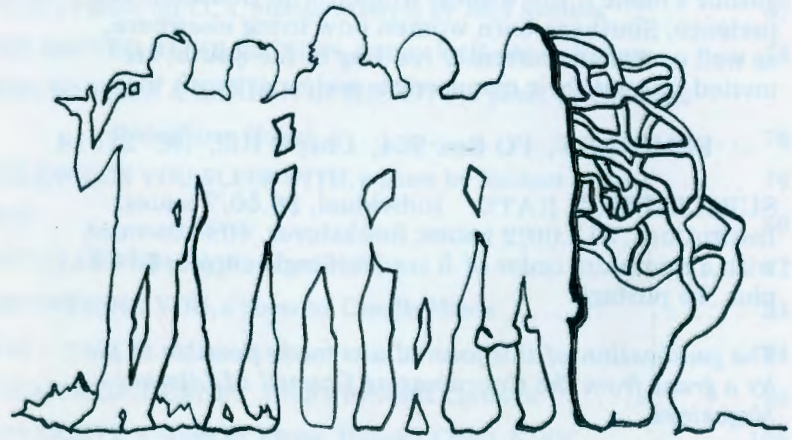
FEMINARY

FEMINARY VOL.XII:1

A Feminist Journal
for the South
Emphasizing Lesbian Visions

THE SOUTH AS HOME: STAYING OR LEAVING



Sue Sneddon

FEMINARY, which began in 1969 as the Female Liberation Newsletter of Durham-Chapel Hill, was renamed in 1974 from a passage in Monigue Wittig's Les Guerilleres:

> *The women are seen to have in their hands small books which they say are feminaries.....In one of them someone has written an inscription which they whisper in each other's ears and which provokes them to full-throated laughter. When it is leafed through the feminary presents numerous pages in which they write from time to time.*

MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVE ARE Eleanor Holland, Helen Langa, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Mab Segrest, and Cris South.

COORDINATING EDITOR for Volume XII:1 was Mab Segrest.

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BOUND BY A Fine Bind

THE COLLECTIVE ENCOURAGES our readers to send us articles, personal narratives, journal excerpts, letters, short fiction, poetry, drawings, reproductions of artwork, and photographs. Please type and double-space articles, send copy-ready drawings and black-and-white reproductions and glossy photographs, and enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of your work. We request material be signed but we will refrain from printing an author's name if she wishes. Women with Southern experience, Southern-born women now living elsewhere, as well as women currently residing in the South, are invited to send their manuscripts and/or artwork to:

FEMINARY, PO Box 954, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

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(The maps appearing in this issue represent several months of collective research, thought, and discussion. The graphics are by Eleanor Holland and Helen Langa.)

COLLECTIVE COMMENTS

"Let's get Iowa City Women's Press to do the printing."

One of the collective members made that statement during a weekend-long retreat we had a few months ago. It was obvious. The immediate response was probably on all our tongues at once, "How will we pay for it?" but the dream comes first and money usually follows. At least, that is how we have functioned for several years now. The women on the collective who are printers (Eleanor and Cris) had reached burnout and we had no more volunteer printers. We also no longer had access to free printing equipment. And we wanted to use that energy which was being spent on physical production of the magazine for other things, like content, for example.

In October of '81, the entire collective attended the Women in Print Conference in Washington D.C. and we came away with an emotional charge, a change in vision, and higher expectation for the magazine, as well as for ourselves as individuals. We wanted to dig deeper, look for the hidden connections, find ways of hearing and understanding that we had overlooked or had not recognized before. We were excited; we were scared. During our retreat, we tried to talk it through. We tried to put the visions into some form we could follow on the actual pages of the magazine itself. It was a difficult, emotionally charged weekend, fourteen hours of meetings, discussions, tears, anger, laughter, and celebration. We knew one another a little better when it was over than when we began.

The collective underwent another change in the spring when Deborah decided to move to Georgia. We were back to five women again, Mab, Helen, Cris, Minnie Bruce, and Eleanor. But it didn't change the vision.

The South is our home. Mab, Minnie Bruce, and Cris were born and raised here and have stayed all of our lives. Eleanor was born and raised in Georgia and left the country but returned after being away for seven years. Helen thought it would be temporary when she moved here, but now she is putting down roots too. What about all of the other women, women who are here, women who have left, and women who have returned? We had approached it before, in our lives, in the magazine, but now we wanted to dive into the depths and begin to really see this place we call Home.

"Let's get Iowa City Women's Press to do the printing."

"Okay!"

And we all wanted to say a very heart-felt thank you to those wonderful women who responded to our request for money. Whether you gave $10 or $150, your donations came at a much-needed time and they enabled us to pay the bills and gave us a spark. Thanks, from all of us on the *FEMINARY* collective.

Cris

DELTA

Raymina Y. Mays

The last time Delta went home, she went on a Greyhound bus. When she had arrived and bathed and settled in a rocking chair on her mother's porch with a glass of lemonade, was surrounded by her aunts who had all gathered to give her mother and each other some back up for the long list of stories that they would tell, she was told a story about her arrival. The Aunts and her mother sat and encouraged each other, added missing details and supplied the right voices, walks and facial expressions. When her little sister Beth Ann was told she was coming home, she sang a little song called "My sister is coming home on a greyhound bus."

"Now I know them songs them babies sing when they jumpin rope," one aunt said, "And that wasn't hardly one of em. Is say, Bell, come out here. I b'lieve this baby out here makin up new rhymes. Don't you know this girl had them kids jumpin rope to you comin home?"

This time when Delta called to tell her sister she was coming home on the bus, she was asked if she couldn't get there sooner. Couldn't she take a plane?

Delta was so caught up in her memories that she didn't realize that she was in town until the bus driver announced "Haytown." The bus stop was still a bench in front of the pharmacy, and the faded Greyhound Bus sign was still pasted to the window. The bus driver put Delta's bags on the sidewalk next to the bench.

Delta saw her mother's continental parked not

far from where she stood. She waved to the figure behind the wheel and waited impatiently for the door to open and her sister, Beth Ann to get out of the car. She walked towards Beth Ann. Almost ran toward her. When she couldn't seem to get to her fast enough, Delta let out a joyful holler from where she stood. People turned their heads, some smiled.

When Delta reached Beth Ann she hugged her hard and then pushed her back so she could eye the changes. Beth Ann was a woman who looked much like Delta. Busy eyes. Cheek bones and nose. All a lot like her own. When she had her eyes filled she reached for Beth Ann again. They cried in each other's arms and Beth Ann whispered, "Momma's dead." And they hugged so tightly that Delta forgot where her tears ended and Beth's began.

Once the bags were loaded into the trunk of the car, Beth Ann drove through the town so that Delta could see what had changed and what had remained the same. Between questions, Beth Ann would point out different people old and new. It seemed that before Delta could answer one question, Beth Ann had another one.

Did she still live with that woman up in New York? Why didn't she call or write more often? Miss Perry and them still live in that green house. Mrs. Sara still get drunk and cain't find her way home. What happened when word got to her that her momma died of a heart stroke? Did she cry? They only had three Aunts left and not four as before. Aunt Lovie died last year of the same thing momma died of. Delta's friend Sonja Jean didn't ever leave town. She had taken to going to the Illusion bar, only bar in town. And Sonja be sittin up in the bar in the middle of the day drinkin beer out of a styrafoam cup with folk who didn't have no job. Sonja slept with women and her husband nearly beat her to death when he found

out and took her kids away from her. Had she slept with Sonja? Did she want to go by Sonja's house when she got rested and the funeral was over? Delta tried to answer all of Beth's questions and to save her questions for later.

Delta had wished first that her mother hadn't died. But she wished second that death would have slipped up on her in the flower garden and not while scrubbing some woman's floors. When Beth Ann parked the car, Delta walked in search of her mother's garden. She was amazed at her mother's ability to grow flowers that would grow past a tall person's knees. She picked flowers for the table inside, but dropped them because she didn't want to look at the table.

Delta entered the house from the back porch. She walked through quickly, not looking at the furniture or pictures or at the room that she and Beth Ann had shared as children. She made way to the front porch. She heard the laughter of her Aunt Beth and Aunt Delta and Aunt Martha. She pushed the screen door open and the laughter stopped.

"Looooooord," Aunt Delta said pulling at Delta's army coat, "If this ain't Bell's child then I don't know who is. Delta leaned over so that the woman whose name she had been given could kiss her. She went to her other Aunts one at a time and waited until they positioned their snuff so that they could say hello. Then she sat in a chair next to her Aunt Delta, and waited for the questions.

What happened to that woman you brought down the last time you was here? Did you feel bad bout being away for this many years? You married? What New York like? You still teach? You still smart?

Delta looked at her Aunt Delta. She remembered her for being good with making her comfortable when she really wasn't. Taking away a fair amount of girlhood pain. Understanding when no one else seemed to.

"Loooorrd. Jesus. The girl just got in town and yall tryin to get her whole life story. Leave her lone," Aunt Delta persuaded. "Rean they questionin you so close is cause they think you gonna go to the funeral then leave right away. Leave her be I said."

"You gonna stay awhile?"

Delta said yes, though she told her lover before leaving New York that she would leave when the funeral was over. She could not stay in her mother's house. Her mother had said never come home again and she took her word for it and the fact that she was dead didn't make it any easier to come home.

When Delta looked away from her Aunts, Beth was standing behind the screen door beckoning her from the porch. She excused herself then followed Beth to her mother's room. She looked at the dresser to briefly see herself in the mirror. She was nauseated by seeing herself in her mother's mirror. She was in the one room where she and Beth had not been allowed. If they went in that room when her mother was away visiting or shopping, she always knew and punished them.

Beth Ann hugged Delta. "Stay. It's summer and since you and the woman who you're with teach and schools out, she can come here too. Delta wanted to be with Beth too and she knew that Beth Ann would like her lover.

For a long time she had wanted to talk with

Beth about growing up, telling secrets, swimming naked in the pond, getting mad at their momma for being nice to that other woman's children and having the patience as long as a short stick when it came to she and Beth. She wanted to talk about how when their father died, the walls seemed to pick up their mother's grief and places in the floor creaked where they never had before and how they seemed so close to their mother then. Delta told Beth that she would stay for the summer and maybe she could meet her womanfriend.

"Momma kept a Direy," Beth Ann said. "I read it. She talk about you mostly. You probably mentioned on every other page. I'll keep our Aunties company while you look at the books. She wrote about ten."

Delta couldn't imagine her mother with a journal. The first page was dedicated "For Mrs. Johnson, who told me to keep this." Mrs. Johnson was the woman she worked for.

There was a slip of paper in one of the pages and Delta turned to that one and began to read:

"Today is the day Delta came home from school up north. She change. her hair is bushy. her clothes not cleaned or ironed. I am ashame of her to come in here with her Aunties here dressed like that. Her friend look no better. She live bout 50 mile south of her but stayin here with Delta before she go home. I don't know who her people are."

Delta skipped pages and read more.

"They was in Delta bed like they was married. This the only way I can explain it. Kissing and holding. I don't allow that in my house. If I hadda been able to sleep last night I wouldn't

know. Who woulda tole me?"

Delta skipped more pages.

"Delta called. She cried. I told her I would kill myself for making her like that if I did it. I think I did. I hate myself. Queer. Folk in town know. Go to the hairdresser and things get hushed. Beth Ann got picked on in school. I got to watch Beth Ann so she won't be one too."

On another page was a passage that read: "I hate myself. I called Delta today. I tell her to come on home and don't bring that woman. Told her Mrs. Johnson know a doctor for her sickness. I love her. I hate myself. She hung up in my face."

Delta lay across her mother's bed consumed by the journal. She was holding a year of her mother's thoughts in her hand. She would ask Beth Ann if she could keep the journals.

As Delta continued to read, she came to a page about Sonja Jean. She couldn't imagine that her mother would write anything about Sonja Jean except that she hated her.

"Melvira's girl Sonja is like Delta, but when she found out she married Ruth's boy. They got babies. Sonja stay in and out of the hospital. Her mind is nearly bout gone. Folk say she leave town to sleep with womens. Melvira and them say the girl crazy. If I say Sonja Jean crazy then I have to say Delta crazy and I know Delta ain't crazy. That is the one reason I didn't like Sonja cause she was too smart like Delta and the two of them together was enough to make my pressure rise. I want to call Delta and tell her they put Sonja away tonight. She said don't call and it be about two in the morning so I might call tommorrow anyway. Dont' care what she say."

Delta's mother never called.

"They say Sonja called Delta's name one or two times while she was under the needle. Delta didn't go to Sonja's wedding folks say because there was a big fight last time Delta came home. I didn't know nothing about this. Show how folk talk behind your back. Sonja must have been the first one for Delta. Why didn't I know?"

Delta wiped away bitter tears. Where was Sonja's house? Beth Ann would take her there. Delta searched for the last journal. She turned pages, though she did not know exactly what she was looking for. Finally she began to read.

"She may not be a mental case. It sure ain't natural though. Someone I brought into the world sleeping with women and doing only god knows what."

Delta frantically turned more pages. She read: "I couldn't accept it. I'll go to my grave not accepting that someone who came out of me sleeps with women."

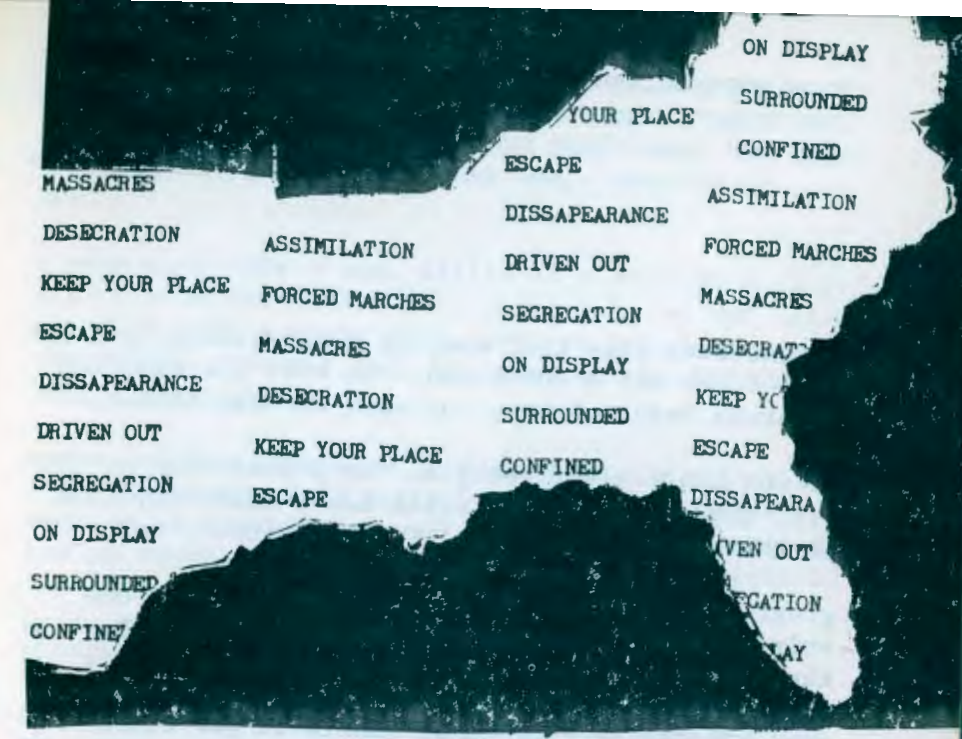
...the "educational" prehistoric mounds by the Black Warrior: the bones of a living people dug up, exposed, desecrated, on display for white grammar school children: I was told that no one knew why these Indian peoples had disappeared, long before white people; I was not told

that in the beginning the first Choctaws crawled from the mound of the great mother, Nanih Waiya; that by 1820 white settlers had surrounded the Southern Indian Nations; that in 1838 16,000 Cherokees were driven out of the South, 4,000 died during forced marches to Oklahoma;

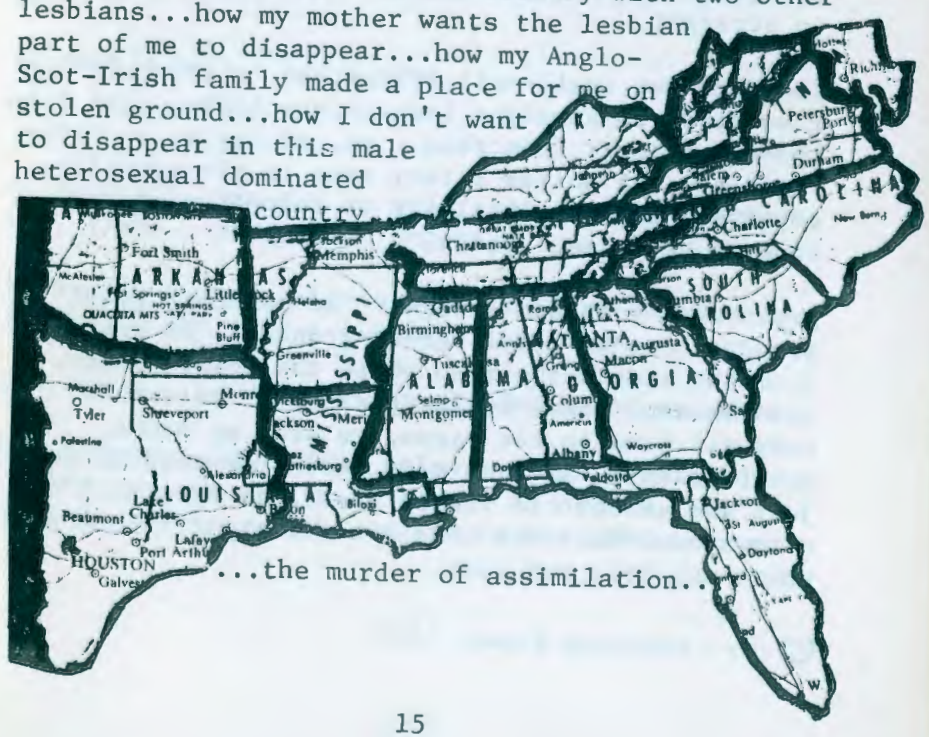
that in 1853 whites continued to try to drive the Seminoles from Florida swamps where they welcomed escaped black slaves; that in 1861 my great-grandfather got 160 acres of government land for fighting in the Seminole Wars...

...in 1951 my grandmother taught me to count to ten in Choctaw; she knew little else about where she lived at Pushmataha, named for one who asked for peace "in the presence of that Being under the shadow of whose far spreading wings we all exist, who extends through all order of animal creation and down into the lowest grass and herbs in the forest"...

...in 1958 the KKK burned crosses to warn the Lumbees to "keep their place" in schools segregated from blacks and whites; in 1979 over 75,000 Indians of different tribes lived in the South; in 1979 Joy Harjo, Creek poet from Oklahoma, wrote "oh woman/remember who you are/woman/it is the whole earth"...



