ENIAC, or more formally, the vacuum-tube monster called an Electronic Numerical Integrator And Calculator. Under Bee's direction, Allie and several others of Bee's crew had worked as operators of ENIAC's manually operated switchboard. This job in the service was a connection they shared over the years, as Bee got an executive's position at Lockheed, where she oversaw the installation and operation of their first computer, while Allie had eventually secured a job as a clerk typist at the small University of Washington, that led to her position in their computer system soon after they instituted it in the middle 1950's.

It was toward the end of that job, about fifteen years after leaving the army, that Allie went to a sing at a nearby reservation, where she met Eddie Raven.

She had been there for a couple of hours already, listening to the speakers, watching the dancers as they were presented to receive their formal acknowledgment as dancers for the people, when the door opened and through the smoke of the fire she could see the tall, slender figure of a young man, another of those being honored, she had thought. He was dressed in western clothes, boots, pants, shirt and Stetson, all black. The hat was adorned with a silver and turquoise concho belt and feather that rode its neatly shaped brim. He stood for a moment framed in the driving rain that swept through the blanket he had raised to enter the longhouse. His presence was commanding in some indefinable way, as though he was the son of a very important man; or as though he had already won many contests, told many tales, sung many songs. Then, as the figure stepped into the smoky room, Allie saw that the young man was a woman of maybe twenty years, a woman whose deep eyes were quiet and still with a certain poise and power that Allie had never seen before. The woman sitting on the bench next to her whispered with a sibilant intake of breath, "Eddie Raven."

"What?" Allie had said. Bemused. Mesmerized. Electrified. She was having trouble with her hearing.

The woman inclined her head closer to Allie's. "That girl that just came in, over there," she gestured in Raven's direction using chin and lips expertly, "her name is Eddie Raven."

After the formalities, while the women were serving supper, stew from the huge iron pots, platters of fish, piles of Rainbow bread, Allie found herself watching the girl. I must be getting neurotic, she thought. She felt bereft every time Eddie Raven disappeared from view, every time she was engaged in conversation with someone. Allie watched her every move, holding her breath and looking away every time Raven's eye seemed about to catch hers.

When the men and guests had been served, the women, who were hosting the feed, filled their plates and made their way through the crowded longhouse to find places to sit where they could enjoy a good gossip and a good view of the goings on. Even though she had helped the family get the food served, and so was part of that group, Allie couldn't bring herself to join the clusters of women, and instead found a place in the shadows of a far corner where she lowered

herself to the floor. She ate, not tasting the food though usually it was a source of great comfort to her, connecting her somehow to home. Though, of course, these were far different people from her own, and their food was very different from that served at green corn dances or other community gatherings back in Oklahoma, still there was something very similar between them, maybe in the feeling of the food though not its taste, maybe in the sense she had, while eating it, of being settled and accepted in the boundless mothering of the earth from which these foods came. Thinking this, she glanced at the piece of bread in her hand, mutely pale, limply white. Well, almost all of them, she thought wryly, squeezing the slice into a tiny, moist ball and dropping it on her plate. She shrugged, aware that even though the stuff was awful, it was also some kind of connector to home, and usually she ate it with a mild sense of amusement and enjoyment.

"That stuff is only good with cheap strawberry jam on it," a voice near her said.

Startled, Allie looked to her left. She was suddenly not breathing too well. Raven was hunkering down near her, grinning, her black eyes gleaming like ripe blackberries in the morning sun. She grinned spontaneously, her mood suddenly swinging to mindless joy. "Or with tons of lard and some sugar!"

The younger woman looked puzzled. "That's how we used to eat it at boarding school, sometimes. It was our special treat." Allie explained.

Raven nodded, comprehending. She edged slightly closer to Allie. "I've been watching you," she said, looking down modestly. There was a slight, quizzical smile on her thin, wide lips. She had the straightest teeth Allie had ever seen. Allie pretended nonchalance, and put a large morsel of salmon in her mouth. Sweet, sweet fish, she thought. She felt her face get warm.

She hoped Raven hadn't heard her, then caught herself. Of course she didn't, you goose, she thought. You didn't say it out loud. But she was aware that Raven had shot her an amused glance when she thought it. She choked. "I noticed you when you came in. I've never seen you before," she managed to say over the constriction of her throat. She swallowed the fish, then sipped some broth from the bowl of stew.

"You shouldn't have thrown that bread," Raven said. "It's good for chasing fish bone. She rose, "I'll get you a piece."

Allie shook her head, now unable to speak. Her eyes were watering. I think I'm gonna die right here, she thought. How romantic. How undignified. She waved her hand at Raven, managing to gasp, "No, no. I'm alright." She coughed spasmodically. "Raise your hands over your head," Raven said. Too overcome with coughing to argue, Allie did as she was told. The coughing subsided. She drew a slow breath, then another.

"I've been away for a while," Raven said. Her eyes flickered, maybe with the flickering glow of the fire. "I haven't seen you here before, either."

"I don't come as regularly as I'd like," Allie said. "The folks are good to have me, and I'm so far from home here, it's lucky they're here."

"Where you from?"

"Oklahoma. I'm Cheyenne."

"I'm Mississippesh."

"What's that?" Allie had never heard of Mississippesh, but there were hundreds of tribes, she

(Continued on page 20)

couldn't know all, or even most of them.
 "We're extinct." Raven gave a short laugh.
 Allie grinned. "Well, so's everyone."
 "Except the Cherokee and the Sioux." Raven
 agreed. Then, with a sly glance at Allie, "and the brave
 Cheyenne."
 "Don't forget the Navajo and the Iroquois, the
 secret weapon of the government in the war." She
 spoke without inflection.

"No," Raven agreed calmly. "Or the drunk drowned
 heroic Pima, good old Ira Hayes, winner of a congress-
 sional medal of honor and raiser of the American flag
 on Iwo Jima, conqueror of the Pacific theatre, and all
 that. I know my history, at least my seventh grade
 civics." There was a slightly bitter bite to her other-
 wise gently voice.

Allie was stopped for a moment. She remembered
 how young this tall, curiously disturbing, profoundly
 self-possessed girl must be. "Civics," she asked.
 "What's Civics? I think that was way after my time!"
 "Some class they give in public schools nowadays—
 it's between history and geography. Current events, I
 guess they call it in some places. I bet they didn't teach
 it in the olden days," she joked.

Again Allie had the eerie feeling that Eddie Raven
 could read minds. "So where do the Mississippish
 live? Or did live, I should say."

"We are one of the Algonquin peoples, one of the
 Anishnaabeg, or originally human beings. Mr.
 Brewer, that's my grandfather, sort of, said we were
 originally from the stars, but then we got on turtle's
 back. Our stock got here through a little hanky-panky
 with Earth Woman or First Mother, Auch'sech."
 Then we lived around the Great Lakes, then we
 moved south and west from those grounds when the
 whites started moving in from the east. I'm the last of
 us," she said matter of factly, "and I live wherever I
 am."

After a reflective silence, Allie said, "I came here
 during the war—the second world war, that it," grin-
 ning lightly. "It had a special quality to it, or so it
 seemed to me. Maybe I just like the rain. And I could
 get decent work, and some of my friends from the
 service were settling here, so anyway, here I am."

"I came out here when I was fourteen, to live with
 my aunt, my mother's uncle's wife. She adopted me
 after my folks died. But they live on another reserve,
 northwest of here. Anyway, I've been around this
 area for most of seven years, but I've been travelling a
 lot for the past two or three—that, and going to
 school."

"Do you come here often?"
 "Some. I haven't been to one of these doings for a
 couple of years, but I come by to visit Betty and
 Raymond and their family from time to time. We're
 sort of related."

At one end of the longhouse the band, which
 consisted of two elderly fiddlers and a young, hand-
 some boy proudly bent over a gleaming guitar, was
 tuning up. People were moving around, putting away
 food and dishes. Allie looked around, and noticed
 that most of the family was occupied with clean-up.
 She stood. "Guess it's k.p. time," she said. Raven
 uncoiled her long limbs and stood. Her high heel
 boots gleamed modestly beneath the sharply creased
 edge of her black, fitted Western pants. She put out
 her hand, saying, "I'm Eddie Raven." Allie took it,
 pressing it softly for a moment, then letting go. "I
 know," she said. "That means something special, I
 think." She shook her head sharply as though to clear
 it. "I'm Allie Hawker." She grinned.

"Raven and Hawker." The black-shirted young
 woman drawled. "We should be an Indian comic
 team."

"Yeah," Allie nodded. Thinking, well, one of us is
 pretty funny. Let's hope the other one is too. They
 carried dishes to the house where several women were
 chattering and laughing as they tidied up after the
 feast.

After cleaning up, Raven sauntered over to Allie.
 "Did you know your name means lost or lost one in
 their language?" indicating the two or three women of
 the house with a slight gesture of her head.

"Yeah, it's been one of our favorite jokes around
 here for some time," Allie said. "That and a thousand
 variations on it. You know."

"Like, if you're lost, I bet I can find you?" Raven
 eyed Allie levelly.

"Shoot," Allie said, gazing coolly back at the

vibrant, handsome face, thinking, okay, little tease,
 let's see if you mean it. She had to make an effort
 to hold her gaze steady as Raven's. "I'm about as lost
 as any little black sheep."
 "Finder's keepers, then," Raven said in a soft,
 startlingly husky voice, and grabbing Allie's hand, she
 pulled her out into the everlasting rain.

When they were in Allie's truck, secure from the
 wet, enclosed in the fog, Raven turned to Allie. She
 studied the older woman for a long time, noting the
 broad lines of her face, the heavy black hair that fell in
 straight lines to Allie's shoulder. Allie was not as tall as
 Raven. She was of the stocky build of many of the
 southern peoples—quite unlike Cheyennes in
 general. Her square trunk rode securely above legs so
 thin the cordoroy pants she wore draped loosely
 over her thighs. Bird legs, Raven thought. A pure
 blood Indian, but maybe not full-blood Cheyenne.
 She liked the straight firm line of Allie's mouth, her
 flat-fingered, broad-palmed hands. She reached over
 to the steering wheel where one hand rested and took
 it in hers, turning the palm up so she could see it. She
 leaned far over it and studied the lines, barely dis-
 cernible in the shrouded night.

"It says here we've known each other for a long
 time," she said. She did not drop the hand but held it
 so Allie would not pull it away. "Allie, my grandfather
 told me we would meet. He told me that a long time
 ago, when I was small. He described you quite well,
 and he said we would meet in a longhouse in the far
 west, that it would be early winter, night, raining, and
 we would both be strangers to the place where we
 were, but that it would be an Indian place, and holy.
 He drew a likeness of you, and emblem I guess you'd
 say. It was of a woman, big compared to the others in
 the drawing, like they do—" she hesitated a moment
 looking to see if Allie understood. When Allie nodded,
 Raven continued.

"Behind you was a huge cloud that he said was light
 itself. It looked like an atom bomb. He said you were
 connected to that light, and that I was too, and that we
 had planned this meeting long ago. When I was on my
 way here tonight, I saw you, sitting in the longhouse,
 just as you were when I came in, and your spirit
 around you bigger than the rest in the room. And
 then I saw the mushroom cloud behind you, rising
 toward the heavens, bright as bright—so light! I was
 nearly blinded by it, and had to look away. It was so
 bright everything in the scene turned brilliant white
 then more brilliant until I couldn't distinguish any-
 thing. My eyes ached afterward. I drove the road here
 half-blind."

"We are connected from sun to sun, he said, and
 our roads cross in every period where people like us
 are needed. When there is a big change coming on the
 world, we are here. He said that was why my name was
 Raven, and that I would be a woman who is like a
 man—in his language that meant lesbian or dike in
 English. And that you would be too. He called you
 Sun Warrior, child of light; he said I am your sister
 spirit, helper, twin, and that when the time was ripe
 we would meet."

"He said so much, and I remember all of it, and I
 will tell it to you in time. But first, did you know any of
 this? Or maybe that old man was just old and super-
 stitious—" but Raven knew, even as she said it, that
 that wasn't true, "or maybe I misunderstood and he
 wasn't talking about you."