...the garden I share in the country with two other lesbians...how my mother wants the lesbian part of me to disappear...how my Anglo-Scot-Irish family made a place for me on stolen ground...how I don't want to disappear in this male heterosexual dominated country



...the murder of assimilation...

lindajean brown

in whutever year that wuz, my great grandpa got into a fight wif a white man. he kill the man, tho we never been tol how. or why, fo that matter.

it wuz monticello, georgia. in a year when no justice could be had fo a black man o womon anywhere in this big country. well, today either, but ...

great grandma decide they should leave. no one ever said run. she decide they should fly--fast as they feet could peddle--up an out o the georgia woods. resettle. nobody ever said--o say, now--run. "cause we done enouf runnin in our time." ast grandma how she feel bout it, now. she'll tell yo straight.

the kids wuz small--all stairsteps, still--wif big roun eyes, an straight long skinny limbs, just like those i inherit from them. an, at night, yo truly could see the whites o they eyes in the moonlite. no jive. africa wuz closer to them then it has come to be to me. today.

great unca john had a wagon. an he carry great grandpa home to momma (great-grandma), in haste, from the side o the road where the thing happen. then he went home; collec great aunt lula them. they all jump in the wagon, go pick up momma, great grandpa, an them kids (where my grandma wuz just one skinny ole little girl), an they roll out o town near bout the middle o the night. fore that white man body wuz foun.

my twice great grandma, bernice, knowd everythin wifout bein tol. she say spirits come to warn her. she live the res o her life out real long, but didn see her boy, joe--o the other one, john--no mo. ever.

i seen a picture o her, sittin in a yard on a rickety ol straight-back chair, wif a baby on her lap. she look like a young girl, cept in her face. she wuz wearin a single roun bracelet on her lef arm, like i sometime do, now.

guess letters move slow in them days. o not at all. o guess nobody could write. o read. o, danger made it impossible to ever see home agin. o nobody had no money. cause nobody from them two resettlin families never seed georgia agin.

missouri wuzn too bad. leas, there wuz lotsa space. an great grandpa had a farm. an grandma grew up to be, whut they call, a fine womon. an when she had my daddy, she name him joe, too--after his grandpa.

an that's part o how i come.

. . .

my mother's mama say we only come from asbury park, new jersey. an nowhere before.

even when i wuz a little girl, i knowd she wuz stretchin the truf a little bit on that.

but, it got to be somethin she don wanna remember.

her mama wuz name ollie bolen. at 16, ollie wuz on her own, an workin as a maid in newark, new jersey. robin an me foun her in the 1880 census

when we went to jersey to look everybody up.

seem her daddy wuz name randolph. an he an his brother, cornelius,come to newark, new jersey wif they families in much the same way joe an john brown went to missouri. like i tol you before.

only, we don know the reason. in this case.

the white bolens wuz scottish farmers in virginia. but they didn have no luck at keepin slaves. so by 1663, everybody wuz free. leas ways, livin on they own: in one o the firs black communities in virginia.

my people--the african bolens--wuz citizens among that community.

there wuz a ol man name george, an his wife, eva.

things get sketchy after that.

but then we foun two o they kids, randolph an cornelius, on the nex page.

randolph marry dorcas page, from virginia, too.

dorcas become my great great grandma. then she have ollie. then ollie have gramma. gramma, mama. mama, me.

talk to mama, but she don know why they lef virginia. nobody really know, fo a long time, now.

gramma might know--but like i said--her memry don wanna go back beyon jersey.

gramma marry jon hunt, originally from charleston, south carolina--but findin his fortune in newark, new jersey, too. they move to new rochelle, new york.

mama grew to a teenager. knew she wanted to be a nurse.

in new york city, new york, at the time, black girls couldn train in none o the hospitals. bellevue let you work there, but wouldn let you train. tol mama, they didn have no facilities for cullered girls to stay at. to live.

gramma have a brother who settle in saint louis, missouri. he work his way wes from jersey wif the intent to go to california. but, he got stuck in saint louis, missouri, doin caterin work fo white folks' parties.

in saint louis, missouri, wuz/is a black nursin school an hospital run by nuns. mama figure she could train there an stay wif our uncle.

that's whut she did.

she got her degree.

she met my daddy.

bein nomadic peoples already, decidin to settle in new york city, new york, wuz no feat. really.

they did.

marry.

i wuz born.

BUBBA MEISSA *

Susan Jacob

Bubbie, I think of you
in Kishbaru selling herring and
bread to the farmers.
Uncle Jake had left, gone to America
to find fortune at the end of his needle.
They told you you'd have to get married,
needed a man to run the store.

They chose you a husband,
a big bootlegger from another village.
You never even saw him, till he
put the veil down over your eyes.

He complained, "She's too short
to be my wife." Told him
you were young, feed her good,
she has inches yet to grow.
But you must have heard them talk and
if you grew you did it only in the night.

Bubbie, I think of you on the boat
somewhere between Hungary and America.
Were you counting small graves on your fingers?
One by famine, one by plague, one
swallowed by the water.
Did you know two more would go,
smitten by the pox, the fever-America.

Five years gone, he waited on the dock.
Bearded bootlegger turned unionman presser.
Brought you to your new village,
Delancy Street, U.S.A.

He thought you'd go into the sweatshops.
Sing union instead of psalms.
Or at least give him small workers.
Here in America, everyone was fertile.
But you had done your birthing in Europe, and
if your womb began to grow you contained it
in its night.

And I think of you, Bubbie,
in your long widowhood, alone in those
three carpeted rooms. Caught
between the languages, loosing the Hungarian,
never really catching hold of the English.
You made your speeches into your cooking pots,
sewed your romances into the hems of your dresses.

Once a year they would take you to his grave.
Shlomo who died six months before I was born.
They gave me his name.
Shulamite the grand daughter who would grow tall.

You used to sign your card to me,
Love From Your Grandmother. I never
called you that, not even once.
But I've walked with you in Kishbaru and
my poems are written with your pen.
And in your night we meet to dance,
two Jewish daughters rejoicing.

(Bubba Meissa--Yiddish for a grandmother's tale)

THE ABILITY TO SLIP IN AND OUT OF THE WOMB

Susan Jacob

I.

Slip into my bed, reluctant woman,
so that I can tell you with
my fingers all the words
I can't get past my tongue.

Let me tell you in my arms
that I know the woman
still a small girl, needing
womb space to sleep in.

Loosen your clothes, let me loosen
mine. Let us make a tent,
shade in the desert,
easy access in and out.

II.

What makes you think,
your search for balance
will move quicker if it is
solitary?

I have faith in feelings,
in comforts of warm flesh--
ass next to stomach--
discarding the technology of your electric blanket.

Like a hot breakfast,
before you leave the house,
my love can coat your insides,
fit any size it needs to be.

You want to buy all your garments
elsewear. Pay in currency
instead of compromising exchange.

I offer no sales, no
cheap cutrate prices, no
solutions, no resolutions, just
a good fit, a solid foundation,
just a set of arms, sometimes
strong, sometimes not.

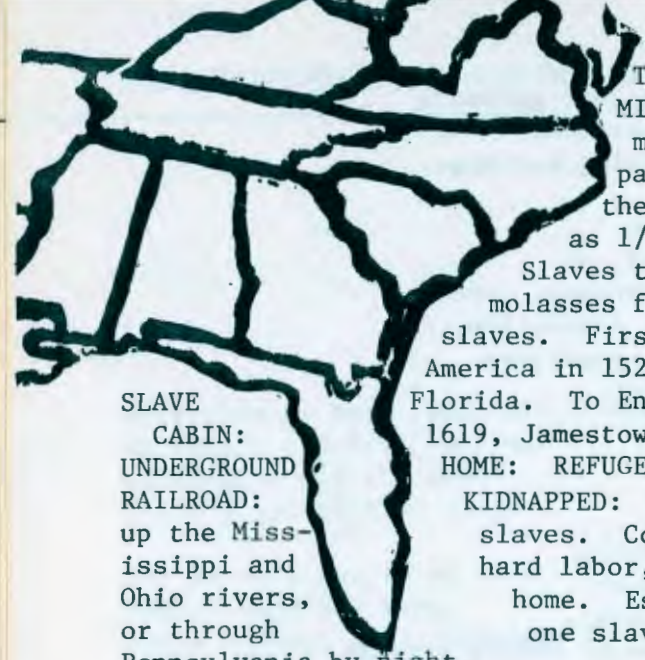
III.

We are women in a world
that does not often fit.
Paradoxes refuse fusing,
public personas seem to battle private.

Maybe, you can clear your life,
be free of the paradoxes. Become like
men, clarity of thought
an individualistic process,
void of weakness and confusion.

I say our liberation must be built
on feelings. Dependency is
our strength. Warm comfort
our ammunition against their paradoxes.

The ability to slip in and out
of the womb. Be big, be
small on either side of a minute.
Be dressed, be undressed.
I'll guard your clothes,
I'll help you to button your blouse.



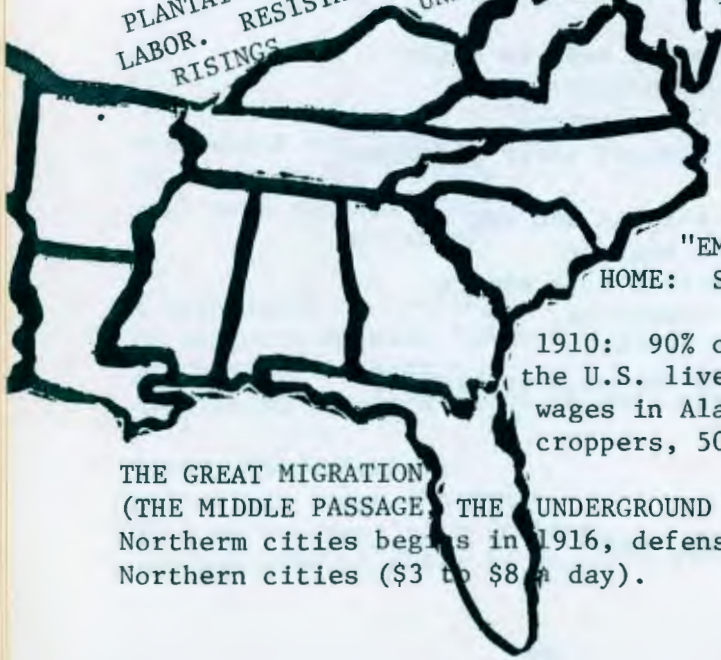
HOME: AFRICA. Then slavers: The MIDDLE PASSAGE, millions of Africans packed in ships across the Atlantic; as many as 1/3 die on the voyage. Slaves traded for molasses, molasses for rum, rum for slaves. First slave to North America in 1526 with Spanish in Florida. To English colonies, 1619, Jamestown.

SLAVE CABIN: UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, or through Pennsylvania by night, "stations", "freight", 40,000 to 100,000 escape to Canada. Harriet Tubman makes 19 trips into and out of the slave south.

HOME: REFUGE, AFRICA.

KIDNAPPED: The Middle Passage, slaves. Cotton plantations, hard labor, a long way from home. Estimated cost to keep one slave: $9/year.

COTTON PLANTATION: FORCED LABOR. RESISTANCE. SLAVE UP-RISINGS. UNDER GROUND RAIL ROAD. SWEET CHARIOT CARRY ME, CARRY ME HOME....



HOME: AFRICA

HOME: SLAVE CABIN.

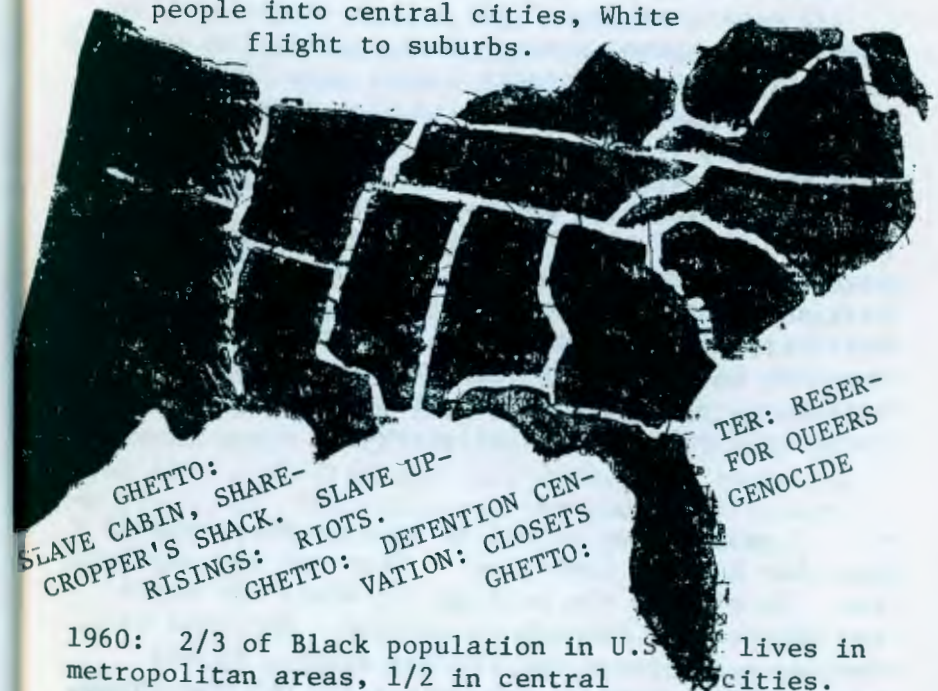
"EMANCIPATION": HOME: SHARECROPPER'S SHACK.

1910: 90% of Blacks in the U.S. live in the South; wages in Alabama for sharecroppers, 50 cents a day.

THE GREAT MIGRATION (THE MIDDLE PASSAGE, THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD) to Northern cities begins in 1916, defense jobs in Northern cities ($3 to $8 a day).

THE CHICKENBONE SPECIAL: trains to Harlem, Philadelphia, Los Angeles. In the 1920's the Black population in these cities more than doubles. Harlem's population increases 5 times. The Harlem Renaissance. Zora Neal to New York, then back South gathering folk lore. Marcus Garvey: Back to Africa.

HOME: GHETTO. Migrants move into the most congested and deteriorating neighborhoods: economically and legally enforced segregation. Baltimore: 1941, 1/5 of the population lives in 1/50 of the space. Depression: the Agricultural Adjustment Act limits how much land is farmed, drives tenant farmers to cities. World War II: more defense jobs in cities. Southern soil increasingly depleted, agriculture mechanized. 1950's: Black people into central cities, White flight to suburbs.



GHETTO: SLAVE CABIN, SHARECROPPER'S SHACK. SLAVE UP-RISINGS: RIOTS. GHETTO: DETENTION CENTER: RESERVATION: CLOSETS FOR QUEERS GHETTO: GENOCIDE

1960: 2/3 of Black population in U.S. lives in metropolitan areas, 1/2 in central cities. RIOTS: Harlem (1963), Watts (1965), Chicago (1966), Detroit and Newark (1967). 1970: 3/4 Black population in metropolitan areas, 3/5 in central cities. 53% of U.S. Blacks live in South. REAGONOMICS: largest budget cuts in public housing. GHETTOS: SLAVE CABINS: TENANT SHACKS: RESERVATIONS: CLOSETS FOR QUEERS: DETENTION CENTERS: GENOCIDE.

Amy Oppenheimer

I have come to live in Appalachia. The hills of Virginia, soft, alive and rich with beauty. Color and nuance. The Shenendoah Valley. Tradition. The Church. I am to live in Christiansburg. I joke to friends that I will start a nearby ghetto: Jewsville. I have left the California Bay area. Mecca for lesbians, women identified women. We walk the streets proud there. We are not often afraid.

I have come here fresh out of law school, to work with battered women. Having spent the previous summer in eastern Kentucky I must have looked like a perfect match to the man who placed me here. I was a feminist, a community activist, and I had told my interviewer that were I to work in Appalachia I would want to do advocacy for and with the battered women whom I knew to be numerous and isolated. Such a person was needed in Christiansburg and so they disregarded my request to go to West Virginia. I suppose all of Appalachia seemed the same to them. But Christiansburg was definitely different; part Southern, part hills, with a large University only fifteen miles away.

A woman comes to see me because she wants to have her husband committed. They are now separated. He sits in the parking lot where she works and watches her through binoculars. He comes to her house and tears the kitchen apart. It has been a while since he has beaten her but she thinks he will again soon. He calls her house at all hours of the morning cussing her or just hanging up. She tells me that there must be something wrong with him. When he was a boy he used to take

kittens and throw them into a pond, forcing them to swim to shore over and over until they died of exhaustion.

This woman leaves my office and another one comes in. She tells me that a woman at the mental health office told her to come talk to me because I fight for the rights of women. Last week she took out a warrant against her husband. He had hit her, thrown hot beans in her face (the dinner she had cooked for him), and forced her head into the commode. She couldn't decide whether or not to go back to him.

I have been looking for a place to live all week; driving from one county to the next in search of my dream house in the country. Nothing is just right. I call a friend back in California for advice, describing to her my options. The best is an old farm house in a beautiful location but with more space than one person can possibly use. She tells me that she would not move into such a large space unless she were committed to finding roommates or to using the space for community needs. I tell her there is no one here with whom I could live and that the community does not need space in the country. I tell her that I will be working with battered women every day and I could not make my home into a shelter and stay sane. She questions my politics. She tells me the space is a luxury. I marvel at the luxury of living in Berkeley, California.

I have dinner with a retired professor from the University. As the evening wears on his charm and brilliance can no longer hide the fascism of his beliefs. First he talks about how "fascinated" he is by Appalachia. We talk about Pikeville, Kentucky where they are moving a mountain and redirecting the river to make more available land.

He tells me how great Man's achievements are - yes, he can move a mountain. He doesn't give a second thought to strip mining; as far as he's concerned they should cut the whole mountain down to get to the land. The final insult comes when he praises the Germans for their excellent engineering. "Yes," I reply, "they were very good at killing people." Still, I hesitated, I did not say "MY people."

The secretary at work has made an appointment for me on a day that I usually don't take appointments. I ask her about it. "He's a Jew-" she says, stopping herself. "What did you say?" I ask her. "Oh nothing." "Is he a juvenile?" I ask, trying to pry it out of her and hoping for some other explanation. "No, he's a foreigner. He talks so funny you'll probably need an interpreter." He was Black, African, and spoke perfect English.

My co-workers are telling me about the abused women that have come to the office. Stories of knives, beatings, mental abuse. They tell me that the worst, the most disgusting case they had seen was the one where the woman's husband was screwing the family pig. Still she stayed with him. "Isn't that the worst thing you've every heard?" they ask me. "No," I think to myself. But I did feel sorry for the pig.

I go to an office party. Everyone is watching a basketball game. Faye, forever looking for a man, is oohing and aahing over the players. "Umm," she says, "wouldn't I like one of those hunks." Tim tells her she would look funny with a 6'2'' black man. She does not attempt to hide her repulsion at the suggestion and tells him that "Blacks are ugly."

I am not used to hearing racism stated so overtly with no thought of shame.