"I think he was," Allie said softly. She withdrew her
 hand from Raven's and reached into the pocket of her
 flannel shirt. She took out a pack of cigarettes and
 some matches, lit two cigarettes and handed Raven
 one. They smoked in silence for a few moments.

"When I was just out of boarding school, I went to a
 green corn dance or something in Oklahoma. I got
 really tired and decided to curl up in my blanket
 under some trees away from the danceground, and
 then I heard some women talking. They invited me to
 sit with them, and I did. They were talking about a
 vision one of them had seen, about an explosion or
 something that emitted huge amounts of light. She
 didn't know what it was, exactly, and neither did I. I
 didn't even know much about ordinary explosives
 then—in Indian school they were training us to be
 domestics or farm-hands—" she snorted contempt-
 uously.

(Continued page 20)



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—Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

State of the Union Message, pp. 13-14

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LANZA



TO JUDY GRAHN

...in response to *Descent to the Roses of A-Family*,
a poem by Judy Grahn.

Along the way
there are many points
of entry
and few will bare
a familiar name

When you step inside
the flame you have feared
will carry you into
the darkness
a place you were told
did not exist
...not for you

She is there
the nigger
stands tall
awaiting your descent

Go to her

in spite of all
you were taught
about running
and calling it something
else

Go to her

and see your face in
her's

Go to her

and hear your voice
rising from her

Go to her

and feel her touch
give birth to
each of your-mysteries

Go to her
knowing that
having seen her face
should you turn away
she will snatch pieces
of your heart
and damn your soul
to a light
that will never
let you forget

Joyletta A. Alice
April 1986



RAVEN'S ROAD

(Continued from page 19)

tuously when she said this and rolled her eyes. "But later I saw the bomb at Alamogordo, White Sands Proving Grounds; you know..."

"Yes," Raven interjected, "my dad was stationed there when I was very small..."

Allie nodded, comprehending, but continued her story "and when I saw it, I realized what that old lady had "seen" in her vision. It was the Atomic Bomb, or maybe even one of the bigger ones they developed later."

She studied Raven's dim face several seconds before going on, while she considered her words. "They have opened the earth," the woman said. She said that the white men are making her bring something out. And we should keep watch to make sure that the birth comes in the right time, and in the right way. To make sure her time comes in the way it should."

"Then," she continued, rolling down the window slightly as she spoke to let some smoke out, some water and wind in, "I was stationed here in the army, and when I got out I had decided to stay here, like I said. The first thing I did was go to the mountains, away from any towns. I was seeking an understanding of my life, of its patterns, of what it was to mean. I mean," she made an abrupt, impatient gesture with her hand, "I knew that overhearing those old women in Oklahoma, then more or less accidentally seeing the bomb blast in New Mexico, then getting assigned to a work-pool in the Army that wound up working with the first computers, finding out that I was gay, that it meant something other than just fooling around with some girl in boarding school—" she shot a quick glance at Raven, to see how she took that news, then ploughed ahead over the protest of her suddenly wildly pounding heart; "see, I found out I was gay in the same platoon where I learned about computers, and it was the same group that was the reason I was in the mountains of southern New Mexico in August of 1945, and I knew that that many coincidences weren't coincidences."

Raven nodded, her eyes intent, a small frown of concentration holding her face in a sculptured shape. She nodded again, signalling Allie to continue.

"I needed to find my direction, to calibrate it, so to speak, and the hills, the rain, the forest were part of that—of how I figured I'd do that." She fell silent, thinking of those three weeks, the rainforest, the eagle, the sky, the talking rocks she had used, before she heard them speak, to ring her small fire. Wrapped once more in the rain and fog that were her closest companions during that time and ever since, she entered the forest in her mind that corresponded exactly to the forest she lived in all those years ago. Several minutes went by while she lived the past again.

"That was about fifteen years ago," she said, remembering Raven was there, waiting for her to speak. "I was not much older than you are, I think."

"I knew your name," Raven said. "Mr. Brewster told me your name would be Lost Woman." She grinned. "He also drew an eagle flying over your left shoulder. A spiri guardian, a Sno' pesh, he called it. A manitou."

"Ah. Your grandfather must have been clairvoyant." Allie smiled. She leaned her head back against the back of the seat, stretching her legs to Raven's side of the cab.

"Clairvoyant, yeah. I never thought of it like that, but of course, that's the word for it. He was my teacher, actually, not really my grandparent."

Allie nodded, "Understood," she said. "But about his clairvoyance, while I was camping, I was praying and smoking, you know," she made a tiny gesture with her hand, "and finally it came to me. I was sitting on a high place looking out over the land—it was a clear day, for once—and watching an eagle that was flying around. She had been circling slowly for some time, and I had been watching, in a kind of sleepy daze. Then, with no warning, no shift of any kind," she stared hard at Raven to see if she understood, "I saw the eagle come zooming over me. She landed a few yards above me, then sort of hopped-flew down. She was just a short distance away—maybe a foot or so farther than you are. And she fixed her eye on me and started telling me things. I mean, she didn't open her

beak and talk like I'm doing now, but she talked. Anyway, I heard a voice, I knew it was her. She told me what my direction was for the next few years, and she told me I would eventually hook up with others like myself who had come to life in this time to watch over a great hatching." She looked at Raven, an expression of hesitation in her eyes. "Well, that's what she said," she burst out defiantly.

Raven laughed and patted Allie's hand reassuringly. "I'm sure she did," she said. "So, who's the mama bird?"

"Well, I think it's the same event as that old woman was talking about, though I'm not sure. I mean there could be lots of births slated for this period."

Raven nodded. "Yeah, gotta watch out for monotheistic thinking. Monochromatic, I call it."

"Hmmm," Allie mumbled. "I think you're right." "Besides, birds hatch more than one egg, don't they?"

"Some do," Allie responded. "Eagles have only one or two, though."

"She also said that a person like me, a 'like a man' or 'um'w'e ganiyu' as she put it, was like a gateway or a midwife, a kind of medium that helps form new—I guess you'd call them manitou." She glanced at Raven as she used the word.

"Manidooq, that's our word for it. It's connected to something they call magis or megis, and that's like a medium that, oh, you know, holds or transmits a certain forcefield that makes connection with and, uh, the appearance or incarnation, sort of, of the manidooq possible. But that's on a sort of small group or individual basis," she added.

"Well, this seems similar, and maybe the group involved isn't very big. I don't know." Allie was silent for a few moments, considering the possible size of the group of "watchers" as she had privately named herself and others who were on the same road.

"I spent the next several years checking out what the eagle said. Among other things, she had told me that there would be a number of us doing this work, and she also said that the fires I worked with and the ones I had seen were the same fires, and they were the signs or gateways of the hatching. That they were like the egg, opening, getting ready to open. And more, she said more, but it was complex and I haven't understood all of it, even the references she was making, yet. Some of them, that I didn't understand at the time, have become clear as the events she was referring to happened. She wasn't so clear about whether what she was saying was about the past, the present or the future, or whether the terms she was using were symbolic, local, actual or just how she talked!"

"Yeah. My grandfather talked like that. I figure I'll understand a lot of the stuff he said in about a hundred years."

"Well, to make a long story short, I spent a lot of time locating my companions. One is in Albuquerque—I met her in New Orleans where she was studying a particular-spiritual tradition, one that she said her people brought from Africa and blended with Indian ones. Another one of them is my first woman lover, Captain Bee. And there are some more I found over the next few years. I just found you, and you are one she referred to, then there's a couple more for sure, actually a kind of clump or family of them that I won't meet for some time, I think."

"What did she say about me?" Raven asked.

"Before we get into that," Allie said, "could we go in and get our coats and things and go somewhere? There's a truck stop I know not far out of town that stays open all night. I'm cold, and I want some coffee. Want to?"

"Oh, sure," Raven said, opening the door on her side. "I'll get our stuff, and tell Betty I'll see her later. Unless you want to come in—" she hesitated a second, waiting for Allie's reply, which came quickly. "No," Allie said. "They're used to me disappearing suddenly. Just get my coat. It's the leather jacket in the kitchen, or on the couch. I forget where."

"I'll find it, don't worry," Raven assured her, slamming the door as she spoke. Allie watched her make her way through the rain to the door, a strange luminosity around her body making her visible through the heavy fog. As she waited she smoked and hummed her song quietly. She knew she had made another turn in the road.

SLOAN-HUNTER
(Continued from page 8)

So I started thinking about my years in the Civil Rights Movement when we started celebrating ourselves as Black people and feeling good about ourselves, about our faces, our noses and our hair. And we looked around and saw that there were many white people in leadership roles in our organizations and we said not only should you leave, but you must leave. Even liberals applauded the fact that we were doing this.

It has never been okay for women to say we don't need men. No matter where we say it, it has never been okay. And that made me realize how deep sexism is, how women have fought, like hell, with women over the issue of men. I don't think I've had knock-down-drag-out battles with Black people on whether white people should be in our space or in our lives. I've never experienced that. But I've experienced it time and time again with women and it makes me sad, it makes me nervous and it makes me realize how deep this is.

The definition of separatism that I am using is the act of celebrating self by any oppressed group, self validation and the removal of self from persons, places, or things either physically, emotionally or psychically, that threaten, obstruct, harm, and ignore that celebration.

I have to say that you could have gotten a better person to do the haggle on separatism. My consciousness is being raised all of the time and I am not a radical separatist and I appreciate them for being there because everytime I read something that they've written, everytime I listen to something that they say, everything is being challenged in my life and I love it. I feel I am a liberal separatist. I have a job that is with the largest financial institution in the world, I work with men, I define myself as a monogamist, which is antithetical to radical separatist thought. And I also define myself as a feminist butch and that is also antithetical to separatist thought.

I believe that any woman has the right to demand separate space and time from men. And I believe that if there are 50 women in a room and only one woman has a problem with that then she deserves our attention or priority.

Lesbian separatists maintain that the only way to free ourselves from male dominance is for all females to withdraw from men, to withhold from them our nurturing, our caretaking. Only by this can we erode the basic foundation of male power and control over us. Male power is based solely on female complicity. I ask myself everyday, in one way or another, what action I am taking, how is that complying. I really believe that that is the name of that tune.

As Julia Penelope says, "Only Amazons, who are Lesbians separatist, do in fact claim land and choose to live away and try to attempt living a life as free of men as possible."

The reality of it is that most of us work in the world and have men somehow connected to us, either actively or passively. We have daddies, some of us have boy children. The separatism that I advocate is a psychic separatism. Until I felt good about my Black self, there was no way I could have an equal relationship with a white individual. And during the 60's when "Black is Beautiful" abounded, it was the best thing to happen. Prior to that I, and other Blacks, referred to our hair as "bad hair", we did all those self-hated things, because we thought that people with white skin were better than us. How I responded before the Black revolution was very different from how I responded afterward. I don't believe that women, as a group, have taken it seriously. I think a lot of it has to do with fear, but I feared white people when I was younger. And I don't fear men physically, but I find myself at work—even with my Lesbian feminist, separatist consciousness, even with the years that I have been with the Feminist movement, and all of the books I've read—I still find myself, at times, deferring to them. And they make me nervous. Not that they are going to hit me, but that they will say something that does not celebrate me, and I will become immobile.

When I moved out to California, I lived in a household with several other women and we consciously said, when we interviewed women for the household,

that this is a separatist household. Men will not be in this house. I was in a privileged position, I was working at the Berkeley Women's Center, most of my activities were with women, all of my professionals were women. Some of the women worked with men all day. We decided that when we came home from the world, we wanted to have a safe space. One year we made an exception, one woman's brother was in town, but we wanted advanced warning. It was really important. A lot of people criticized us for that. A lot of Lesbians said, "you aren't that together, you are threatened by having a man in your house." But we continued to do it until we moved out of the house.

It was very important for me to do that because I realized that I had a lot of dependency on men, and male approval, that I didn't know I even had. It was only when I withdrew from them those years, as much as I could, that I realized that I did not need them. And now I can let them in my life, and I'm talking minimal here because they are no fun for me.