I drive around winding roads exhilarated. I love the country yet I feel the confusion of not being able to call it "mine." My people live in cities. Up through the twentieth century in many parts of Europe, Jewish people, by law, couldn't own land. I begin to understand the magnitude of this. That the only place the Jew is not a foreigner is the inner city. Or a suburb of the nouveau riche. Or Israel? More alienation. My ancestors were forced into occupations that Christians would not engage in; money lenders, tradespeople - whatever was "beneath" them. We were forced into work now used as an excuse to, at best, belittle us and at worst, exterminate us. Shoved into ghettos and town trades, are we always to be outsiders on the land? I love this land yet I must fight to feel I belong here.

I have finally found a place to live after staying on the couch of a hostile co-worker for over a month. A one-room log cabin in the woods; just what I wanted. Isolated. My nearest neighbors are an elderly couple. They live a quarter mile down the road. This is what I have come here for: the solitude, and being so close to the hills and the woods. I am excited and feel strong.

I am told that if I am to live in the cabin I must surely get a dog - and a gun. But I don't like dogs and I don't believe in guns - I protest. My landlady tells me that just a week ago, while the cabin was still being built, it had been shot up. Went right through the front door to the back window. Shattered them both.

I get a dog - and a gun.

My landlady is concerned about my safety. She takes me out shooting with a friend and I do well. She is relieved. She says "By tomorrow the whole county will know you're a good shot; they won't bother you."

I have made friends with this woman who is renting the cabin to me. We spend evenings drinking tea and talk openly while awaiting the finishing of the cabin. She wears baggy clothes, has short white hair, and spends her time painting. Her eyesight is beginning to go so she listens to tapes instead of reading. She hates TV and tells me she doesn't like men much. They tend to encroach upon her.

One night I talk to her about my anger at men for limiting my life through their violence. The cabin shot up. Having to get a gun. Living in fear. The next night I go to visit her. Her attitude towards me has changed. She tells me that I can't move in. That I will be unhappy there. That I am messing up her life. She begins to shout at me. I realize how deeply she had been shaken up by talking with me. She says yes, I have scared her. Perhaps she has understood that I am a lesbian. I can't be sure. I try to calm her down. Finally she hugs me. She says I can move in, that we are friends again. I am relieved, but I know now that I must carefully watch my words.

I go to court with a client who has taken an assault warrant out against her husband. They have separated and are now fighting over custody of their child. The husband approaches me in the hall and tells me that she has his frying pan and he wants it back. I tell him I don't want to hear about it and he tells me to go to hell. I laugh. My client is upset though. How can he talk to her lawyer like that? It must mean he is more powerful than we. She wants me to take out a warrant

against him for cussing me.

The hearing is long and heated. The judge shouts at me and at my client. Finally he makes a decision in her favor. Her husband walks out muttering that he will kill her. Back in the office she gives me a hug and says she loves me.

A woman comes to see me to talk about getting a divorce. She's been beat up for nearly twenty years. Been in the hospital twice. "You know what finally did it?" she asks. "This." She thrusts a bottle of Kwell on my desk, the proof that he has been going out on her. "I wasn't going to leave him, but when I found out he was seeing another woman, well that's it!"

As I talk to these women I feel we are at once different and the same. A slender thread separates us and I bless the luck that has put me on my side of the line.

I am driving home at night. It is clear and the sky is full of stars. I can see galaxies and all the constellations. I am exhilarated, mesmerized. I crane my neck out further wanting to see more and more, wanting to become a part of the sky. As I look, my car veers dangerously off to the side of the road and I must remind myself to watch where I am going.

I am home one Saturday when the postman comes by. He introduces himself and makes small talk. Finally he asks "Are you a foreigner?" I tell him that I am an American thinking "Yes, I am a foreigner."

I am overcome by feelings of wanting to really talk to the women who come to see me. I want to sit with them. To hold them. To heal them. To make them whole. Sitting across from them, a wide desk separating us, I feel ineffectual. A lawyer is not what they need. Instead I want to talk to them about the ways I love women. I want them to see that through being a lesbian I am finding a joy and wholeness I never thought existed. I want to tell them that they could find this too.

But I know that I cannot do this. That in fact I must hide who I am in a way that I have never had to before. That I must learn a skill that I have never had to use when I was living so openly in California. I have to learn how to act like a professional. I have to assess exactly what I can say and to whom. I have to judge how great the risks are and hope that my judgements are correct.

Often, I think I have gone beyond the limits. A slip-up could be dangerous. I would be discredited in the community. And I would become a greater target for their violence. Other times I think I am being too conservative; I must take greater risks. The more open I can be the more room it could make for other women to see their possibilities.

I lead a double life, one at the office, the other at the cabin. My self begins to emerge as I dive deeper into the country.

My nearest neighbor is a woodsman. He cuts wood and gives me his old double headed axe without understanding my glee. He and his wife live in a tiny cinder block house. They have no plumbing, no car, no phone. They have a TV set and four dogs.

I am told that if I need help I should run to this neighbor. He wouldn't hesitate to defend me; he's killed two men, one said to be in self-defence, the other...? His wife is half-crazy. He beats her silly, but only when he's drunk.

At times I feel fear here, and then I remind myself of how safe I have felt while I was living in eastern Kentucky - just over the hills. I learned there that the violence was within the family, and as a stranger I would be left alone. But here there is a mixture of people. Students from a nearby University, local folk, and the hunters. The pattern of violence is less predictable.

It is hunting season. Everywhere I look there are trucks full of men in camouflage with guns on the rack in the back. I wake up to the sound of gun shot. Dawn is the best time to hunt.

The people down the road have caught a bear. I see them driving down the mountain, the bear on the hood of their pickup truck. A local tells me that they hunt bears by stalking them out with dogs and radios. It's no sport, the bear hasn't got a chance.

I dream of making friends with a bear who asks if she can stay with me on the land that I am living on. We talk to each other and she tells me that she will not hurt me, that she only tried to hurt the men because they went after her. I have heard that there is a bear living on my mountain. I want her to stay.

I have finally made a real friend! A lesbian, closeted, but still a lesbian. She even lives in

the tiny rural county that I live in, and does work similar to mine. We compare our lives. She tells me what it's like to grow up on a dirt farm in North Carolina, and I tell her about being a New York Jew. I ask her what she learned about Jews when she was growing up. She tells me that her parents told her things about Black people, but she learned nothing about Jews. One lazy day we are talking. She tells me what a bargain hunter her mother is. "Yes," she says, "She'd always Jew em down." Quickly she apologizes and goes on talking. I can no longer listen. She asks me if I'm still there. "No" I say, but I find I can't talk about it.

I am going away for a few days. I ask my neighbor to look after my dog (the cat is coming with me). He doesn't mind at all. He likes dogs. Can't stand cats though. One time his wife brought one home - crazy thing it was. He came in the door and it sprung out at him. He shot it then and there. No he never did like cats. Mean things.

I feel more like a cat every day.

I keep hearing stories about guns. A woman was being threatened by her husband, he held a gun to her forehead and made her get down on her knees and beg forgiveness. For what? For talking to her friend on the phone, for getting a job, for smiling at a stranger, for not living her whole life for him. "He accuses me of going out on him, he checks the speedometer when I return from work to make sure I went only to work and back. Where else would I go?"

These guns haunt me. The power of the shot. The disassociation from the act. The finger pulls the trigger, the gun does the rest. I wonder if I

should keep mine loaded. I keep thinking I should practice shooting. But I don't.

Violence has become more obvious to me here. The subtlety of a particular piece of pornography or advertisement is no longer what I notice. Here I feel closer to the violence. But still I remember feeling bombarded by violence in the city: screaming out at me from billboards, and inherent in the fear of walking alone at night.

Perhaps here it is the contrast that makes it so difficult for me. I came to the country as a refuge. I feel protected by the land around me. I feel deceived when I learn that danger stalks these hills.

The director of the woman's shelter tells me she wants me to give a talk about women and violence. Connections keep rolling through my mind. About the way that men keep women in fear. Fear of being lonely, raped, alone. Fear of being unwanted by a man, ugly, a lesbian, an old maid. Once married, fear of being beaten, yelled at, demeaned, abused. About the ways that the women, and the hills, and the animals have been broken, tamed. The violence of the choices as they have been named by men. The choice of marriage (beaten, abused), a single life (raped, lonely), or lesbianism (outcast, ugly). I want to tell them they can redefine their choices. I search my mind for ways to say these things without exposing myself too much. and without saying things that will cause others to run in fear.

I go back to California for a month. It is spring there. The plum trees are in bloom and the daffodils have come up. The grass is a lush green. It is like a carnival.

Everywhere I go I see lesbians. The woman selling flowers. The woman riding her bicycle down the street. Women walking arm in arm. Women kissing. Bulletin boards are plastered with flyers shouting out what there is to offer. Groups for lesbians over 40, fat lesbians, short lesbians, classes in psychic healing, massage and tarot.

I feel joy at seeing familiar places and old friends. These are places I have longed for, yet part of me remains distant. The contrast is too great.

I have barely arrived on the west coast before I feel assaulted by my own "community." Two close friends of mine are not speaking because one of them objected to the presence of young boys at an event and the other did not. S/M is the latest craze and the topic of endless conversations. I feel surrounded by disagreements and infighting. At times I get angry or depressed. Often, I feel like a spectator.

Back in Virginia it is still winter. Wood to be brought in, stoves to be stoked. I feel welcomed by the hills which are, for now, my home. A woman who was struck with a soda bottle has gone back to her husband. Another is feeling stronger. She comes to my office to tell me that though her new boyfriend is good to her and wants to marry her, she doesn't want to marry him. She sounds defensive as she tells me that after two bad marriages, it would be foolish to marry again so soon. In fact, she tells me, she thinks women don't need men, would be better off without them. She looks at me for approval. Tentatively she tells me of her friend who is a lesbian. "It really is a beautiful thing," she tells me, "not that I'm that way, but my friend is really a good person. You probably think I'm crazy," she says.

"No, no, not at all," I reply, wishing I had the courage to say more and wondering what the risks would be. She goes on talking excitedly as I wonder what's in store for her in Christiansburg, Virginia.

HOME: REFUGE. HAITI: Papa Doc and Little Doc Duvalier, Ton-Ton Macoutes' "security forces".

HOME: TERROR, poverty. 8% earn 43% of revenue. 43% earn $60/year. U.S. sends in Marines in 1915, helps suppress revolutionary peasant reform.

HOME: Corporate interests. 200 companies with plants in Haiti: Exxon. Firestone. ITT. Texaco. Citibank. Reynolds Aluminum. J.S. Penney. Sears.

HOME: TERROR, POVERTY. REFUGE: U.S. REFUGEE. Haitian boat people to U.S.: The Immigration and Naturalization Service declares them ECONOMIC not POLITICAL refugees. No ASYLUM.

2500 Haitians in DETENTION CENTERS (SLAVE CABINS, RESERVATIONS, CLOSETS) in Miami, New Orleans, West Virginia, Kentucky, Texas, New York.

DETENTION CENTERS: FORCED LABOR, women in Alderson paid $10/month for job mopping floors (SLAVE LABOR, $9/year, TENANT FARMERS, 50 cents/day, HAITIAN PEASANTS, $60/year). DETENTION CENTERS: BEATINGS (OVERSEERS' WHIPS: TON-TON MACOUTES: TERROR). DETENTION CENTERS: SOLITARY CONFINEMENT (CLOSETS).

At Miami and Alderson, Haitians go on hunger strikes (RESISTANCE: UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, SLAVE UPRISINGS, RIOTS--HARLEM, STONEWALL).

MASSACRES. DESECRATION. KEEP YOUR PLACE. ESCAPE. DISAPPEARANCE. DRIVEN OUT. SEGREGATION. ON DISPLAY. ASSIMILATION. POVERTY. TERROR. DESECRATION. KEEP YOUR PLACE. SURROUNDED. CONFINED. ESCAPE.

THE MESSAGE THEY BRING (from chapter 7)

Cris South

BACKGROUND: Jessie Pyne is a 27 year old white woman who lives alone in the country and who co-owns a small printing business. Although a long-time feminist, she has only recently come out as a lesbian and is in her first woman relationship. In trying to confront and deal with racism, she attends an anti-Ku Klux Klan protest march near Raleigh, where she witnesses the beating of a young Black woman who dies shortly after the rally. Angered and frightened, Jessie and several of her friends decide to form an active anti-Klan organization and begin to publish an anti-Klan newsletter, much against the will of Jessie's lover, Kate, who is terrified for Jessie's safety. As an eyewitness to the beating/murder of the Black woman, Jessie is expected to testify at the upcoming trial. She is targeted by Klansmen as someone who should be silenced and they begin a series of terrorist attacks, designed to scare her into complete silence and which later result in a physical attack against Jessie herself.

Laura poked her head into the back room and shouted over the roar of the press, "Hey, Jessie! You have a phone call."

Jessie frowned, "Can you take a message?"

Laura shook her head. "It's Denny and she sounds real upset. You'd better talk to her."

Jessie muttered as she turned off the press. Work was still backed up from last week when the press had broken down for two days and she didn't want to waste precious time on telephone calls. The shop had suddenly been flooded with jobs, dissertations, handouts, flyers. She crossed the room to the extension phone and jerked the receiver off the hook.

"What is it, Denny?"

"Jessie, I'm at your house and I think you need to come home right now." Denny's voice was taut.

"Denny, I am backed up to my ears with work," Jessie said impatiently, "I won't be able to leave here before midnight. It'll have to wait."

"Somebody broke into your house and completely wrecked the place. You need to come home!"

Jessie held the phone in stunned silence. Finally, she found her voice, "I'll come home."

"Good. Kate's here, too."

"Why..."

"We came to work in the garden." Denny cut her off abruptly.

"I'll be there in half an hour," Jessie said and hung up slowly. Who would break into her house? Almost two years there and she had never had any trouble before. Laura came around the corner and peered at Jessie.

"What's going on?"

"Denny says somebody broke in and wrecked my house."

Laura stared at her, "Burglars?"

Jessie shook her head, "I don't know. I have to go home. Can you take care of things here?"

"Go on. I'll manage."

Jessie nodded her thanks and grabbed her knapsack.

She climbed slowly out of the car, uncertain as to what to expect. Denny was waiting for her in the yard and Jessie could see Kate standing on the porch.

"Jess," Denny said hurriedly, "I didn't want to get into it over the phone but there's something you need to know before you go in there."

Jessie looked at her, alerted by the nervousness in Denny's voice, "Is it that bad?"

Denny nodded, "It's really a mess. They've torn up furniture, scattered trash all over the place. They even wrote stuff on the walls. And ..." Denny hesitated, not looking at Jessie.

"Go on," Jessie prompted, feeling a sudden surge of alarm.

"It's Kelly, Jess."

Jessie stared, "Oh shit!" She ran towards the house, ignoring Kate as she burst inside.

Nothing Denny had said prepared Jessie for the chaos in front of her. Nothing seemed to be standing, or even in one piece. Tables and chairs were smashed, all the dishes broken. Trash was everywhere, the smell sickening. She could see the overturned woodstove in the other room, ashes

scattered all over the floor. Then Jessie looked up. Written across the faded blue walls in large, red, spray-painted letters were words, "Nigger lover" and "queer". Jessie could only stare. She felt nothing.

Finally, she started into the study but Denny pulled her back, "Don't go in there. There's no need."

"What did they do to Kelly? Did they kill her?" Jessie's voice was tight. Denny nodded. Jessie brushed her hand away and walked into the other room. It was as bad as the rest of the house. The sofa and chair and been slashed and the cotton stuffing was strewn around the room. Her desk had been overturned and her papers had been scattered and trampled on. Jessie glanced at Denny as she gestured towards the closed bedroom door.

"Did they wreck that room, too? Or is Kelly in there?" Denny didn't answer. Jessie opened the door and stepped inside.

For some reason, they had not touched this room. Everything was exactly as Jessie had left it, the bed neatly made, clothes in their proper places, a book still open on the bedside table, the lamp upright.

In the middle of the floor, lying on the old blanket Jessie had given to her for a bed, was Kelly. Jessie knelt down beside her. No blood, she thought to herself as she touched the cold, stiff body. The dog's eyes were fixed, open. Jessie wished she could read that final expression. She rocked back and forth on her knees, not understanding. The pain was beginning to replace the numbness and she fought it; there was too much to do to give in to it now. Too much to do. Denny touched her on the shoulder.

"What happened, Denny? What did they do to

her?"

There was a long pause before Denny answered, her voice a pinched whisper, "They hung her."

Jessie turned to stare at here, a stunned look in her eyes, "They hung her? Hung her? Where?"

"From the tree by the porch."

"Oh for... hung her. Goddam, Denny, who would do that?" Jessie's voice cracked. She grabbed a shoe and threw it as hard as she could. It hit the wall with a loud thump and crashed to the floor. She reached for the other but it never left her hand. She leaned back on her heels and stared at the dead setter.

"I'll bury her for you, Jessie."

Jessie stood up abruptly, dropping the shoe on the floor, "I need to do it. Just go home, Denny. I need to be alone for a while."

Denny shook her head, "We'll stay out of your way but I won't leave. Kate can help me clean up. Call if you need us." Denny touched her on the sleeve then left the room. Jessie didn't move.

She put the shovel in the shed and stood at the edge of the pasture, smoking a cigarette, watching the sunset. The digging had been hard. Kelly was a large dog. Had been. Had been a large dog. She wiped the sweat from her face and shivered as the chilly night air penetrated her damp clothes. Her hands shook and her stomach was in knots. She felt like she might throw up. Where were the cats? Were they all right?

Jessie threw the cigarette on the ground and crushed it under her heel. She walked to the other

side of the house, not wanting to go inside to the mess and the people. She looked at the woodpile. Many large logs had been left, to be split when there was time and energy. Dogwood. No real grain to work with, a killer to split. Killer. She placed a log against the old stump she used as a block and picked up the heavy maul. She tapped a wedge into place then stepped back and brought the maul down with a loud crash of metal on metal. The log cracked. She worked in another wedge, rolling the log onto its side. Down came the maul again. Three strokes and the log split. She tossed it aside and reached for another. Over and over, she brought the maul down, faster, as she swung her grief into each blow. Down. Metal against metal. Sparks flew when her aim was off. Down, metal retorts like shots in the dark. I could kill, she thought. I could kill them. I...could...kill... them. Down came the maul. Down.

For almost an hour she worked, until the muscles in her shoulders and arms felt torn from place. Blisters rose on her hands. The pile of split wood grew larger. Jessie didn't notice the darkness or the blisters or the tears. She swung the maul, driving her anger into the wood, harder and harder, hearing only the shell-like retorts. She didn't feel the skin shredding on her hands. She didn't hear Denny's car leave or Kate come onto the porch.

She turned to grab another log, but there were none left. She dropped the maul on the ground and stared at the woodpile. Kate came down the steps, took Jessie's arm, and led her inside without saying a word.

There was a fire in the woodstove. Denny and Kate had managed to get it upright and replaced the vent-pipe. Pillows from Jessie's bed were on the floor in front of the stove. Kate motioned for Jessie to sit down and then she handed her a cup of

coffee. Jessie dropped onto a pillow and accepted the hot cup, then almost dropped it. She turned her hand over. The palm was raw and bleeding. Kate's face tightened but she said nothing. She left the room and returned with a pan of water. Setting it on the floor, she rolled back Jessie's sleeves and immersed her hands in the water.