Feminism saved my life. Women's sacrifices and things that they've done over the years, before I knew that sisterhood is powerful, has really made the foundation for my consciousness raising, my continual growth.

There is an epidemic of women making detours to men. And every week someone is telling me that they slept with men, because they think that I'm a separatist. I don't know what they think I am going to do to them. It is the dykes that are not separatist that have alienated these women...

I think that every woman has to separate from men, psychically. I have met an occasional heterosexual separatist. I know a woman who says she is not a Lesbian, she is turned on to men, but she refuses to sleep with them. She hasn't slept with them in 6 years because she says she doesn't want to comply. I give her the rose of the day.

By becoming a separatist we choose to invest in each other, thereby divesting in men. We acknowledge that whatever our gains might be, they will come from working together, defying the heteropatriarchy and by doing this we lose absolutely nothing because we have nothing. So anything that we gain is important.

I don't know why it is so threatening for women to hear us say that we are separatist. Other than the fact that sexism is so deep.

I see racism and sexism as diseases and those of us who hang out with diseased types become infected. In order to make ourselves healthy we have to purge ourselves. In my younger days, when I thought Lesbianism would cure everything, I was always asking, "aren't you going to come out?" But I am a little picky now...We will react as people do who are carriers and we have to remember that, and we have to be gentle with each other and realize that a lot of times we react in ways that damaged people react. The goal is to make ourselves well, whole; to celebrate ourselves.

We have to be gentle in everything that we do. It appears that we are harder on women (in reality that is not true; men have the power to wipe us out). At times we react in not the best ways toward each other.

In Lorraine Hansbury's *A Raisin in the Sun*, the character Moma was coming down on her daughter-in-law because the daughter-in-law was coming down on the son, Walter, for spending the money they were going to buy a house with. Moma said: "when do you think the time to love somebody is, when they've done good, when things are going okay? You haven't learned anything at all, the time to love somebody is when they are down and the world has whipped them so.

When we measure somebody we measure them not by our yardstick, but by theirs. We have to take into account all of the hills and valleys that they've come through to get to where they are. So when a sister says, "I hate men, I want them to die, I don't want them in my life, I can't stand them." Understand that she was not born that way.

I want us to celebrate ourselves because we are the hottest things going. We are most of the planet, we make everything move. We need to celebrate ourselves. And anything that threatens that celebration, it is okay to remove ourselves from that.

In 1976 I saw a sign in a church that said: To celebrate is to see who we are and to say "yes."

—by Margaret Sloan-Hunter

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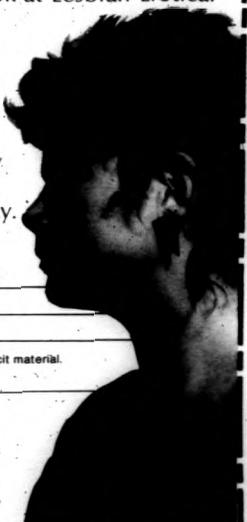
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Notes on the Black Lesbian Aesthetic in Literature

(Continued from page 13)

"We must write in spite of our fears."—Isis, 1979; a report, in "Off Our Backs"

[Black women writers must be] "more concerned with exploring and ending oppression..."—Barbara Smith, 1983, Introduction to *Homegirls*

"We must write towards a vision of the unfettered lesbian life, so the reader of tomorrow will know we knew her existence was always unconquerable and inviolable...Let it all survive...welcome our writings in all of its forms..."—SDiane Bogus, 1984, "All of Our Art for Our Sake"

[The Black lesbian writer] "must throw herself into the arms of her culture by acting as student/teacher/participant/observer absorbing and synthesizing the meanings of our existence as a people..."—Jewell Gomez, 1983, "A Cultural Legacy Denied and Discovered"

"We must accept Black women as writers by accepting their visions as representative of Black women's reality because those visions corroborate, extend, and particularize the history of Black women in this country."—Gloria Wade-Gayles, 1984, "No Crystal Star"

"In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower."—Audre Lorde, 1984, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"

MANDATES FOR BLACK LESBIAN CRITICISM

"If lesbian-feminists are doing criticism, then they are responsible for doing actively anti-classist, anti-racist work, using anti-classist and anti-racist criteria for examining those literatures."—Cherie Moraga & Barbara Smith, 1977, "Lesbian Literature, a Third World Feminist Perspective"

"The first rule of a Black feminist criticism would be a demonstrable commitment on the critic's part to the notion that sexual and racial politics and female identity are inextricable elements in Black women's writing."—Barbara Smith, 1980, "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism"

"A distinction must be made between 'analyzing critically,' i.e. 'talking about a book's worth,' and 'trashing a book.'"—Cheryl Clarke, et al., 1983, "Black Women on Black Women Writers..."

"All Literary Criticism is anchored in a set of aesthetics, certain values which are acknowledged or not. Unless the critic is prepared to recognize, if not discuss, the aesthetic values out of which she is dealing, her judgments of 'good' and 'bad' lose validity."—Audre Lorde, 1983, *Conditions Ten: "An Open Letter"*

"A lesbian aesthetic in Black women's literature is necessary, if for no other reason than to separate those who write about Black lesbians but are not themselves lesbians."—Cheryl Clarke, 1983, "Black Women on Black Women Writers..."

"It is crucial, as women writers come more and more to the forefront, that women reviewers of their work offer them and the reading public literary criticism that reveals soundness in mind, words, fact, and judgment."—Ann Allen Shockley, 1984, "On Lesbian-Feminist Book Reviewing"

"To examine Black women's literature effectively requires that we be seen as a whole people in our actual complexities—as individuals, as women, as human—rather than as one of those problematic but familiar stereotypes provided in this society in place of genuine images of Black women."—Audre Lorde, 1984, "Age, Race, Class and Sex"

[There is] "a commitment to considering the voice of the Black lesbian feminist as the definitive statement of truth about the Black lesbian feminist."—Caroline Streeter, 1984, in "Off Our Backs"

MANDATES FOR THE CREATION OF THE BLACK LESBIAN CHARACTER

[It is needful to] "find one book based in Black feminist and Black lesbian experience, fiction and nonfiction, that would make my waking and sleeping hours easier, that would tell me something specific about my life."—Barbara Smith, 1977, "Towards..."

"Aren't stories, poems, biographies, and novels concerning the conflicts, struggles, survival, joys, woes, and loves of the Black lesbian also needed to fill the gaps of the sweeping gamut of the Black woman's image in literature?"—Ann Allen Shockley, "The Black Lesbian Invisible Woman in American Literature"

"The task of creating a Black American heroine in depth, of detailing the anguish of her unique dilemma, of delving into the mystery behind her Herculean spiritual strength, has remained for that select group of Black American women writers to reveal...the infinite source and personal horizon of collective Black female experience."—Sondra O'Neale, 1981, "Speaking for Ourselves: Black Women Writers of the 80's"

The female characters of Black lesbian writers must "define their own humanity as something far larger than the sum total of roles and images created by others."—Gloria Wade-Gayles, 1984, "No Crystal Star"

"Nature abhors a vacuum and there is a distinct gap in the picture where the Black lesbian should be. The Black lesbian writer must recreate our home, unadulterated, unsanitized, specific and not isolated from the generations that have nurtured us."—Jewell Gomez, 1983, "A Cultural Legacy Denied and Discovered: Black Lesbians in Fiction by Women"

Earlier I insinuated parenthetically that the "aesthetic" operates "for better or for worse." By that I mean that within each area of the aesthetic there are contradictions and conflicts that seem to set one writer or scholar in opposition to another or that create seeming schools of thought regarding the direction of the work of Black lesbian-feminists. For example, in the matter of the "writing" mandates we are simultaneously asked to be archivists, ambassadors, collectives, scholars, praise-singers, self-therapists, politicians, soothsayers, griots, notaries, and philosophers.

And though the tasks are all as admirable as the values they represent, it is simply not possible for Black women who are lesbians to be all things in all ways to the vision as it takes shape. Our utterances are meant, in text, and as quoted excerpts, to inspire and inform, guide and clarify. Thus, when the school of Black lesbian writers who see our primary roles as political—in the name of the ground of being meant to fight male domination, anti-lesbian hysteria, or the racist oppressions so familiar to our daily living—we can be sure that the passion and intention with which that mandate is expected to be met allow no frivolity.

So, if Vivienne Crawford writes fantasy, Shockley writes satire, or Becky Birtha writes romance, these women may never be "reversed" let alone studied, read widely, or understood as making deposits in the bank of the future to which Walker alludes. It is noble to want ourselves to be all that we can be, to be represented in fiction as in life, in all our characters, with all that's human nature, but we cannot expect ourselves to be and do all at once. So we must attach ourselves to the aspect of the struggle and the aesthetic that best suits our sensitivities and the true impulse of our participation. Here I offer these comments randomly, to position myself in regards to the thinking and writing that is going on. Here I clarify some of my thinking, as I try to gather what are essentially the uncollected thoughts of an entire community, knowing all the while that I may very well misrepresent, underrepresent, or inadequately represent what the "aesthetic" seems to be. But it is a start on a term bandied about like a hard but fuzzy tennis ball.

Black lesbian feminist criticism is fraught with disagreement because so many writers are trying to make up lost time. Where we once thought, as did Gloria Wade-Gayles, that there was not a tradition of Black lesbian portraiture in literature before 1945 and up to 1975, Audre Lorde, Ann Shockley, and Anita Cornwell all stand as contributors to it who did not find publishers in the pre-feminist, pre-gay studies days of that time. Both Barbara Smith and researcher J. R. Roberts have noted how Black lesbian materials were subjected to repression and many existed for years out of print; it is only after years of "invisibility" that the "woman-bonding," and "lesbian" presence in literature has been resurrected. Alice Walker tried to document Zora Neale Hurston's probable bi-sexuality; Bessie Smith has been much discussed and claimed among lesbian ranks, if not wholly, partially because she does stand as a living figure for times thought non-existent or erased.

Thus, when we get a contemporary portrait of the Black lesbian, as Lynne Reynolds notes in a review essay of *The Black and White of It*, we want it to be the truest, most salient, purest,

steps out of the "politically correct" vision we want to hold, or if she fails as a believable life, coming off as only a type or kind of lesbian, i.e. Black woman as lesbian as in *Eva's Man*, then the criticism crushes the attempt for its inauthenticity.

We want our writers to imbue their characters and themes with adroit and "artful" coalitions between politics and literary values; we want the writer and the critic who reads her to be ultimately "Black and lesbian" or "Black and Feminist" but that is as unreasonable as thinking we read but one type of book or trust the reviews of only a few select critics.

I won't be made to believe that we are that narrow. If the "commitment" is truly to have Black lesbian portraiture and its critics be of the same ilk, be the only voice we trust, we limit not only the Black female imagination, but we deny the magnificence of the creative process to those who are capable of creating classics as we have come to appreciate over the years. Our art is predicated upon our values of fine literature, much learned from very heterosexual teachers and very heterosexual fictions; Bret Ashby in the *Sun Also Rises* is not a dyke by our standards, but she is intimated as one in an image that I have come to appreciate.

If only the Black lesbian writer can draw the Black lesbian, for example, then no such reading as that which Barbara Smith gave Morrison's *Sula* would be possible. High art transcends the parochial view of the experiential. Thus, Alice Walker's woman-bonding pair in *The Color Purple* transcend the contemporary label "Black lesbian" because they are not in fact. They become lovers not as a political act but as one of personal choice, and with very little commitment to any ideal about women being together as lovers. Still, for the most part, Walker's pair are warmly received but she is not herself a lesbian. This is an instance of our "accepting the visions" of Black women writers "as representative of Black woman's reality," but that does not mean it is the sole way to present it, or the most revealing. Black lesbian criticism is fraught with danger and disagreement. The mandates I cite here don't begin to address the questions asked again and again by critics such as Clarke, Dandridge, Gomez, Shockley, Hull, and Smith. How to handle perjorative criticism by our own kind? How to treat a book by a Black lesbian-feminist when we do not like it but are made the franchisers of the work because of the "commitment" to the Black lesbian-feminist voice as the truest and most authoritative? How to deal with white feminists who think themselves unable to be "just," "sound" or "objective"? How to assess our ability to review or discuss another woman's work? How to assess our critical values? How to tell our truths in the face of the edict to be "politically correct"? How to judge work by Black lesbians and Black women without expecting it to conform to an aesthetic not yet fully formed nor free of bias?