"Denny and I got most of the mess up. Some things can be fixed. Most of the dishes will have to be replaced. The cats came home a little while ago and I fed them. They both seem to be all right." Kate's tone was quiet and conversational. She sat close to Jessie but did not touch her.

"Who would do this, Kate? Who would tear up my house and kill my dog?"

Kate hesitated for a moment, then reached into her pocket, bringing out a slip of paper. She held it out so Jessie could read the words. "This was hanging on the door when we got here."

YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY. YOU CAN'T IDENTIFY ANYBODY. WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE. AND WE CAN COME BACK AGAIN. TELL THE D.A. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.

Jessie looked at Kate, "That answers my question."

"I think so."

Kate carefully dried and bandaged Jessie's hands. Then she slipped an arm around her lover's shoulders and leaned close to her.

Kate was terrified, despite her calm appearance. If they would do this, wreck a house and hang a dog, what would they do to Jessie? Should she tell Jessie that they had cut the phone wire, probably in anticipation of finding her at home?

"They're trying to scare me off." Jessie

looked at Kate, "They're trying to get me to say I lied, trying to get me not to testify at that trial in January."

"I know." Kate lit a digarette and tried to steady her hands. She needed to be calm for Jessie right now, "Are you going to stay here?"

"I don't want to be chased out of my home."

"Have you thought what might have happened to you if you had been here when those men came?"

"No."

"I'm not asking you to make any kind of decision right this minute. But please, think about that. These men obviously think they have nothing to fear. They came in broad daylight. It could've been you instead of Kelly, Jess. I really believe that."

Jessie picked up her cup awkwardly and sipped the cooling coffee, "I love this old place. I don't want to leave."

"Baby, I know," Kate whispered, "But I'm so afraid for you. I'm so scared they'll do something to you. Men can be horrible. I know that. Please don't stay here, especially not tonight. Come to my house and think about it. Please."

Kate's hands were shaking. She was scared to leave Jessie there alone, and scared to stay with her. What if they came back? She watched Jessie's pale face silently, willing herself to be quiet, forcing herself not to bodily carry Jessie to the car and drive her away, drive them both away, from the danger Kate felt all through the house. She could feel Jessie's anger and pain, not spoken of but filling the room, surrounding them.

Suddenly, Kate felt a wild urge to run, to

leave and to not come back. She couldn't take this. She couldn't just stand by and watch Jessie get hurt. And she couldn't put herself in a position to be hurt either. She had been hurt enough, too much. She knew about men. She knew what they could do. Kate couldn't protect Jessie. There was nothing she could do to protect her. Nothing.

Jessie felt numb, and tired. All she wanted to do was sleep. She looked at Kate quietly, "I'll get some clothes and then we can go to your house."

Kate almost shouted with relief as Jessie rose and went into the bedroom. Once she got her into town, once Jessie got some rest, maybe then Kate could talk some sense into her. Jessie just had to leave this house. She had to.

"You've got to move into town, Jessie. It's very dangerous for you to be way out there alone. It's too damned far from everything and everybody."

"I don't want to be forced out of my home, Val."

"You've got to protect yourself."

"It's like admitting defeat."

"It's like being alive!"

Denny, Val, Kate, Laura, and Jessie were all crowded into the small office of her print shop. Jessie was exhausted. She had not slept the night before and the bandages on her hands had made it nearly impossible for her to work. She was tired and irritable, sick of this line of argument, having heard it already from Kate.

"The next thing you're going to be telling me

is that I have to stop the newsletter and that I can't testify at the trial."

"Nobody said that," Denny pointed out.

Jessie glanced at Laura who was leaning against the desk, her arms folded across her chest, silent, watchful.

"Ignoring what happened is just plain stupid." It was Val again. The other women nodded. Finally Laura straightened, stretched, and spoke for the first time.

"You remember that story I told you about my grandparents, Jessie?" Jessie nodded, "It was a true story." Laura turned and left the room, quietly closing the door to the shop behind her. Denny spoke again, "The next time they might wreck more than your house, Jessie."

Jessie jumped to her feet, "And just where would I go? They can find me if they want to, even if I live in town."

Val's answer was quick, "You can live with Denny and me. God knows we've got enough room in that house. The idea is to discourage them. Knowing that you're not alone out in some isolated house in the country might just do that."

Jessie turned her back and picked up her knapsack. "I have to think about it."

Val kicked a case of paper, "I hope you live long enough to make up your mind! Are you going back out there tonight?" she demanded.

"Yes," Jessie shouted, "Now if you will be so kind as to leave, I will lock up and go home!"

The women left silently, not looking at Jessie.

She locked the door tiredly and headed for her car. Maybe they were right. She looked at the lights and buildings and felt the surroundings close in on her. She hated the city. Then she climbed into her car and drove away.

Jessie was still not rested when she got up the next morning. She had overslept. She pulled on clothes and headed out the door, trying to remember what she had scheduled for the day. As she turned to lock the door behind her, a piece of paper caught her attention. She pulled it down, filled with a sudden fear. In the same block print as the last note, it read, THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT. YOU NEVER EVEN HEARD US, DID YOU? YOU'D BETTER HAVE A TALK WITH THE D.A. BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.

Maxine Alexander

(for Zora Neale Hurston, who said it first)

Didn't we sing.....and sometimes swing
(with sword in hand)
lord!
Didn't we stride
And fly
thru harlembright
midnights
and lower east side
madness

Didn't we stride
And fly
And didn't we sing
(with sword in hand)
lord!
And inhale the WORD
And be in the music
And breathin
the staged and
unstaged word
from poet and prophet
wino and child
(And all in between)
Discarding fake heroes
In search of TRUTH and
LOVE
And haven't those we loved the most
deserted us
one
by
one

Leaving us to sing alone
(with sword in hand)

KITCHEN TABLE

WOMEN of COLOR PRESS

BOX 592 VAN BRUNT STATION
BROOKLYN NY 11215

Anne Blackford

"Well, I'm my own mother," said Louie, without emotion. "And I can look after myself. I want you to let me go away..."

Christina Stead
The Man Who Loved Children

I.

Wary, odd, I grow into my body,
an amarylis too tall on its stalk

As a child too old
not to understand

but not old enough
to speak clearly

Now, in my thirties,
feeling my way back into that house

I want to know
how to grow up out of myself

Dust blurs on the windows,
films of old cobwebs

my need to shrug off
old layers of lies

Growing up in a family
sharing two mothers

each suffering in denial
of her love and anger

unable to tell the other
what she really felt across

the segregated boundaries
of the 1950's

Dreaming over the kitchen table,
I told Savella all my stories

Peeling potatoes, she leaned back
listening, not listening

to all I wanted to say.
Her own beliefs I never out-talked,

how Marion's ghost came back
to find her

how babies are born with eyes shut
like puppies

how I was not the same
as her real daughter

Water scours the kitchen sink
obliterating our words

strips of potato skins
glued to the enamel

How I needed her to recognize me,
bringing my little boys home

long after she could
care for them

Like my little brothers,
they rocked on her wide shoulder

Well, I'm older now:
the guilt that pulled me

from real mother to
real mother is not so strong

I could never be the daughter/mother
of any woman whose life

couldn't be her own

Always turning, when my mother
turned away, to the kind, slow body

of the woman I was
almost afraid to touch

Both of us suffered from my fear
of her blackness, my need

for her warmth
I know now how much she must have

dreaded my whiteness

II.

Summer. Diarrhea.
The wavering light of the laundry room.

I fold the diapers
swiftly, smooth them under my hand

Her strength gives me strength
in these gestures

Upstairs, I hear her walking,
humming in snatches to lull

a fretful baby
Sometimes it feels like my own body

takes its only gracefulness
from this earliest memory

of my black mother

The secrets of race,
unspoken and casual,

preceded us, built up walls
I'm only beginning to see were real

At night I dream
I am digging up this house

its cinder-block foundation
the toys and clotted mud

I can have no history
if I don't pull this down

The intent to hurt
was cemented in its walls

Yes, I'm older.
I pick my family as I go along

But this childhood
split into race and fear hurts me still

That odd half-note
of a woman humming catches

my throat
I know I've survived

by right of her love

What she taught me
long after I was grown up

is that the listener
makes the poem

recreates my language
and gives it back to me

Savella's images weave
back and forth

in all I want to say

The isolation and wordlessness
of nurturing these warm, small bodies

leaning down to kiss their
duck-fuzzed necks

I close the screendoor
on that shade-drenched

kitchen, I hold the mesh
of my sadness I could never

tell her If history
goes on repeating

its walls and broken lives,
Savella's death by cirrhosis,

my complicitous silence,
I have to speak across

my guilt and distance
to pierce the heart's slow mending

I have to walk out
to live my own life.

LEROY'S BIRTHDAY

Raymina Y. Mays

Leroy was sitting in the easy chair, next to the stereo and not paying much attention to the rise and fall of Nina Simone's voice. When he was a boy he'd pound a closed hand on the arm of the chair to keep time. He knew the words to "Here Comes the Sun", but he did not sing. Knew how to weave in and out of the song, harmonize, meet Nina with his own melodious movements, but he did not. He just sat there, in the chair, fire in his eyes. Shaken. The impact of the I-don't-love-you-anymore of his voice still hanging over the silence.

April couldn't believe she was sitting on the couch across from him. Couldn't believe she was chain-smoking Nuella's cigarettes, blowing smoke rings but thinking fire. Couldn't remember if that room had ever been that hot.

Leroy was ten when he last visited her and Nuella. It was after his daddy got custody though there had been no divorce or custody case. His daddy decided by himself, that he'd keep Leroy with him. He'd spend his weekends, Thanksgivings, and one month of his summer vacation with his momma. If she wanted to buy Leroy's clothes and toys and pay for all or some of his education, she could. But, if she had any thoughts about trying to keep Leroy for good she could forget them because a judge would have to settle the problem, making known officially that she was an unfit mother, a dyke, and no woman besides. Then, she would in fact, never see Leroy. Never live on the south side of town where she was living or never be able to live in the town of Busheville for that matter. And, Roy, Leroy's daddy, was sure she'd back away from a scandal like that.

Roy had his way about the arrangements, even though word got around town that she was in love with Nuella and had been seen in the bar on forty-second street, where Nuella and women in love hung out. Somebody in the neighborhood found out, threw bricks through their garage windows and spray-painted DYKE on one of its doors and BULLDAGGER on the other, and she and Nuella had to move. They moved to South Bend, close to the bar of which Nuella had part ownership.

Every Saturday she and Nuella would drive to Busheville, pick up Leroy at his daddy's house and give him what they thought was a week's worth of love in two days.

One Sunday morning while Leroy was visiting, he walked in on April and Nuella while they were in bed to tell them that if they planned to catch any fish that day they'd better get to it. Fish biting and them laying up in bed.

That was Leroy's last weekend with them because as far as she could tell Leroy had gone back and told his daddy that he liked being around April and Nuella because they loved each other, slept together, held each other.

Hell broke loose with Roy in Busheville because that was exactly what he wanted to hear. He had no witnesses before, to prove that April was actually sleeping with Nuella. Where speculation only lent itself to name calling and partial custody, a witness, her son, sent Roy to a lawyer and a judge and it became legal that she couldn't see Leroy any more.

During the first few years she'd ride past his school and look for him or past where he lived, then she gave him up entirely and she and Nuella tried to learn how to live without him. On his

birthdays they'd buy wine and bad-mouth all the blues and the bitterness that the loss had caused.

April wanted badly to know how Leroy remembered things and how long it had taken him to hate her. She was thinking those thoughts before he rang her doorbell because it was his birthday. Nuella had gone out to buy wine and she had been sitting in the easy chair, next to the stereo feeling good about being thirty-seven and looking forward to thirty-eight. Having considerably warm feelings about Nuella and their years together. When the bell rang April ran to answer it because she thought that it was Nuella. Leroy stood six feet tall in front of her. His bowed-legs gave him away. April reached for him, but he stepped to the side and brushed past her into the living room. He seemed to be looking for Nuella, so April told him about the store and the wine, but before she could tell him the reasons for it, he said he couldn't stay long and he had just three things to say. First, he hated her because she was a lesbian. Two, he'd never forgive her. Three, she was not his mother and she was no woman besides.

For what seemed like days he had been sitting in the easy chair, his words still echoing in April's ears, and her own words echoing in her own ears. Her words that she loved Nuella. And, when he asked if that was all she had to say for herself, the words "yes", that her life with Nuella was not open for debate with him at that moment and ever, because circumstances put ten years between that kind of sharing. Not open for discussion right then. That if he wanted apologies, she was only sorry that he had to grow up around such stupidity and intolerance. That it was his birthday, his birthday and he could stay if he wanted to.

(This story also appears in HOME GIRLS, A Black Feminist Anthology, edited by Barbara Smith, Persephone Press, 1982)

MIGRANT WORKERS. HOME: BASE STATES, ... fornia, Florida, Puerto Rico. Migrants "STREAMS" (MIDDLE PASSAGE, TRAIL OF TEARS, UNDERGROUND RAIL ROAD), Florida and Puerto Rico north to New York. Texas to Washington state, California up the Pacific coast.

HOME: FIELDS, orange groves in Florida, tobacco, peppers in North Carolina, potatoes in New Jersey, cotton in Arkansas, Illinois corn, Wisconsin asparagus, Ohio onions. HOME: LABOR CAMPS, poor sanitation, no plumbing, polluted water, disease from dehydration (in migrant STREAM), heat stroke, poor sanitation, pesticides. Average life expectancy 40 years. Farm work third most dangerous occupation in U.S. (LABOR CAMPS: DETENTION CENTERS, SHARECROPPER'S CABINS, GHETTOS, RESERVATIONS).

In Belle Glade, Florida, Jamaicans work for $3.79/hr and must cut 8 tons of cane, each, each day, or face deportation. U.S. Sugar and Gulf-and-Western fields. Workers who join unions are deported (UNITED FARM WORKERS: RESISTANCE, UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, SLAVE UPRISINGS, RIOTS--HARLEM, STONEWALL).

HOME: FIELDS. Workers and crops sprayed with pesticides. DDT, organophosphates. Symptoms: skin rash, headache, vomiting, dizziness. 800-1000 workers killed, 80,000 injured by pesticides annually.

Poor housing, health problems, income: $5,000/yr. LABOR CAMPS: Housing owned by the company. Stores are company stores. Asked if this wasn't like slavery, a cane company owner answered, "Yes, but it works."

LABOR CAMP: SLAVE CABIN: GHETTO: DETENTION CENTER. UNITED FARMWORKERS, UNIONS, RESISTANCE.

Sara Heslep

I live on the edge of a great
clearing where sun
warms every inch of hidden skin
until there are no mysteries
in coveredness
restive with cloth, I do not quilt
cold galaxies are not now
where I would live
On the other edge of me, a wood
black with evergreens
curling with giant ferns
pulling so I plunge in to explore

divining a path
to heat and light and rain
the foliage expands here
everything blooms and fruits
before my eyes and so I begin

but I go back toward the dappled places
tugged back into the sun
having visited even abandon
gone far into the cave of firs
into the one-eyed cabin
where loves fell to griefs
and gone out again into the live
air leaving the talismans
where they had been cast
it would take strength
to breathe in this place again
and I am on the edge still
hungry for sun.

Sara Heslep

the box
once cut open
proved to have some mother material
in it, tax folders and
the sponsored Indian child

when I cut
Peter off without a letter
it was because of her
cutting at her for dying on me

now somewhere in Arizona a young man
finishes high school I hope

the old woman in Maryland
a picture in his wallet

what does he think about
is he still
on the hot sidewalks of Flagstaff

does he have work
what does he want
from life
this Hopi child

who grinned
from grade school photographs

she would know she wrote every month to his mother

was it her white liberal atonement
here is my money save a

child for me, daughter of Oregon pioneers

or writing
from the lonely suburb
of a Southern town
did she choose her grandchild
blood of the West

somewhere

she knew she would not see
a grandchild, blood of the line.

Jean Swallow

AUGUST, 1980: We have just arrived in San Franciso. I am barely able to speak, the journey from North Carolina was unspeakable; what we left behind is immeasureable. I am not sure what we left. All I know is that I am still acting in desperation, that the entire trip was made in terror. I am drinking heavily. I do not care about that; I care about surviving. Diane and I go down to Fisherman's Wharf with our friend Sunshine. The boys on the dock selling fish insolently sing out when we go by, "find a dyke, pick a fight." My friend Sunshine holds me by the shoulders like a mother would, "never mind, never mind." My notes read:

"Certainly this welling of anger that seeps through me now is nothing like what I'd experienced in North Carolina, except only in the very worst times and only when I felt safe to say it, which was never. This new anger is so strong at the source, feels as immutable as the fields bordering the highways in Carolina. It feels unanswerable, it feels as though this pilgrimage to Mecca has indeed shown me a truth. This is where Mecca is supposed to be. And it's not any better here. Different but not better."

SEPTEMBER: We have sublet a flat in the Mission District. When we are on the way home from a women's bar one night, a car full of young men pulls up just as we are about to enter the flat: "Hey, want to go to a party? Hey, what's wrong with you, girls? Dykes, just a couple of dykes. How would you like a broomstick shoved up your ass?" We get into the house and move boxes against the front door. We hardly speak.

I am looking desperately for a job. Writers here are valued only for how well they can do technical writing. Downtown is very conservative; broadcloth cotton shirts, navy or grey suits, both the men and the women. A young woman, going to school downtown at night, is raped by a group of men, beaten and then run over with her own car. It is about this time I decide that I can not run in heels and therefore will never wear them again. But I am still trying to get a job as a writer; I still make the rounds of the downtown agencies. It is not clear to me yet that writing is what I do, it is not who I am.

My oldest friend Cindy writes me to say I am "taking things too seriously." I do not recognize this as a code. Long before, she taught me that "to live outside the law, you must be honest." She was one of the only ones to whom I had tried to explain what had happened in North Carolina. When I get her letter, I am so crushed it is all I can do to sit down. I sit in the sun in a downtown plaza and cry silently. It is lunch hour but no one notices or speaks. I feel invisible. But on the subway going to interview for a job, I am trying to read the writing on a young boy's cap. He turns to me and says: "If you don't stop staring at me I am going to cut those green cat eyes right out of your head." My notes read:

"It's so cold here--it feels like I'm cold all the time. They tell me it will be better. They tell me 'it will all be okay soon.' 'You'll find a job.' 'It will get warmer.' 'Soon as you get settled, you'll be able to appreciate the city.' On the bus yesterday I heard one woman say to another as she was leaving, 'It will all turn out okay.' But they didn't look at each other.

Isn't that what we always say? Will we say that forever? Is that the only comfort we have to offer? There is no sanctuary here. I have traveled to the other side of the country and there is no sanctuary for queers anywhere. I am so tired of

trying to find warmth. I miss the nights when the heat of the day lingers and slips around you like the hug of an old friend."

OCTOBER: I find a job. We move to another flat, in a white, hetero, professional-type neighborhood. I hate it but I feel safer there. I stop smoking October 5. Healer Jane is here, helping, I don't remember the first few days but I make it. I can not sustain the new job, though it is very like the job I left in North Carolina, publishing environmental reports. Good salary but I can not sustain it. I yell at the men, even the boss men. All the workers are isolated into cubicle offices. The only other queer is a word processor who used to be an interior decorator. I keep feeling like I am in the wrong office. I quit. I can not face the agencies again, so I decide to free-lance. Depression steals what is left of me; when Cindy comes to visit I do not feel safe enough to let her stay with us. This has never happened before in our thirteen year friendship. We do not meet; I do not return her phone call.

NOVEMBER: It is too hard to get up in the morning. I call Diane (who has found work) on the telephone and beg her to come home in the middle of the day. I am drinking steadily. We have joined an anti-racism group for white women. Each woman seems very powerful and ready to change. I am afraid. The image of the South that comes up is "hot, poor and almost always irreversibly, unredeemably racist, sexist, anti-semitic, in short, insufferable. "It is hard to answer," my notes say, "it seemed insufferable to me--I left. I took with me a sense of destruction, of power, powerful violence, but not impersonal hatred. They deliberately hurt us in Chapel Hill; us, not just any 'white faggot bitch' as they call us here."

Nothing is making much sense. A friend throws the I-Ching for me and the hexagram says things are

starting to move. I can't believe it. I can't stop crying. Finally I go to Marcy, a lesbian therapist. When I tell her my story and how we left North Carolina, she cries. She tells me: I am not crazy though I will not forget this year or next. When men in a New York bar are sprayed with a machine gun held by a queer-hater she calls to reassure me, to steady me. She is proud that I have survived; gives me that to hold. She says I must stop drinking. I do. But I want to claw my throat out.

DECEMBER: I stop speaking to the friend who brought me out. When she asks about Christmas, I reply that we do not celebrate Christmas, we celebrate Solstice. She snaps, "even that, can't you leave even that?" But I am beginning to see that lesbians are a people and we have an old, old story. I have the scent of it now and I will not let go. Marcy says take a job, any job. I am hired on Christmas eve. I am exhausted.

JANUARY, 1981: I am working as a secretary. I am very silent. My notes read: "When I was leaving North Carolina this past summer people would ask me why I was moving. I would tell them that at least once in their lives every queer needed to make the journey to Mecca--and I would always laugh--but the laughter did not diminish the fact that somewhere, hidden as it may have been, I truly believed that I was moving to Mecca. The rest of that sentence goes, in Mecca I would become safe and find a home.

But it is not a very pleasant story I have to tell this New Year's Day of 1981. The day is pleasant enough, I am sitting in the sunshine in my work room, an enviable position to begin with. And then there is the rest: the work room is in a turn-of-the-century Victorian on the top of a hill in a city where, I have been told, we all want to live, San Francisco. But it is not home. I am not sure

I know what home is--all I know is that if I look for a place where "the people" will accept me, I will look forever. I'm waiting only until I can find a place where I accept the earth, she accepts me, the cycle is a circle and I am reassured enough to keep living."

FEBRUARY: My job throws me back into terror. My boss has decided I am the answer to his mid-life crisis. Offers to take me to plays, dinners. He doodles women's breasts on his rough drafts sent to me for typing. But this time, I do it right. I am less confused. I know this fucker. I take notes. I keep a record. And I slam down the lid on his fingers as hard as I can. Then I wait, ready to fight. He calmly hides in manners and just asks again next week. I am learning the obscenity of politeness.

I am not writing anything except fragmentary notes. Soon even this stops. Marcy leads me back through my life, retelling the story from a dyke perspective. Suddenly, old hidden parts make sense, the years of tranquilizers and alcohol, anything to keep me quiet. I can not feel all of it at once. I stop talking about my parents. My anger is astonishing even me.

I am beginning to understand about the alcohol, about how we silence ourselves with it. We use it like the code words: to help us not "take things too seriously," to let us forget each time it doesn't "turn out alright." We use it and cry in our beer instead of screaming in the streets. We use it so the lies don't feel so bad. We use it and they know it and they like it this way. And we are doing their work for them. This understanding sickens me. But it keeps me sober--for the longest time in ten years.

MARCH, APRIL, MAY: I am hanging on. There are no notes. But as the anger seeps into me, I am getting stronger. I am not making

apologies. In May, Marcy and I agree I am through with therapy for now. Diane and I celebrate with sparkling apple cider and I do not feel foolish. I hear Judy Grahn read from her new book of lesbian/gay history. We are a people. We have a history. I am greedy for more.

Now, the weather is warmer. I join my union and start working against racism on the job. We wear our green ribbons. The man in Carolina is beaten to death for being where queers are suspected to be. My anger does not diminish or recede into the background. The volume is up full blast.

JUNE: My mother calls on her birthday. We scream at each other. I only hold back a little. She is trying. I am trying. We talk again on Solstice, which was also Father's Day but no one seems to notice.

I have my hair cut to an inch long. Straight people are incredibly rude; apparently the taboo was much stronger than I realized. But the dykes and faggots on the street smile and nod. It is worth it. In San Francisco, there is not just a Lesbian/Gay Pride Day, the entire month of June is filled with an array of events. We go to the Parade, march with the Southern Women's Contingent. Three hundred thousand other people attend in celebration of not only lesbian/gay pride but also resistance. We have a history of resistance. They don't tell us that. But we do. At the parade, for the first time in my entire life I feel proud of being a lesbian; not angry proud, I feel that always; or proud but nervous, or proud but drunk. Just plain whole proud. My life changes. I begin to look at San Francisco in a new way. We move to a flat in the Haight, a mixed neighborhood. Also in the Haight is Cole Street, one of the few streets in the world with a visible lesbian presence. We live near there and I walk on Cole Street each day as I go to work.

JULY: My boss leaves for a month-long visit abroad. I join a writer's group. And finally, a poem. And finally, I am thinking I will stay here. San Francisco is a city of survivors and refugees. Because there are so many of us, and because there is so much anger here, San Francisco extends the possibilities of life for queers. In that way, it is better here. I can be out here. I can see other dykes here. I can fight back. And I can do my work here. I will not come home.

What happened at home? Oh, another horror story although it is my own: Someone "saw" me on the street holding hands with Diane. They told everyone at work. The guy who had been sexually harassing both of us went after us, verbally and physically. The company did not back us up but used us as a racial and sexual wedge. Threats of public hearings. Choosing sides. Lawyers. And in a day, people I had worked with for a year and a half stopped speaking to me. Total silence as I walked into the room. Silence for all eight hours except the loud mutterings: "dyke," "white bitches." Our house was mysteriously broken into four times during these six months, eggs were thrown down the hall, beers and a bike were stolen, and my rings--they stole my rings and scattered the contents of my Wicca-blessed box.

Each time this happened, the silence got deeper. I wouldn't say it then; I couldn't believe it. But we were run out. I knew it somewhere, but the implications of believing what I knew was true kept me silent, haunted and gutted. The journey away from that silence started when I heard the other stories, when I learned how to decipher the codes, when I realized that not only was North Carolina not safe, but nowhere was safe and that none of us, anywhere were making that up.

In my new house, a poster of Carolina hangs just to the right of my desk, directly across from my bed. The poster focuses the room. Looks like

upstream on the Haw River, although it could be any river, even the Little River. Sometimes I just stare at it. Well, here's the other part of it: they didn't take my life but they sure took my home. It was a bitter bargain. But I survived. And here, in San Francisco among the dykes, I am recovering. I have my life and my love and I am learning to speak, the truth this time.

Ruthann Robson

When you are bleeding "in and about the head" as the prosecutor would later say, what do you think of if you are a nice Southern girl who came to New York for a part in soap opera? It is hard to think of anything. You can still feel the stitching of his boots whip your temples.

You think you might be dying. It is hard not to be melodramatic, it is your heritage. You would have been so good in that daytime drama, but you did not get the part. Something about your voice not being quite right.

You wait for your life to flash by frame by frame transforming you into a lovely creature with "all the elegant things." There is a wonderful still shot of your debut in Charleston. But such debuts do not happen to white trash girls from Dillon County, South Carolina.

Even your tatted fantasy life is useless in New York. Southern belles are not welcome here. They are not survivors. The scarce winding staircases will not be given to foreigners.

You are grateful for the cold, for once in your life. You know the subzero temperature is an asset to your clotting factors. You try to remember your biology notes with all the arrows. The word FIBRO-GEN appears in your own tenth grade handwriting. But you can not recollect. This is New York--you correct yourself--you can not *remember*.

You hold dirty snow to your face, like an afternoon movie of a courageous woman in the Alps.

Will the blood chap your cheeks? You can not help wondering. The loss of a mere pint or two can not dull your inbred blade of vanity. It is acceptable to look tragic, but never ill kempt.

You wander in your blizzard of blood until you reach a hospital. They will not take you. You are not a resident of this borough. You can produce no proof of insurance. No one knows who your daddy is.

The heat of the emergency room makes your wounds run faster.

You cannot recall how you found the help of that young woman. You stained her camel hair coat. She said she was an attorney and wiped your face with her glove.

She will be responsible for taking you to the police and swearing out a complaint against your husband. She will be responsible for your ascent onto the witness stand to testify how the man you married beat you and kicked you when you said you wanted to go back home.

She will not be responsible for the juror who laughed at your accent or for the smirk of your husband at the not guilty verdict.

She will file the papers that will institute the dissolution-of-marriage proceedings. The family law judge will enjoy hearing about the sordid little criminal trial that resulted in an acquittal. He will not reward you with alimony. It will not make Divorce Court. You will never be on TV.

You learn your place. The magnolias were not so brutally white when compared to the blizzards

of the North. Your mother was right. You should never have married a Yankee.

But you are a survivor. The people in Dillon think you were a success in New York, but your show was cancelled, and you hungered for home.

When your best friend asks you why you *really* left New York, you will say, "Boots."

"All the men wore boots with brown snow lines."

In a way, you will not be lying.

HOW TO MAKE A GARDEN IN THE CITY

Catherine Risingflame Moirai

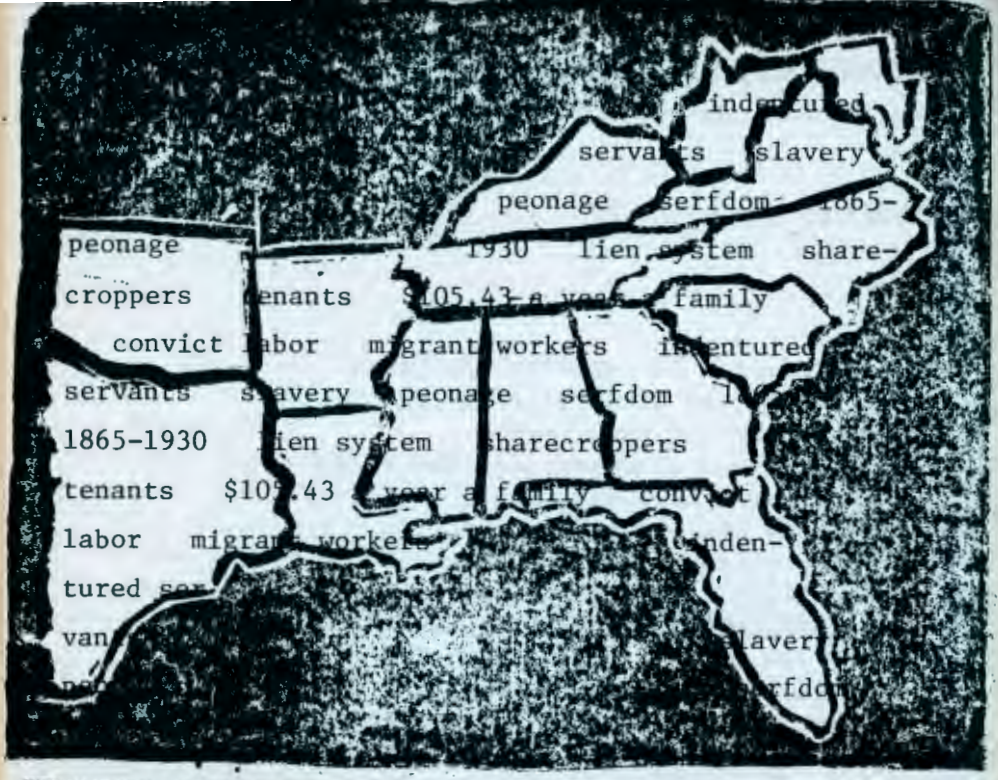
Go for a walk. Look for weeds.
Learn which you can eat.
Eat them.
Walk the train tracks;
look for what falls off.
Use it.
Find yourself a pot;
put a little dirt in it.
Find some old leaves, look for worms beneath.
Add them all to the pot,
and eggshells, onion skins, leftover tea.
Give the worms some time to work.
Plant something.
Do it again
and again.

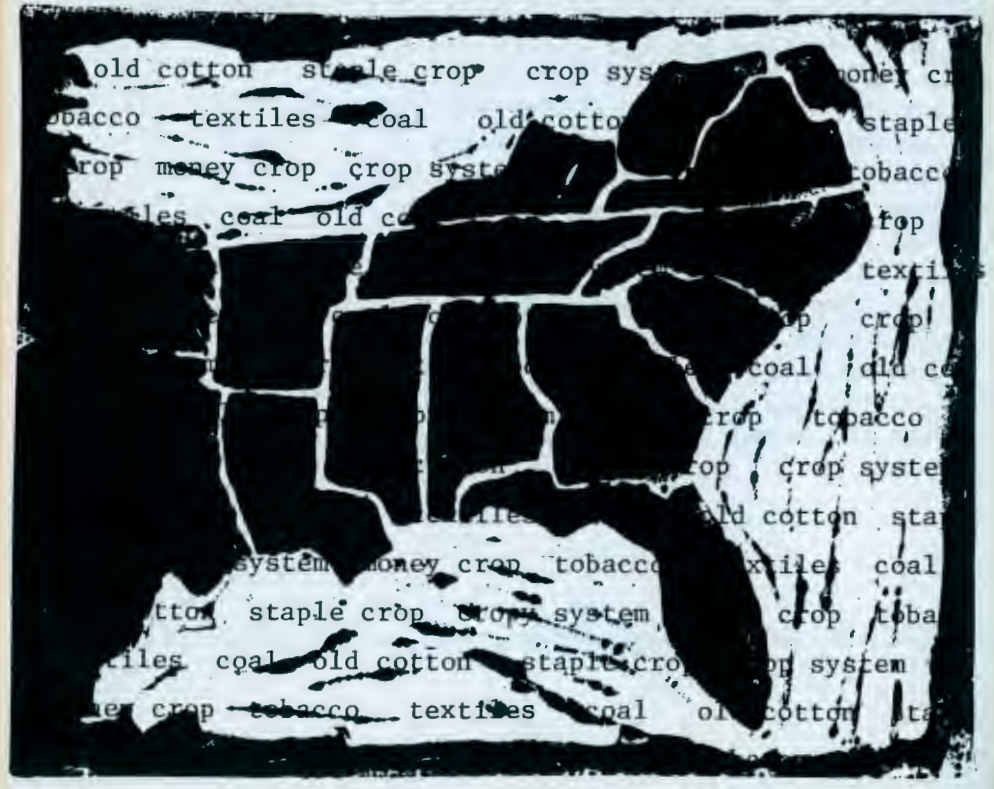
Every morning touch the earth.
Every night praise the worms.
Listen.

STRANGERS YOU SLEEP WITH

Rachel deVries

Early morning. You wake to the sound
of birds and the first hint of light.
In your dream you have been
fighting with a stranger, all the while
keeping your eyes fixed on her mouth.
You watched her words form, knowing
the smoke of anger that would curl
from her lips. You cannot remember
the fight, only its intensity and
the way you wanted to stop and take
her in your arms. When you wake
you remember you've spent the night
with an old lover. You watch her
sleep in the half-light of early
dawn, you see how her breath moves
a wisp of hair across her cheek, you
see her hands fanned out on the sheets,
defenseless. You think of other
lovers, how they've looked on these
same sheets, of the way they slept,
how some of them hid their hands
in the dark, or made fists even
in sleep. You want to lean
into this woman beside you, but
something stops you. You realize
you recognize nothing in her
but the shape she takes in sleep.





Henry Grady 1886 "the New South" "and yet the miners gasping for breath fifteen hundred feet below the earth's surface get bare existence out of the splendor"

"in 1907 proposed to establish 14 years as the minimum age for child labor...proposed to limit hours from 60 to 54 per week" Frona went to work turning stockings at Carr Mill when she was eight

National Emergency Council on Economic Conditions in the South 1938 1975 Southern black women 46.8¢ to Southern white men's dollar, in Louisiana 38¢, in Georgia 44¢, in Alabama 45¢ 1978 unemployment black women 15.9%, black men 8.7%, white women 6.0%, white men 3.5% in the hosiery plant 25 years, a knitter, female $3.85 an hour

Walker County, Alabama 1981 "largest coal-producing county in that state 28 largest holders own more than 65% of the mineral wealth...contribute only $8,807 in taxes on mineral rights...of this $5,020 goes to education...for the last 16 years, the county has been forced to borrow money to open the schools"

the Mississippi plan 1898 literacy provision, poll tax, mode of registration, list of indiscretions "disenfranchisement of both Negro and borderline white voters" the Louisiana grandfather clause property qualification

the KKK Vietnamese fisherman in Galveston Alabama women coal miners tires slashed "In an economic system which feeds on the lives of workers chicanas are devoured. U.S. government figures show that almost half of all Mexican American women 16 years of age or older do not go beyond the eighth grade"

UNTITLED

Kathleen Hall

I thought I missed the fall
the most I miss the summer
most of all the stick
the frizz where I was hatched
the chigger
scabs

Children of this city's
streets at thirty
will remember, sigh
for cool Julys
sweaters required
under smog stars

I thought I missed the drift
of leaves I miss the hot
seat outside Rock-
wood Dairy Bar

RECOVERING YOU

Camilla Mason

i use this pen
to reach your face
to find
what touch has lost

it will always be the first morning
that moment when sun turned upon wet lilies
damp glory,
like birth,
whenever I find your face again:

and I will meet it often
for a woman once loved
is carried always:
found in the motions of a stranger--
stirring the choice of friend or lover

my hand touches her cheek
it trembles at the sweep of bone you share--
hollow shadows

I will always half love any face that is kin to yours

By the third grade, I knew I would have to leave. I was too queer to stay. My family loved me, and I loved them. But we didn't know what to do with how I was different. It was like solitary convinement, but I couldn't see the bars. Some of my friends ran off at 16, or got married. When I thought about getting married, all that came to mind was bridesmaids. So I went off to school. It was the only work I knew I could do. The first time I walked into a room full of lesbians, I felt it: home.