Then, there is the matter of criteria for criticism. In the hands of men, we have often been dismissed as "minor," "regional," "peripheral." In the hands of women, Black and white, we have often been accused of too much emotionality, too much romance, not enough critical insight, unbalanced portraiture, bad politics, or of being "dancing dogs." So, how do we begin to address the need to have a critic fully informed about a writer before she goes to her work? How can we assure ourselves the best possible handling of work? Rita Dandridge, Ann Shockley, Barbara Smith, Gloria Hull, and Evelyn C. White all lay out some specifics in terms of what should be included in a critical article or essay or review, but I suspect strongly that we ought to judge work by Black lesbian-feminist by values we are all enrolled in supporting.

The one requisite I am sure that I hold towards the work of Black women, lesbian and feminist, is that it touch my moral and spiritual ground of being. Now that is not a tenet voiced by others, but frequently, in the fiction of Black women, such themes are disclosed poignantly. For example, Ann Allen Shockley's *Say Jesus and Come to Me* has not fared well among critics because it has a larger commitment to the moral than to the literary or political. Assessing morality and spirituality simply does not exist as an option in the Black lesbian-feminist aesthetic. What is needed then, is a paradigm of appreciation that steps outside of its own mellee of dissonance and perceives the "actual complexities" of which Lorde speaks.

Given all of this consideration, the mandates for the creation of Black lesbian characters are closest to realization and unanimity than any single component of the "aesthetic." Writers and critics are clear that "what is possible" in the literature, and lives, of the Black lesbian has yet to be written, and in that I take my hope. As Peg Cruikshank observed in *New Lesbian Writing*: "We may be coming to an end of a period in which lesbian writing was parochial, focussing on achieving visibility, and our emotional and sexual identities." Now, if we could only adjust our political agenda to accommodate the opening.

AMAZON RISING FROM THE DUST
(Continued from page 6)

PEN:
Everything fractured then
as the sword clubbed and then went in,
not just the ribs and skull,
the full picture
went to pieces, I saw the
world break, the sun
splinter, Helen your beauty
and your godlike features
cracked like shell
before my own cracking face
and graceless fall.

Oh god Helen, we lost the war;
we lost each other in the war.
I was your tooth
and they pulled it
I was your dagger
and they tore it
from your hand

AMAZON CHORUS:
She was your voice
and they slit your throat
She was your breath
caught like a duck in a gill net.



PEN:
Helen you stood with all
the women on the wall, watching,
hands clutching
as I lay on the sand
unglittering

yet I saw your fingers
curl around my breast
and then your own breast
warm for a second in my grip
as I slipped off...
my lips were flattened in the dust
as you let me go...

I was your arrow
against the foe
I was your backbone
bent low
oh lady of sorrow
I was your bow

AMAZON CHORUS:
Helen, your arrow
where is it?
Is it hidden
in your pocket?
Is it long like a rocket,
or is it round as a locket?
Is it a bee sting?
Is it stored in a quiver,
or under your disgust of slimy things?
Helen—your arrow,
do you have it?

PEN:
We have to move through memory
as the wind moves through dust.
My corpse self was crow-eaten
and discarded (thrown into the river,

even as you watched) oh Helen,
I had to move through that scene
to another, to the dream remembered,
a dream of wild horses
of women's fingers tangled in the manes,
and tangled with each other,
in a dream of what we do with horses
when we do it all together,
when we do it with one motive.

HELEN: I've heard of Amazons with horses.
I've heard you do the most
amazing things with horses.

AMAZON: Horse my pelvis, horse my thighs
horse the thunder in my eyes

HELEN: What DO you do with horses?

AMAZON CHORUS:
As for what we do with horses
it's none of your business

it's none of your knowing
what rides we mounted
what circles rode, what songs shouted

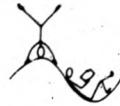
it's not for your understanding
what fires we kindled
in autumn darkness,
what flames we handled
when the moon was
breathless.

as for what
we did in tandem
it was the bonding of warriors,
as for what we did of ritual
it was what you now call: actual
as for what we learned in shadows
it's not of your fathom,
it's deep as molasses
or a parade of motorcycles,
it's the well-waxed chassis
with eighty horse power
and electromagnetic fuel injection

as for what we do with horses
we ride them like forces,
as for what we do with forces,
we tug them in closer.
as for what we do with borders
we cross and uncross them,
as for what we do with curses,
we put them in purses
and fling them to blazes.

as for what we do with horses
we fondle their noses
we drape them in roses
and race them on courses
it's a great-hearted outpouring
with the whole crowd cheering,
it's not for the artless,
it's the marriage of speed,
the finest run on the finest steed,
it's what we whisper in their ears,
it's how their hoofbeats whisper up
to us, "Destiny, destiny, destiny...
rides on opportunity."
It's the brave heart churning,
to nearly bursting,
it's the best blood yearning
for the hot breath
pressed to the hotter neck,
it's the hand slapping and the flank
slapping back against the hand,
as for what we do with horses,
it's the rush of our great trying,
it's the tension of our lunging
it's the love of promising
it's the flesh imagining itself flying
it's the flash of light before thundering,
it's the dark ring of opening,
it's the way we have of living
in the dust of the wind.

From *The Queen of Swords*, by Judy Grahn, a work in
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LAST YEAR THIS TIME
(Continued from page 12)

bath where I sit, my head hung low, steam rising into my face, and the sensation of a giant rock weighting my chest.

Soon Terry calls, and she tells me that at the very university hospital where the doctor (I refuse to write my doctor), had spread his hands in unconcern and sent me out the door—in the clinic building right across the street from his office—is a Breast Screening Clinic known to be one of the best in the area. And this clinic, she tells me, because it receives federal funds, is required to adjust its fees for low-income patients and to allow the patients to pay in monthly installments.