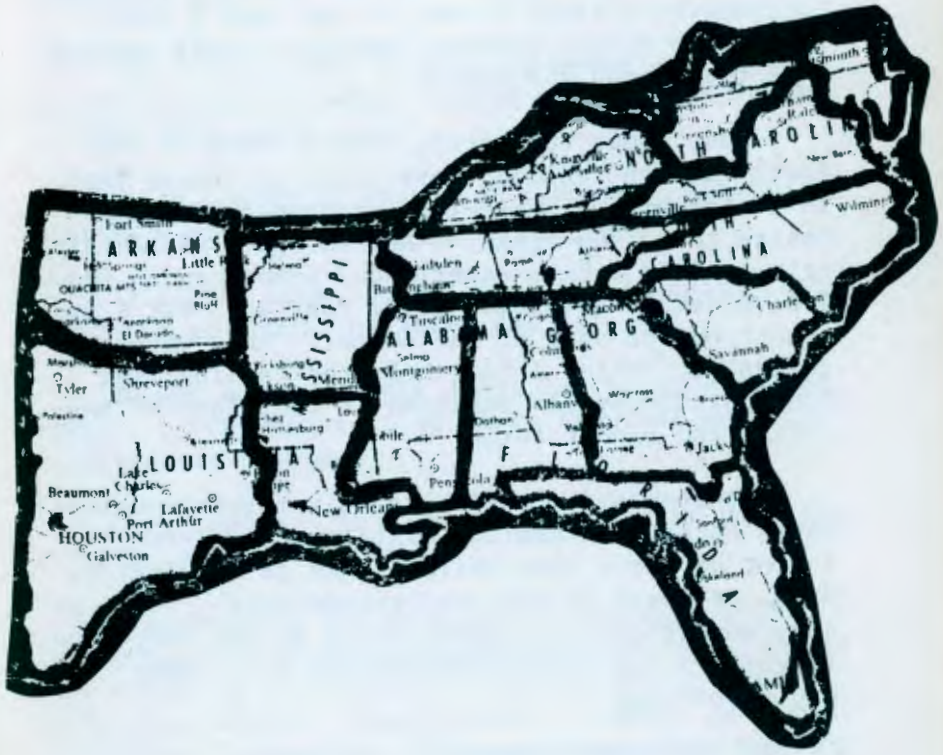
segregation	reservations	confined
on display	ghettos	assimilation
surrounded	closets for queers	forced marches
confined	detention centers	massacres

Once I went through Gay American History looking for information on Southern queers and found it. In 1903 a Texas doctor gave a paper in New York advocating castration and removal of ovaries to "eliminate much that is defective in human genesis and bring to bear in the breeding of people the principles recognized and utilized by every intelligent stock raiser in the improvement of his cattle." Atlanta, 1937: "All homosexual desires had disappeared after the ninetieth shock...said to have been a lesbian since puberty, ten grand mal seizures were induced." A young man committed "by parents to private mental hospital in Southern state" explains the effects: "For the first eight years after shock treatment, I never knew if I would be able to connect my thought...Amnesia happened maybe a thousand times." Erasure. And confinement; a former head of the Miami Vice Squad comments, "How do you love a homosexual? You love him this way. You put him in prison." And "I would rather see any of my children dead than homosexual."

assimilation	Yellow Thunder Camp	escape
forced marches	reservations	driven out
desecration	ghettos	segretation
keep your place	closets for queers	confined

In Durham, 1980, a man is beaten to death while sunbathing for being a faggot. I am nauseous for a week thinking: I have heard this crack on my skull my

whole life long. But we survive. The Miami cop explains: "Homos want privacy. Any house in which you find homos living, you'll also find a lot of shrubs, hedges, trees, a dog in the driveway... They're always having parties." And "They have the grapevine in the world." When my first lover asked my mother what she thought of our relationship, she said, "She's happy now." She told me how she defended homoSEXshuls to her Sunday School class. Allan's mother came to the Gay Pride March in Durham. My brother, knowing, asked me to be godparent to his children. This year the Atlanta City Council declared June 26 Lesbian, Gay Male and Transperson Pride Day. 3,000 march in Atlanta, 60,000 in Houston. In Montgomery, black and white queers go to the bar together, in spite of police harassment. And we keep having parties.



Anita Cornwell

Nowadays, it is often said that the new South is the coming place for black people to live and get ahead. And perhaps that is so, although I was born in the Deep South at a time when the lynching was almost as prevalent as apple pie and motherhood.

Water coolers and rest rooms plastered with the legend "White" and "Colored" will probably remain etched in my brain forever. I still remember there being no public high school for black children in two towns that we lived in, and, perhaps worst of all, I recall, as a child, yearning for something tasty to eat so bad that I once snatched a dirty, dried-up scrap of apple peeling from the ground and ate it.

Just about the entire time I lived in the South--and we resided there until my second year in junior high school--I was consumed with the desire to go "Up North." And in spite of all the tribulations I have experienced since coming here, I have never regretted having done so. Yet I came almost on the spur of the moment. And, unconsciously, I think I long held the feeling that some part of myself remained in that land of magnolias and peanut farms.

Consequently, early one July morning--several years before the soaring Sixties got underway--I went by train from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., to visit an aunt and grandmother. Then, by car, we prepared to travel South to the very house in which I was born in Greenwood, S.C., many Septembers ago.

Deep in some corner of my mind, I was most reluctant to venture again into that unhappy land of my youth. Yet, that was probably the main reason I was returning to see if the ghosts were still astirring.

In time-honored, black Southern tradition, we took our lunch--fried chicken and potato salad amongst other goodies--so we wouldn't have to confront our old nemesis, dandy jim crow.

Obviously, we could not take along our own washroom and gasoline station. So, finally, somewhere deep in the heart of Ole Virginny, we made our first service stop.

Then, in mounting dread, I watched the skinny, sunbaked white Southern male as he slowly approached our dusty Olds.

"Can I help you, Ma'am?" he asked aunt Laurie who sat behind the wheel as she was the one driving us down into rebel land.

Ma'am? What is this! An old-timey minstrel show or a prelude to the lynching bee?

"Fill the tank up, please," Laurie said, then asked him to check the water and oil.

He was about to walk away. Well, it's now or never..., "Can you tell us where the rest room is?" I called out to him.

"Yes, Ma'am. It's 'round yonder," he drawled, pointing a long bony finger.

I approached the side of the building with misgivings. But surely it couldn't be an out-house that close to the highway? And was my old friend, dandy jim, waiting 'round yonder to guide my steps? Then, when I came upon the rest rooms, twin white

doors informed me: WOMEN MEN

Well. The times, they do change. A little.

When I returned, Laurie had moved the car away from the station proper over under a group of trees. And she and my grandmother were well into lunch. Quickly, I joined them. I helped myself to the potato salad and a golden brown drumstick.

"We have some cheese and crackers, too, Nita," my grandmother said from the back seat as she tilted the portable cooler and poured me a glass of lemonade into one of the paper cups.

"How is the ice supply, Mother?" Laurie asked. "Mine has melted already--"

"We've still got plenty," my grandmother replied, then gave Laurie two or three medium size cubes.

"It's good Mother thought about the ice," I said to Laurie as I stared out across the highway. "It must be at least one hundred and ten degrees out there on the road!"

"Yeah. That's why I like to ride in the back," my grandmother said. "It's cooler back here."

I turned around to look at her. "With all that stuff crowded around you back there, I don't see why you don't smother," I declared.

She and Laurie chuckled as they finished up their lunch. Then Laurie asked, "How was the rest room, Nita? I think I'd better wash up a bit before we hit the road again."

"It was as spic and span as a commercial for sunny-glow cleanser," I told here. Then I looked back at my grandmother. "Mother, don't you want to go to the john, too?"

"Oh, no!" she quickly replied. "I'm fine, thanks!"

Grandmother doesn't want to go because she's afraid of their johns. The thought made me hotter than the scorching pavement out there under the Virginny sun. She would never be rid of those invisible slave chains. Was I doomed also? What if I had to spend the rest of my life trying to erase the vestiges left by dandy jim crow and his lynching-bee buddies? What if they got us once we were far enough down the way?

Finally, Laurie came back, and we were ready to leave. She looked through her purse, then turned toward me. "Nita, do you have my keys...?"

"Keys? What keys?"

"Oh, all of my keys. The ignition, the key to the gas tank, my house keys," she replied, her voice betraying her anxiety.

"You gave them to the attendant," I reminded her, a tight feeling suddenly pricking the back of my neck.

"But he must have given them back, otherwise I couldn't have driven over here under the shade," she pointed out.

Ah, the ghost-riders under the Ole Virginny sky! "Well, you may have left them in the john," I said. "I'll go check--"

Then, just as I opened the car door, she declared, "Oh, I remember now. The attendant wanted to check on something, so I gave the keys back to him. But it looks as if they've all gone off somewhere," she murmured, staring at the quiet little red and white service station shimmering under the relentless sun that was already beginning to give me a suntan although we were travelling in a hardtop sedan.

"I guess it's their lunchtime too," I said calmly. But I was really wondering if they weren't out rounding up the rest of the mob.

My grandmother gave a loud grunt from the back seat then declared, "Lord, whoever hear of anybody not keeping up with their car keys? We never will get anywhere if you keep doing that, Laurie!"

Laurie didn't say anything, but I could tell she was unhappy over my grandmother's criticism. Is it too late already for me to get out of this business. How far to the next Greyhound stop, y'all?

I lit a camel to steady my nerves. It made my grandmother more upset.

"Nita, you smoke too much!"

"This is only the second one I've had since we left Washington, Mother," I informed her in my bland, pseudo-calm voice.

Then a deeply-tanned white man stepped out the front door of the service station, a toothpick dangling from the side of his mouth. "That's him! Isn't it?" my grandmother exclaimed.

"I don't think so," Laurie replied slowly. "The one who waited on us had on a white shirt.

And he was much taller, I think..."

"Naw, he's not the one," I agree. "The bird who helped us was as thin as a typewriter ribbon."

"You should have watched what he was doing with your keys!" my grandmother said in a sharp tone. It was evident she was more worried than I although I was concerned enough for a busload of worriers.

Laurie finally motioned to the attendant who ambled over to the car. "You want something else, Ma'am?"

"It seems the other attendant may have forgot to return our keys," Laurie said. "Is he still around."

"Well, I can call him, Ma'am. He lives right over yonder. He just went home t' dinna-"

After the man left to make the telephone call to the other attendant, I looked at my grandmother and Laurie. "They sure are polite, aren't they? I wouldn't have believed we'd get all that 'Ma'am this and Ma'am that,' would you?"

Laurie laughed, but my grandmother, who had seen far more horrible sights than Laurie and I, came up with a timely reminder, "They're always nice to you as long as you stay in your place!"

"Here he comes!" Laurie suddenly says, nodding toward the tall skinny white man running across the field with our car keys dangling from his hand, so sunburned it was the color of my own.

"I'm sorry about that, Ma'am," the attendant apologized as he gave Laurie her keys. "I guess they just slipped my mind a bit."

"Oh, that's all right," Laurie assured him. "I should have remembered them sooner. I'm sorry we had to disturb your lunch."

"That's perfectly all right, Ma'am. No harm done at all," he replied, nodding as we prepared to get underway again.

Then we fell silent as the black and blue Olds streaked down the highway once more, plunging us deeper into the inferno. Soon we left Virginia and passed into North Carolina. The net grows tighter. Why am I coming back to the land that crippled me. What manner of folly is this. Why am I not home in my den listening to cool, soothing music on the phonograph?

Will we leave this rebel land alive. Who are those grim, silent strangers who infrequently zoom by on the North-bound side of this two-lane interstate highway. Why isn't it wide. Why is it so sparingly travelled. How many of my ancestors have been sacrificed on this inhospitable terrain?

Shortly before sundown, we reach the outskirts of Charlotte, the first lap of our flight to freedom several lifetimes ago. But it is as though I have never been here before.

Strange streets, don't you remember me? I huddled here a thousand years ago. I have my scar-tissues to prove it. They are invisible to most, but my dear friend, dandy jim, will bear witness. He rides on the bumper like an idiot. But he has his place in the scheme of things.

I was fleeing my place. Yet it pursued me as doggedly as the ravages of time.

"Are we going to spend the night here?" my

grandmother asks now that converstion is possible with our greatly reduced speed.

"Yes," Laurie replies. "I made reservations in Washington for us to stay at the YW here."

Laurie is weary from the long drive. I could spell her a bit, but I doubt that she'll ask me. My driving is rusty like the rest of my capabilities. Anyway, Grandmother would probably faint if I took the wheel. She has visions of me still in rompers.

What ho! We are stopping before the YWCA. It looks like enemy territory!

I hold my breath. I hear my grandmother stirring in the rear. She can scent such turf more readily than Laurie or I. The door of the Y suddenly opens discharging a woman and several youngsters. They are all very blonde.

My grandmother speaks. "Laurie, this is a white place! You know they don't want us in there. Why you make reservations with them?"

"Mother, I had no idea this place was white as the reservations' clerk in Washington made no mention of the fact over the telephone," Laurie declares.

"Well, let's don't bother with them then," Grandmother says, leaning forward to give weight to her suggestion. "We can find some place to stay in the colored section."

Slowly, unwillingly, I turn around to look at my grandmother. She sits there--intense and upset--surrounded by an incredible array of bags, boxes, suitcases and other paraphernalia--most of it hers as Laurie and I are travelling light. Her spirit is trapped too, more burdened than her body, by

excess baggage that was never designed to serve a single decent human need.

"I think we ought to go in and hear what they have to say," I finally suggest to her.

"What for!" she exclaims. "Nita, you know we didn't come down here to start trouble!"

Her anger and anxiety make me more frightened and angry. But I am determined not to show it. "That's not starting trouble, Mother," I protest mildly. "We have a reservation, so the least they can do is to recommend some other place for us to stay."

Laurie places a weary hand on my arm. "Don't argue with Mother, Anita. You know how she is. Such things as this upset her easily."

"I'm not upset," Grandmother retorts. "I'm just saying we ought not to go in places where they don't want us!"

The discussion circles around in dispirited fashion for several more minutes. Then Laurie and I leave to go into the Y to explain the situation while my grandmother remains in the car, her mouth set in firm disapproval.

The building is cool, calm, subdued. Humane--on the surface. We are met by a few curious glances as we make our way toward the business office, but we're not otherwise challenged.

A thin, middle-aged woman hunched over a small crowded desk seems a bit startled to see us entering her office. She approaches the counter rather gingerly. "Yes, is there something I can do for you?" she inquires in a doubtful tone.

"We are here to see about the reservation we

made in Washington for tonight," Laurie informs her.

The clerk's mouth flies open she is so astonished. "You mean to say they sent you here?" she exclaims.

Laurie nods as she hands the clerk the address she had written down in D.C.

"Isn't this the place?"

"Yes," the clerk admits. "But--well, you see, this isn't the colored YW."

"We see it isn't, but we were wondering if you might be able to direct us to a reputable hotel where the three of us could spend the night?" Laurie replies.

An intense look of relief sweeps the woman's face. Then she is suddenly brought up short. "The three of you?" she declares in a voice filled with alarm. "Is there a man with you?"

"Oh, no," Laurie says, shaking her head wearily, "my mother is out in the car."

The clerk finally recommends The Carlyle, a black tourist home on South McDowell, the same street that my mother and I had stopped on when we first came to Charlotte several light years ago.

"What did they say?" Grandmother eagerly inquires when Laurie and I return to the Oldsmobile.

"We are going to The Carlyle," Laurie replies.

"A colored place?" Grandmother hastily inquires.

"Yes," Laurie says, nodding grimly as she

settles behind the wheel again.

The Carlyle, a large, newly-painted, white wood, three-story house squats close to the sidewalk, and by the time we get there the heat of the day has dwindled down to a pleasant warmth which greets us as we enter the small, clean lobby.

It is a relief to meet with smiling folk who seem delighted to usher us up to our large clean double room on the second floor. "This is a nice place," my grandmother declares after the bellhop disappears and we begin puttering around.

"Anybody for a little Haig & Haig to help with the acclimation process?" Laurie inquires as she brings out the pinch bottle.

"Make mine double on the rocks," I tell her.

Then we devour the remainder of our lunch. And, finally, the bed and oblivion.

II.

Next morning we breakfast at the tourist home, refill our cooler with ice and water, then repack our belongings.

Now for the final plunge.

It is a gray, sunless morning. And my spirit matches the morning. Dread clamps its fingers around my head like an iron hat.

Once we are far down the road, however, the sun comes out with a vengeance. Ah, memories of those good old days when we tramped ten miles to the spring for cool water. Drank our fill then

hiked back with a bucket of warm wash water.

"Greenwood!" Grandmother suddenly exclaims. "We're in the city limits, Nita!"

"Already?"

"It's almost noon."

Soon we are turning down Hall Street. We pull into the driveway of a one-story frame bungalow. I peer anxiously, expecting to see a seven-year old me, tearing out the front door, down the steps and up the dusty road to the candy store, my favorite clubhouse during those arid years.

"Well, here we are," Grandmother says as I hold the car door open for her. "It's good to be home again, isn't it, Nita?"

"Yes, it is, Mother," I mumble, but I am really not convinced that it is so.

My grandmother is inordinately proud of the home and land she had once worked so hard to buy as a young widow with three daughters to support and educate. Every summer she returns to Greenwood to see after her house, "And to tend your granddaddy's grave," she often declares.

Once, I almost came back with her. The events of that time are running through my head as Laurie and I lug a large, unwieldly bundle up the front steps.

A smile must have betrayed my thoughts because Laurie remarks, "I'm glad you seem pleased to be home again, Anita."

"I was thinking of the time I was packed and ready to come down here with Mother, but Bertha and

I had to go off in search of tennis rackets first. Remember?"

Laurie nods, then laughs. "Mother left without you but took your loafers that you had asked her to pack in one of her suitcases...!"

"Those were the good old days," I say in a hearty tone as we finally make it through the door with our ungainly load. "What on earth is this?" I ask as we drop the bundle in the middle of our already over-crowded bedroom. "It looks like a mattress?"

"It is a mattress," Laurie declares, then laughs at the expression on my face. "Mother claims she can't sleep on anything but her feather ticking."

Dinner is finally over. At last I am able to find a moment of solitude. I wander out onto the front porch to sit in the old swing. Surely, it can't be the one I played in as a child! It squeaks the same in any case. It is dark now. The Southern darkness I had once hoped never to see again.

The heat is an oppressive oven, melting all opposition. I do not resist. I simply wilt. Even the singing choir of country mosquitoes cannot bestir me unduly. This time next week, I will be home again. I hope.

Eventually, Laurie comes out to join me, carrying a glass of ice tea in one hand and two large white straw fans in the other. She gives me one of the fans. "Mother says you might want this...?"

"Thanks." I take the fan from her and start fanning myself absentmindedly. "I had almost for-

gotten how not it gets down here," I begin, looking at Laurie vaguely outlined in the semidarkness as she sits in the old rocker next to the swing. "And the mosquitoes!" I exclaim, whacking my bare legs. "I guess they'll really have a picnic off us!"

Laurie sips her tea, nodding. "Mother has some stuff you can rub on your legs if you want."

"No thanks. I don't guess I'll bother. That stuff never helps me much. We used to use it when I lived in Yeadon."

"I suppose the trip down has stirred up a lot of old memories," Laurie says as she turns toward me slightly.

"Everything seems so different," I murmur as I swat the mosquitoes with the fan.

"I'm sure it would to you," Laurie concedes. "I remember the first time I went away to State College when you were a baby. I was actually shocked when I came home at Christmas. Everything seemed to be so much smaller!"

"That's it! The place looks about one-tenth the size I remember."

She laughs softly then informs me, "Mrs. Lewis just told us that Edie is back home visiting her mother across the street. Perhaps you two can compare notes later?"

Mrs. Lewis is the caretaker who lives in the house while Grandmother is away. Edie was one of the playmates I had as a child. "Where does Edie live now?"

"I understand she lives in Ashville. She and her husband teach there."

The following day, while Grandmother and Laurie are out at the cemetary placing fresh flowers on my grandfather's grave, Edie comes over to visit me. She is still short. Short and brown all over--hair, skin, eyelashes. She wears a yellow, sleeveless frock and white sandals and is quite as friendly as ever. Her face breaks into a smile as we greet one another.

"Does Greenwood look different to you now, Edie?" I ask as we finally settle down on the front porch.

"Different?"

"Yes. Smaller. Look at Miss Sarah's old store up there," I begin, turning to nod up toward Magnolia Street. "I remember it as being three times that size. It looks almost like a doll's house to me now."

Edie gives me an odd look, then a half-smile touches her mouth. "It was just remodeled last year," she informs me. "They enlarged it."

"Oh, I see. I guess it's just my imagination," I murmur. Then I ask her about her cousin, Robert, one of our playmates of old.

"He's married and living in Virginia now," she relates. "He has three children. A girl and two boys."

"Do you have any children, Edie?"

"I have two. A girl and a boy. They're home in Ashville with my husband."

"How nice," I murmur, then we wander off into other areas, mostly concerning our childhood days in Greenwood.

Finally, Edie's mother comes out on the front porch and calls to her exactly as she had done when we were children. I wave to her and she waves back.

In the afternoon, Grandmother, Laurie and I drive up town for a bit of shopping. Main Street is no longer dominated by the railroad tracks that once split the town in half.

While Laurie and I wait outside the shopping-center drugstore for Grandmother, she informs me, "There's going to be a fish-fry and barbeque over in Taylor Ring this evening, Nita. Would you care to take it in?"

"Well, I suppose that is better than rocking on the front porch which seems to be quite the thing here," I say, then turn as I hear my grandmother tugging at the rear door.

"What are y'all talking about," Grandmother asks as she leans against the vehicle, her arms loaded with packages.

"You must be planning on having a party," I remark as I get out to help with her load. Then, once she is settled, I ask if she wants to go with Laurie and me to the fish-fry later on.

"Oh, no. Your old grandmamma wants to stay home and rest for a change," she says as Laurie backs out of the parking area.

Around six-thirty, Laurie and I get in the Olds and start out for the fish-fry and barbeque in Taylor Ring, one of the less affluent sections of town.

"Mother must know something about fish-fries in Taylor Ring that we don't," I remark to Laurie

as we move up Hall Street toward Magnolia.

"I don't suppose either of us will know a single soul there," Laurie murmurs as she stops for the traffic sign.

"Maybe we should have invited Edie to go along with us," I suggest.

"I thought you knew, Edie went back home this afternoon," Laurie says as we start up again.

"Oh, I wanted to say goodbye to her," I mumble. Yet I know very well that Edie and I said our goodbyes long, long ago.

The fish-fry is held in the front yard of one of those large, peeling white, rambling houses, the likes of which I used to think of as being haunted when I was a child. It has seen brighter days, probably around the time Fort Sumter was fired on.

"Things don't look too lively, do they," Laurie comments as we gingerly make our way between several old-model, mud-caked sedans parked on the edge of the sparse gathering.

"No, they don't," I agree, reluctantly, although I don't know what I had been expecting.

The women stand around in their cotton frocks --faded and limp--looking at Laurie and me as if we have just disembarked from the planet Pluto. Worse still are the men, sporting their rumpled pants and tattle-tale gray shirts, who try to pretend they aren't interested in us at all. Yet they stare more intently than the womenfolk.

While I'm trying to size up the true status of the refreshments, I suddenly look up to see

Laurie motioning for me to join her over near the edge of the yard.

"Would you like a drink of liquor?" she asks when I reach her side. "Our friend over there has a moderate supply of corn in his car," she relates, nodding toward a droopy-looking dude in a faded, sweat-stained shirt leaning against a battered Chevvy coupe.

"That stuff will grow hair on your chest," I complain. "What about a fish sandwich or something? I'm so hungry I'm getting a stomachache!"

"Everything looks like it's burnt and raw to me," Laurie declares. "I think we'll be better off going home to some of Mother's chicken and dumplings."

"Well, I'm for that!" I reply with much enthusiasm.

Soon after Laurie has her drink of white lightning with the obliging stranger, we take our leave from Taylor Ring. "If I had to stay here longer than five or six days, I think I would probably go berserk," I confess to Laurie as we pull away from the lackluster fish-fry.

"Yes, things are a bit quiet in these parts, aren't they?" Laurie agrees.

"Quiet!" I exclaim, then wonder what my life would have been like if I had never been able to get away from Greenwood. Such thoughts depressed me so much that I am not aware Laurie has taken a detour until she stops in front of an unfamiliar house. "Hey, where are we?"

"I want to run in and say hello to Mamie Jackson for a minute," Laurie says. "She went to

school with your Mother and me, yet I don't think I've seen her since you were born--"

"Jesus! Will you recognize each other?"

Laurie laughs. "Probably not," she finally concedes, then touches my arm. "Don't you want to come in, too? I'm sure she'd love to see you. You may even remember her...?"

I neither remember nor want to see Mamie Jackson. "I'm about to die of starvation," I complain. "My head is now aching along with my stomach, and I'll bet Mamie Jackson is a long-winded as any local politician."

"Oh, no she's not," Laurie says, laughing again. Then, once more, she urges me to go in with her. And I decide, what the hell. Why not?

A short, dumpy woman in a long, out-of-fashion dress that seems to require a shawl, meets us at the door. A startled look settles on her face. She stares at Laurie a moment, then suddenly cries, "Laurie! Oh, how good to see you again! When did you come down, girl!"

We are escorted into Mamie Jackson's crowded, old-fashioned living room where the thermometer must hover around ninety-five in spite of the medium-sized electric fan whirring in one corner. She and the furniture belong together, survivors from an era when fringes and large flowers were in vogue.

In the middle of the living room, Mamie Jackson grabs Laurie and kisses her again. And, again, they express their delight in seeing one another for the first time in more than a quarter of a century.

Then, finally, Mamie Jackson turns toward me.

"And this is...?"

"This is Anita," Laurie tells her. "This is Ruth's baby!"

"No!" Mamie Jackson exclaims. "You don't mean this is Ruth's daughter, all growed up!"

Laurie nods, I smile trying to hide my embarrassment, and Mamie Jackson continues, "Why I remember when you were just a little old thing," she declares, holding her hand just so high, registering my former height, or lack of same. "You and your brother," she continues in that warm, down-home drawl. "You were such sweet little children. And now here you are, taller than me. All growed up!"

As we departed from Mamie Jackson's, her words kept rumbling through my head. Then, as Laurie and I drove toward home, it finally came to me: I need no longer search for that unhappy child who once roamed those hot dusty roads and who used to be me. She was gone. No more. All growed up!

Two days later, we reloaded the Olds then started on the long drive back home.

Flying Thunder Cloud, RDOC

i wonder if its that
i work best
under

adversity

is it
because i'm

Black

or am i masochistic?

when i was much
younger

i started reading

angie d's
poetry

niki g's
words

started believeing
hardy
in panther theology
muslim theology

i even spoke out
the
early
stages
of
pre-teenhood
about

Black exploitation
genocide

and i ran into a
lot of problems

in the
gay
community

for being
so
young

and
although

I had
sexual escapades

that i no
see

as totally
dyke

i'm happy/proud
to be living
in the South

the place
of often
scorned

it was here

not my native
New York

that i came
to worship

the funky/sweet
perfume

that is encased
between a
womon's
legs

hidden
wafting
down
down

from her
pubic
hairs

it was
here
not N.Y.

that i came to
love
the
shyness

the
enchantment/boldness
of a
beautiful
tigress

of course
i often
feel
oppressed

aren't *all*
wimmin
oppressed
in the
south

aren't *all* dykes
oppressed
everywhere

sure as a
womon
of
color
a Blackdyke

i feel
oppressive
kinks

more
keenly
than
others

but as
far
as where
i
stand
on who
i am
i fit
somewhere
in between

and sometimes
someplace
way out of the
concern
of many of
my paler skinned
"sisters"

the fucked up
condition

that the
south is
in
takes some of
the

sting

from what i
feel

the inner
raging that

i feel/felt

towards
anything

white

dissipates

when I revel
in the
sister spirit
surrounding
me

when my sisters
meet
with me
on a
higher plane

i often wonder
if it is

that i work
best
under
adversity?

whether
i'm a

glutton
for
punishment

cause i
can't
forsee
in the
near
future

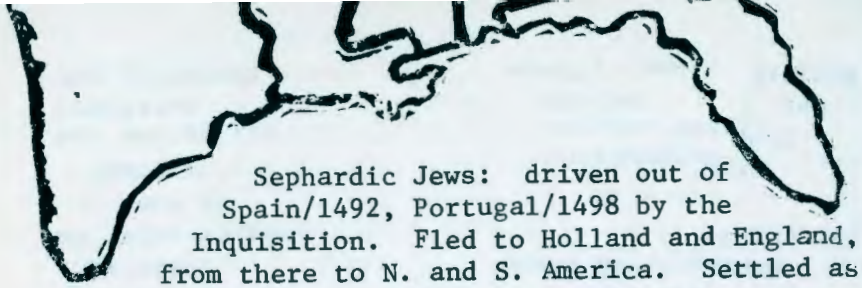
pulling
out
from
here

but trials
have
always
made my
people
STRONGER

we kind of
roll
with the
punches

i
guess i have
to

keep on
fightin
the
power.



Sephardic Jews: driven out of Spain/1492, Portugal/1498 by the Inquisition. Fled to Holland and England, from there to N. and S. America. Settled as traders, craftspeople, innkeepers. No laws, or almost none, to restrict civil or religious rights. Fought in War of Independence. After war, some worked in new government, some moved west. 1800: largest east coast community of Jews: Charleston, South Carolina.

Few Jews owned land or farmed; some few had slaves, some few spoke out against slavery. 1840s and '50s: Second wave of immigrants: Ashkenazi Jews from Northern Europe. Competition with established Sephardic communities moved Ashkenazi Jews south and west. Pack peddlers/ wagon peddlers/ storekeepers. Families from several towns met for religious services, set up shared synagogues. In many communities, only one Jewish family, or only a few.

Southern Jews supported the Confederacy. Under stress of war Jews sometimes accused of profiteering or disloyalty. Several Jews were Confederate generals. Judah P. Benjamin, Jew from New Orleans, was Confederate Attorney General, and Secretary of State 1862-1865. 1862: after Grant's victories in Tennessee cotton market boomed. Grant accused Jews of speculating, ordered all Jews out of Tennessee in 24 hours. Lincoln rescinded the order one month later. Jews were expelled from some Southern towns, stores raided. Many Jews left the South after the war.

1880-1924: Third wave of immigrants from Eastern Europe. Total of 23 million foreigners of varied nationalities came to U.S. between 1881 and 1914! Two million Jews (9%). Fear and prejudice of foreigners was widespread. Most stayed in Northern cities, few came south. 1900-1910: foreigners only 3% of Atlanta's population.

1900s: Many Southerner farmers forced off land and into urban poverty as Southern bankers and legislators urged "Yankee industrialists" to move factories south. Atlanta 1913: Leo Frank, factory manager, northern Jew, accused, tried and sentenced for alleged murder of girl millworker. Atlanta Jews afraid to be out on streets during trial. 1915: Leo Frank taken out of prison and lynched.

1920s and '30s: continued industrial exploitation of workers. Labor organizers came south, some Jews. Southern Jews nowhere more than 1% of population, isolated. Speaking out = radicalism, yankee ideas = hatred. Keep quiet or move. As Jews assimilated into middle class, doors closed against them. Organizations eliminated Jewish members, refused to employ Jews. Housing developments and resorts had signs: "Christians only" or "No dogs, Negroes or Jews."

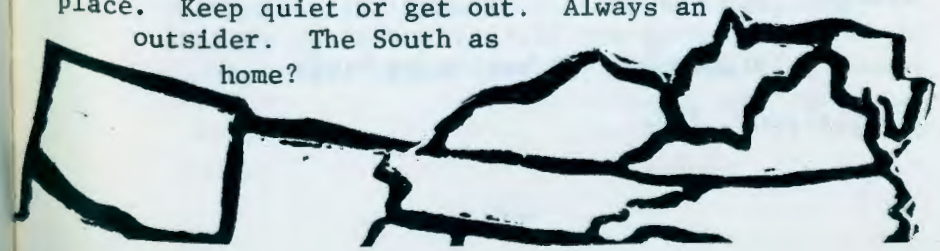
1940s: Jewish organizations struggled to get Jews out of German death camps but immigration quotas set in 1924 barred all but small percent.

1950s: McCarthy hearings. Many Jews attacked as radicals, lost jobs. Civil Rights Movement. 1958: in Atlanta and Birmingham, 5 synagogues bombed for Jewish support of integration.

1960s: Among Civil Rights activists, many Northern Jews. 1964, Mississippi Freedom Summer: three civil rights workers killed: one Black and two Jews.

1970s and '80s: Anti-semitism across U.S. again increasing. Klan numbered 6,500 in 1975 - 10,000 in 1980. Christian New Right attacks civil liberties, burns books.

Southern tradition says Jews and Gentiles get along here. But Jews have almost always kept their place. Keep quiet or get out. Always an outsider. The South as home?



Elaine

i had to leave because

mer & mother wore sunglasses all the time to hide depressions of mysterious origin. they looked at me through them and whispered 'pretty girl' like a command.

mer & mother & sara went to memphis every saturday & bought gloves & placemats & lampshades & toiletries & all i ever noticed was the black woman who was always in the elevator to push the buttons for us. i threw up once because i didn't know what else to do & i could throw up still.

daddy paid for everything before i could even figure out i didn't want it. he paid for school & the summers between. one of those summers had me down & writhing on the apartment floor *i was so useless.* at that moment i became free to move through dangerous spaces without hesitation.

the first time i left

i was drawn into a string of thrilling adventures in which all of us characters were hollow & grotesque with leisure in a country too poor to be our own. i came back to settle down alone with dog & garden & fill a year with the rote detail of university 'education.'

always,

nightmares of having no hands.

i went to washington to work in the public interest

& the capital was a gray matter. all day, in righteousness & fear, we young citizens wearied ourselves pressing against the granite. at night we came home to big houses where refugees fresh with the blood & song of revolution camped in passing. in their presence, our exhaustion turned restless & dreamfilled. one by one we grew reasons to take ourselves away from what we had believed was the center of power . . .

i went to chile and celebrated martyrs

in churches surrounded by machine guns. i gathered notebooksful of statistics to prove that indeed babies were getting smaller, women were working harder, nonmilitary men were becoming superfluous, & the rich were going crazy with pleasure . . . anyone's ears could have been the military: we could not speak, could not acknowledge the reality around us, could not dare the obvious rage--except in the company of proven companera/os, singing the songs quietly after securing the doors & windows.

yet i was gringa, a blue-eyed temporary participant, though my throat & palms burned with recognition, i could not immediately undo the centuries of violent domination that separated our realities.

time came to go home.

the plane picked me up & set me down in the industrial midwest & i started speaking english again but i *could not* go back to middle class white america. my sensitive host-

esses grew nervous & pointed me towards where i finally found rosemary. rosemary shared her house with me & i cared for her children while she worked from 3 to midnight making cars for general motors. when she came home from work, she told me stories from her childhood, 20 years & 20 miles from my own. while my own memories wandered through the ample yards of privilege, hers were packed into race-bound space--the laughter they called up was powerfully focused.

rosemary is an organizer & i was turning into one. we got on our knees every morning to center ourselves on the tasks of justice. we held political potlucks, picketed, faced down the newspaper editor, got on tv, wrote the wives of corporate heads, went to jail, and strategized the eventual fall of the local power structure.

evenings while rosemary was bolting seat bottoms & isaiah & gary were under the shrine of the tv, i read everything i could by & about women. i started seeing the connections between pieces of myself & the world around me. i looked at my body & recognized a world-wide story passed from mother to daughter that had remained outside of language--a story that could well include the future unraveling of the greed- & violence-based hierarchies which threaten to end life on this plant.

at this point in my story i come out to myself as a Lesbian Womon.

here i claim & name my own pain, & here i learn to dance in the whorling center of our womonspace, laughing at the false power of the murderers.

coming out & coming home to arkansas,

i travelled through land cared for by wimmin. i slept in womonbuilt houses, i helped plant womongrown food, sang womonborn music, in multi-colored, barebreasted circles in the heart of the woods, sisters told stories which stirred my viscera from her white sleep. awkwardly, the struggle against racism became mine. i have not forgotten since,

i live with my mother now

& the blood flows again around the disappointments we have buried in each other since my birth. we thrash in pain, but this time we are each centered in our love for ourselves. we grow strong enough to touch each other without fear.

i lie with the trees at night. much closer than the stars, the bombers cross & i get a deep angry hunger for home. in the day i walk down sidewalks past women whose bodies are bound, teased, plucked & painted, & i rage with nostalgia.

down below words, i trust that the earth our bones are made of will help us shake free from the plastic tangle that binds us to exhaust & concrete. i quiver to smell so much carnage, but my bones feel sure enough to keep on walking--one womon's child more who plans to make this place home, or be returned to dirt in the process.

this story belongs to the earth.

REMEMBERING HELOÍSA

Claudia Canuto

sometimes you wondered whether life
would really have an end
you counted days like faded beads

till they came

savage playing with lights
burning eyes like burnt cigars
changing faces into blurred masks

as if you cared

they attacked your teeth with electric needles
lit your breasts with wires
plugged your feet in water
till they came

orgasms spurting dense
vomit upon a luminous doll

'68 and we were seventeen
in a South American country
I read Beauvoir and you read Marcuse
we dreamed of France

how we would one day enter Louvre
stroll streets of the Quartier Latin

but April seemed made for marches
and we were deaf to the pleading of rain

BIRDS & KKK

Claudia Canuto

They say it is early spring
in Centennial Park
and that all the birds are back.

The crosses are back too--
they burn in front of a fraternity
in Vanderbilt University.

So? She's immune to bad news
such as this.

She's been killed many times
in your savage fires.

Sue Silvermarie

"hope": . the stance that what is desirable is also possible. From Webster's Unabridged.

Each arm, each leg
begins with one branch and ramifies
to the fineness of roots, of twigs:
twenty-seven branches in each of my hands
twenty-six each foot.
This is a dream i'm making happen.
I resemble a young sycamore
in a world of walking trees.
I wade, this way, practicing a new mode:
rooted movement.

Waist-high in my homeplanet,
how can i trip
or forget connections?
My brain is balanced by my feet,
from tip to toe
I move as an organ of knowing.
Half of me drinks from an underground stream,
half turns toward the sun to breathe.
Through these elements
I glide slowly.