I'm stunned. Probably he can look out his window and see this clinic. Surely he knows about it.

The appointment has been made. In three weeks I will go to the towering clinic building where in X-ray they will insert a large hollow needle in my breast to locate the microcalcifications which are the problem, then thread a wire down through the needle and hook it, then pull out the needle. The wire will be left in. I will go to surgery where I will receive a local anesthetic and a surgeon will cut down the wire until he gets to the area of the microcalcifications, which he will cut out, after which the tissue will be taken to Pathology where they will determine whether it is malignant. All this has been painstakingly explained to me by a young woman at the Breast Screening Clinic, after she told me she knew my name, had considered taking my writing workshop the year before.

The appointment made. Nothing more to do until then. I enter a period of heightened awareness. One day, cutting a half-cooked little new potato, I find an inner faultless circle of creamy white. Next to the fresh green of the brussels sprouts it is all the bright beauty I can imagine in the world. Staring, smiling, I know the rest of my day will be transformed, as it seems my eyesight has grown supernaturally sharp and all my senses quickened, and time has slowed to a leisurely blood-rhythm, heart-felt.

It's harder with people. At first when I tell someone, a chiasm opens between us, as if I have stepped over the line into another universe. The diseased and the healthy are of a different order and speak to each other with difficulty over a great distance. The person expresses shock, sympathy, embarrassment; and I feel shaky and exposed, made weak.

Then it is tenderness that comes to me. Hard to receive. Caring. There is a miraculous happening. I see a woman I have known for fifteen years, as writer and peer, with whom I did political work in the old days. She is someone I have always wished would care about me and be my friend. When she hears what is going on with me, she is solemn, thoughtful. The next time I see her, at a gathering, she comes up to me and puts her arms around me and says, "I love you," and I feel her open heart, I know she means the words.

One could be cynical about these demonstrations. I remember receiving a letter from my father after he had been critically ill. In the letter he wrote that he loved me. Only such a devastating event could have wrung that admission from him. And I talk with a friend who says, "God, it really says something about how we treat each other, doesn't it, when you have to be threatened with death before people appreciate you!"

But I overlook the ironies when people offer me their love, now. It is a great gift to me, especially as I get to see my friends at their best, open and respon-

sive, operating from that which is most positive in themselves. The woman whom I have cared about for so long; her telling me she cares about me too—this enters with great sweetness into me, fills in a place in myself that had been empty and sore. From this moment a real friendship between us begins.

"A healing circle?"

"Yes, let's set the date. Next Tuesday? Wednesday?" My friend Ann is insistent.

I sneak out the door muttering, "Oh...one day soon...I guess..."

It is too much. How could I possibly ask six or seven people to give a whole evening to me?! Ann says she'll ask them, I don't have to. That doesn't help. I don't deserve people focusing their energy on me in that way. I don't want it.

For a few days I avoid Ann. Then finally she corners me and asks again. I tell her what I think about this.

She frowns: "Sandy, you had better check into that. What do you mean you don't deserve it! Wouldn't you do it gladly for someone else?"

The night before the biopsy seven women gather at Ann's house. We sit in a circle with candles and cedar and crystals in the center making a sort of altar. One woman has brought a sculpted face she made, my friend Flo brought a mitt of soft fur for stroking.

Resigned now; I begin by telling what will happen tomorrow, and how I have been experiencing life in these last three weeks. For an hour or more these women talk of their feelings for me, sing songs, offer objects, create a sort of joyousness in the room.

I look around the circle. There is Yarrow, whose lover recently left her, whose face is slimmer, clarified by suffering; there is Ann, who was in an automobile accident, whose joints ache and her dislocated wrist gives her trouble; there is Flo, who works with the Shantü Project, whose clients are young men dying of AIDS, who carries their sadness with her and sometimes has to retreat to her room for days at a time just to return to herself; there is Frances, struggling to resolve a nine-year love relationship which is changing now to a friendship; there is my lover Barbara, who works so hard healing others and rarely takes care of herself; Dayna who is so critical of herself, saying "I start things and I never finish"; Tricia...Nadine... Each of these women is in need of healing. We are equally diseased, out of ease with ourselves, chaffing against ourselves or our lives.

This realization releases me. It lets me relax, deeply. And I see that that invisible line over which I had stepped into the universe of the diseased never existed. There is no such place separate from the world in which these people live.

The biopsy showed normal tissue—this time—and I was delirious with relief. For a week or so I was blissful. Then so-called ordinary life resumed. A year has passed now. My friend Terry has given a dance performance to a sold-out audience. At the breast clinic they say that everything remains the same, and as long as that is true, I'm safe. Strange word, safe: one I have come to understand is never accurate.

The branches outside my window droop, heavy with red berries like little hard balls of rosy light. I work, I love, I question, I fight. And when I think of this time last year it is with gratitude, for never again can I imagine myself separate from others, special in my pain, unique in my sense of struggling, wounded, hopeful life.

—by Sandy Boucher

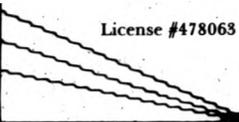
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ANIMAL TIES

In patriarchal society, animals and women (read: minorities) are beaten, raped, enslaved, sold; used for entertainment, cheap labor, sex, experiments; considered inferior, "cute," evil, uncontrollable, emotional, impulsive, instinctive, childish, irrational, property, objects; referred to as chicks, bitches, pussies, foxes,

dogs, cows, beavers, birds, bunnies, sows, kittens, lambs, hens, shrews, geese, fillies, bats, crows, heifers, vixens. (From FEMINISTS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS flyer).

In a 1985 speech, James Watson, co-discoverer of the DNA Helix, said: "There is a debate now as to what is the right of a mouse. Why are we wasting

time in Washington with taking seriously this business?...This is complete and absolute craziness." Watson also charged that the reason there are so many "silly" federal constraints on biological research is that "the White House receives its advice from people who know something about physics or chemistry. The person in charge of biology is either a woman or unimportant." (Cartmill, M., "Animal Rights and Wrongs," *Natural History*, Vol 5, No. 7, New York: July 1986, p. 66).