I come upon a sudden bush of yellow
brilliant with delicate petals.
I stop in astonishment!
First color of my first spring in the country.
BUT THIS IS THE END OF THE WAY THINGS HAVE BEEN--
I hear the voice of the earth through my skin
before i can sing and before i can cry.
THIS IS THE END OF THE WAY THINGS HAVE BEEN
AND I WILL BE GENEROUS THROUGH THE END.

YELLOW TO MAKE YOU READY.
This is not the knowing I was ready for.

My roots are inside her
my roots extend to her center,
I draw her power up
each long breath pulls up her power
sap through my trunk, my spine,
her life arising, arising in me.
Power bursts from the crown of my head
I feel it sweeping through my branches
in a gusty dance, up
and then down to touch the earth once more.

Yellow to make me ready.
Optimistic yellow to maintain me
through the last spring
of the way things have been.
This message becomes conscious.
My roots touch those of the bush.
Is it war and rape and fear that end?
or the part of the earth that makes up our bodies.
All ends are also beginnings,
even armageddon
must lie on the circle.

I want to think it's possible
that war and rape and fear
now begin to end.
It seems more likely
the part of the earth that makes up our bodies
along with trees and life in every form
will be betrayed by the neutron bomb.
It seems more likely property may stand
on a scorched planet,
silent skyscrapers, intact factories
to mark mass graves.

NO COURSE IS BEYOND CHANGE, she whispers
from the petals of forsythia.

Our planet alters her orbit, undetected
alters us all.
NO COURSE IS BEYOND CHANGE
she chants into each of my branching bones.
In rooted movement,
I link myself
with trees with people with life in every form;
I link myself in rooted movement
with you and you,
extending yellow around her
desiring what IS possible.

READING MAPS : TWO

for Mab

Minnie Bruce Pratt

I have no map for the past, for going home to see
my mother, on the back roads between Opelika
    and Clanton,
on toward evening. This year she is seventy,
I am thirty-five, grownup but still her child.
We love each other, but she doesn't talk to me much,
not the secret words of the heart, her struggle
    to be
a good woman for twice as long as I have lived.

I have heard proverbs from her: *a whistling woman,*
a crowing hen, always come to a bad end.
About her life, mostly silence, a blank piece
    of paper.
I want to rip that up, useless guide to this land
we were both born and raised in, the place I
    drive through
now, over the Tallapoosa, the Coosa, over roads
    made
on dirt paths once marked by Choctaws with painted
    trees,
past fields where, within her lifetime, good
    christian men
made bonfires, burned black folk like pine, while
    the women
lifted up the children to see.

What does she know
that she has not told me? memories locked
    in her heart
like letters in the cedar chest, words faded
    to brown ink,
memories like old newspapers piled in the garage,
headlines black on brittle paper.

When I was twelve,
I went through bureau drawers looking for my mother,
opened a leather diary, written before she married.
The brown ink
curved like her voice. The few lines I saw,
never spoken, doubted my father. When she saw me,
she said nothing. Later she took her words behind
the garage
and tore them page by page into a wire wastebasket
and burned them, flames orange as daylilies
in the yard.
The pages flared open, shrivelled, twisted, then
dropped
to ashes on the ground.

I want her to tell me
she doubted them, the men, the women, who taught her
to live with things the way they were. I want
to know
if sometimes she veered from the road she was told
to take:

like the way she drove her father to Bessemer,
the steel mill,
the year she was sixteen, every week left him,
picked him up. He was a security guard,
she said she didn't know exactly what he did.
This year I figured out: that was about when
T.C.I. hired white men with shotguns to walk
the fence,
the noose of barb wire around people
in its company towns,
to lock iron on the feet of black men, prisoners
leased
from the state.

I don't know exactly what he did.
I wanted her to know, and knowing, to have held
herself separate from him. She has always tried
to do the right thing. I don't know exactly
what she did.

I want her to be company for me tonight,
on the road
fifteen miles from home, for her to give me
a way to live,
not this puzzle of why she and the women
I call kin
chose the ways they did.

I don't want to be left
alone in this place, once familiar as my own body,
where now the ground heaves around me with secrets
my mother never knew or never told me. I don't
want
to be left here trying to find my way by guess
and memory.

Silent lightning strikes the road ahead, splits
the pink and yellow sky like a peach into halves,
like a peach off one of Mr. Randolph's trees
that I ate as it lay, warm as a small sun,
in my hands.
The road narrows between sides of red clay,
almost the road I climbed up in the afternoons,
the dirt
gullied, crumbling around roots snaked out
from trees,
the stubborn clay that I saw remake itself
into hill, even as it was worn away.
With the lightning and thunder of rain the road
turns
slick as hard clay I once stood on and slid
the storm between my feet, felt the downpour
quick and free as a creek over my naked skin.

In the headlights' glare the road turns to steam.
Sudden wind flops the trash, the plastic bags
on the edge of dirt. Out of the corner of my eye
I see
them. They are bodies convulsing, stirring
in the ground

by the side of the same road that once took me
further south,
toward Meridian, to my greataunt's, to
my grandmother's house,
where I sat on the porch by day and watched
the road,
how the white dust stirred hot around
the feet of black women and men, how they turned
off on a path I did not know through the woods.

On moonless nights, when the woods came right up
to the porch,
when the chuck-will's-widow spoke out of miles
of dark,
I sat safe on the other side of the screen
with the women
in my family. We never talked about what went on
in the night
unless one of the neighbors, come over with deer
meat, told
about a hunt, how he and other men shined lights
in wild eyes, made a wall of glare, shot
the animal as it paused to choose a path back
into the woods.

During the day we didn't mention
how the road from Mobile and Jackson, from
Montgomery,
Birmingham, connected to our road, or how
that road became the path that went behind the house,
wore down the grass to the backyard where
a black woman
did our wash in an iron pot over a slow fire.

I want to drive into the past now and ask
the women
in my family what they thought about what they saw
from the porch, if they thought about what
they didn't see

the years they hooked rugs there, knitted and tatted,
quilted, silently uttered their comforts. Then
I didn't question them; I watched white cotton
thread unroll from between their fingers, present
become
future in rows as patterned as tracks
in the white sand.

I wanted to be like them, with hands that could
speak
stitch by stitch, make something out of nothing,
have a house with a porch where men never sat,
have an island of shade at the edge of sunlight,
the glare netted by clematis vines on the screen,
hear no sound but bees or a louder hum,
the red-throated hummingbird's wings; sit safe
at the edge of night, the porch a stretch
of yellow haze
under the naked electric bulb, buzzes,
junebugs stopped by the screen, the mesh of light;
to live quiet and sometimes work puzzles
on the card table
with the other women, match jigsaws of color,
out of a thousand pieces make a landscape,
wheat fields under purple clouds, a woman
bending with a scythe in a foreign countryside.

I wanted to be like them and I was: in the after-
noons
I watched from the porch as the cornfields
stretched
green as a yard around me, and the road that ran
past,
glittering, white, was our road.

I did not see
the hidden road, the one made in the dark blue sands,
the grey, brown, yellow red sands, the river sands
on the shore of an ancient sea,

the one made
by the feet of Choctaw people walking from
the Tombigbee
to the mound of the great mother, walking
to the west
with the little cry *yaiya ishkitini*, with
the big cry
yaiya chito, driven out of their woods;
the road
made by the feet of Ibo people stolen
from the land where they hoed their sweet yams, beans,
walking to chop cotton in strange fields at dawn;

the road of their children's children, black women,
Q.T. or Dinah, who came up to clean house,
wash or cook, get Aunt Janie up or put her
to bed, smooth her arthritic legs, then go down
the road just before dark, down the white thread
of sand,
walking home to houses we didn't see from the porch.

I have wanted to be like the women in my family and
I am,
even lately when I don't want to be:

I have
the look of Mary when she sat her horse over fields
rowed green with corn, black with fifteen slaves,
all grist for her mill in the bend of the river
where the road crossed over on her ferry.
I know
I take after Mary Jane who lived her life
insde the fine-toothed shade of black walnuts
on land bountied to her husband for murder
of the Creeks,
who died as she nursed her eldest grandson,
caught
in the bed in mosquito netting on fire, a gauze
of flame.

I know I have inherited
the ways of Lethe Ann
whose road ran between the house, the turkey pen,
and church, her eyes fixed on the cross.

And I
am like
my grandmother who never knew who her mother was,
brought home birth-red by her father, riding
down the river road, the tracks leading back
to Perry County, but his words never to the woman
at the fork of whose legs she began her journey.

Tonight if I followed this road, the unwinding
grey thread,
to each of them, to their graves, if I knelt
in the grass,
the dew cold on my hands, to tell them I wanted
to alter the pattern we were born into, to ask
them
to help me, to show me the hidden ways
that they used to change how things were, I am
afraid
each voice would sound in the night air, sweet
as cape jessamine, like the only voice that I have
recorded, Ora's that spins off the tape
naming my grandsires, not a word of herself except
that she and sister Laura took their fortunes
from *Proverbs*
thirty-one, thirteen: *She worketh willingly*
with her hands.
I know when she tacked bits of cloth together
everywhichway, made a pattern as she pleased,
cotton from chickenfeed sacks, wool
from old coats, she called that quilt *crazy*.

If I follow this road tonight, I will come
to my mother's house. I have wanted her
to tell me
how to live. I have no record of her work:
the twenty years of weekly trips out in the county.

the visits to women with children that had
to be fed,
women trying to teach themselves to read,
women like Mattie who had worked all her life
in the fields,
who prophesied a different world, no more death,
no sorrow,
all tears wiped from their eyes.

She wrote down
office records, directions for the red tangled roads,
where to turn left at the pine tree, at the sign
Jesus Saves. I don't know where she stopped,
where sometimes she went further on, or
how she felt as she sat on the porches of the women,
if from there death and sorrow ever looked
like the white men at the courthouse, or herself,
or if she saw how she resembled the woman opposite.

I resemble her, just as when I sat between her legs
in the bath, the water wide as a creek around us.
We were together but separate. I have wanted us
to be separate, like islands in the bend of the river
apart
from the land we live in, different
from how we have been,
and together.

But when I told her I had separated
from my husband,
was departing from the way things were, when I said
the word *lesbian*, she wanted to hear no more
in this life, not a word to her people. She saw
silence
between us, in the hereafter: I would burn
like the woods
on fire in September.

I remembered fever as a child,
yellow walls of my room like a sandy road in noon
sun,
the bed in flames, my mother at the door. I can not
remember if she came to me or if she walked away.

REVIEWS

The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor, selected and edited by Sally Fitzgerald. Vintage Books, 1979. Reviewed by Catherine Risingflame Moirai.

As a devout Catholic child of the late 1950's, I pledged myself to a schedule of regular attendance at early morning Mass. During those pre- and early-teen years, I was at the church every Tuesday morning and on the first Friday of each month. Often there were only four people in the church besides the priest: myself, my grandmother, Regina Cline O'Connor, and her daughter Flannery.

That is how I remember Flannery O'Connor. The images I carry of her center on those early, often pre-dawn, encounters at the small church in Milledgeville. I remember her struggling on crutches up the church steps, her mother standing on the porch and waiting. No doubt there were polite greetings. Our families were of the same old-Milledgeville class; from listening to the adults around me, I learned to think of the writer as simply, familiarly "Flannery." Her mother was "Regina Cline" with O'Connor sometimes tacked on as a polite afterthought. But on the church porch I rarely paid attention to adult greetings. What I remember best is Flannery's eyes. Unlike most Milledgeville residents, she looked directly at me. It didn't surprise me, later, to read that she painted as a way of teaching herself to see more.

I responded with interest in her, an interest mixed with a fair amount of identification and perhaps projection. There were some similarities in our situations, despite the huge difference in age and experience. Both of us were Catholics in

an area hostile to non-Protestants; both of us were misfits in a world where southern women were expected to be conventionally pretty, charming, gracious, and not too visibly intelligent. Both of us lived with, and under the power of, Southern Ladies; both of us were in Milledgeville against our will. From the adult talk around me, I knew that Flannery was considered something of a freak--a freak accepted because of her family, and enjoyed as a local "character," but nonetheless a freak. Since I too was a freak in that town, I paid attention to her presence and work. I read her books and listened to what was said about her; when I went to college later, I often chose to write papers about her stories. She was perhaps the only part of my seven years in Milledgeville that I did not want to forget.

But by the time this collection of Flannery's letters was published, I had gone a long way from Milledgeville and that child at morning Mass. I had left the church, married, moved to the North, returned to the South, divorced, come out as a lesbian. And in all that moving, I learned that as a woman I was a "freak" wherever men ruled, not just in the South or in the Church. Then I learned that as a woman I was identified with the dark, as in the yin/yang dichotomy, and that pale skin was no sure passport to safety. I couldn't go home again, whether I wanted to or not; "home" in the patriarchy is an illusion. Furthermore, there were some remarkably fine people out there on the edges --all the "others," the darker, female, and/or non-Christian people who make up most of the world. Beginning to love them, and to ally myself with them politically, meant learning to love myself. I know that in the white male world I am still a freak, still ugly and stupid. That knowledge helps keep me from false security and from hoping to pass back. But the longer I consciously stay out, the more I develop different standards of "beauty" and "wisdom."

Now, reading these letters, I am confronted with a woman who couldn't travel far enough, and I grieve for Flannery O'Connor who lived and died and believed in a world which taught her to despise herself. She did try to move away, physically and otherwise. She went North as soon as she could; she denied the importance of sex; she thought of herself as an "integrationist," not a white supremist. In each case, her physical, emotional and political heritage kept her "home." Her mind was turned against herself in a parallel of her physical disease, for lupus is a sort of allergic reaction in which the body attacks itself. Her world told her she was a thing to be scorned, and she believed it, even though she also knew the flaws in those who passed judgment on her; she believed their ideals, even if she knew how the practice betrayed them.

Lupus attacked as Flannery, who had been living in Connecticut with the Fitzgerald family, was traveling back to Milledgeville for a visit. Her father had died of the disease, so there was no doubt of the seriousness of the illness. After the initial crisis, it was decided that Flannery would stay in Milledgeville where her mother, Regina, could take care of her. It was a decision that Flannery later reconciled herself to, on the same grounds that had justified her departure:

> This is a Return I have faced and when I faced it I was roped and tied and resigned the way it is necessary to be resigned to death, and largely because I thought it would be the end of any creation, any writing, any WORK from me. And as I told you by the fence, it was only the beginning. (9 June 1957)

> I am always vastly irritated by these people...who know as much about the South as I do about lower Hobokin and on the strength of it advise Southern writers

to leave it and forget the myth. Which myth? If you're a writer and the South is what you know, then it's what you'll write about and how you judge it will depend on how you judge yourself. It's perhaps good and necessary to get away from it physically for a while, but this is by no means to escape it. I stayed away from the time I was 20 until I was 25 with the notion that the life of my writing depended on my staying away. I would certainly have persisted in that delusion had I not got very ill and had to come home. The best of my writing has been done here.

This is not to say that what the South gives is enough, or that it is even significant in any but a practical way--as in providing the texture and the idiom and so forth. But these things have to be provided. ..I don't think you can have much of an ear for what you hear when you're over 20-- that is, for a new kind of talk and life. The advantages and disadvantages of being a Southern writer can be endlessly debated but the fact remains that if you are, you are. (16 July 1957)

But if that return was not the end of Flannery's writing, the question still remains, how much and what might she have written if she had not been confined so much to Milledgeville? How and what might she have learned that was denied her, or that she denied herself, to stay safe at home? There is no doubt that there were denials. For instance, in 1959 a friend offered to bring James Baldwin to meet Flannery:

No I can't see James Baldwin in Georgia. It would cause the greatest trouble and disturbance and disunion. In New York, it would be nice to meet him; here it would not. I

observe the traditions of the society I feed on--it's only fair. Might as well expect a mule to fly as me to see James Baldwin in Georgia. (25 April 1959)

That exchange was symptomatic. Repeatedly, faced with an issue of racial justice, Flannery retreated behind the screens of etiquette and "keeping peace." One can excuse this easily by the fact that she was, indeed, very dependent on her mother, and too drained by her illness to engage in the struggle. But beyond that physical level, I hear echoes of the training I also received. "Pretty is as pretty does" was one of my grandmother's expressions, and I heard it often since neither my face nor my behavior was considered passable. Like most girls being reared to be middle-class ladies, I learned the lesson that expression encapsuled: a lady never causes a disturbance, raises her voice, or is conspicuous in any way; the best way to anything is quietly and politely. I later realized that the problem with the lesson is that it is most often taught to potential victims to make them more susceptible to oppression. Rape crisis center workers often remark on how difficult it is for women to scream, to react quickly and vehemently, to "make a scene" in the face of danger. That fear of being "unladylike" or "not pretty" also keeps us from reacting to the oppression of others, even if we let ourselves perceive it. Flannery's comprehension of racial issues rarely went beyond a question of good manners. She said that she became an "integrationist" because she saw a bus driver being rude to a black passenger. Her comments on a local incident reveal the same approach:

I hope you don't start hearing about Milledgeville in the news. The local Negroes have just petitioned the city council to do the usual things--integrate

the schools and eating places, etc. However, they also wanted a Negro elementary school built, so I think this means, build us one and you won't be bothered. One item on their list was to integrate the library. It turns out that the library has been integrated for a year and they didn't know it. Nine Negroes had cards. That's the way things have to be dome here--completely without publicity. Then there is no trouble. I hope the rest of it can be taken care of as well as the library did it.... (11 Oct. 1963)

By 1963, I was no longer in Milledgeville, but I have heard about this "integration." An integration of nine people from many thousand, done so quietly as to maintain the barriers in most people's minds, meant that the library resources remained inaccessible to most black citizens. Flannery did not say (and perhaps she did not know) that the library tables were removed to prevent black and white patrons from sitting together. It was an "integration" designed in every way to accomodate racism.

These letters are, in fact, full of racism both overt and subtle. The word "nigger" is prevalent. There is the arrogance of her stated intent in the story she called "The Artificial Nigger": "What I had in mind to suggest with the artificial nigger was the redemptive quality of the Negro's suffering for us all." (4 May 1955) Like the Pope discussing the glories of motherhood, Flannery O'Connor was finding benefit and meaning in someone else's situation, in a pain she would not share. By putting value on that pain, she could give herself an excuse not to end it.

What distresses me as much as the racism in the letters is that her editor, Sally Fitzgerald, tries to deny or gloss over that racism even while she admits it.

> . . . her own being would have been . . . raised and perfected, completed, by a greater personal empathy with the blacks who were so important a part of the tissue of the South, and of the humanity with whose redemption she was so truly and deeply concerned. Her will was never in danger on the score of racism. . . she was an integrationist. But large social issues as such were not the subject of her writing, and she never thought in those terms. . . And if she did not live to envision fully and dramatize their role in the divine comedy, it was perhaps because it was her well-met responsibility to her gift to give dignity and meaning to the lives of individuals who have far fewer champions, and enjoy considerably less sympathy, and are far lonelier than they. (p. xvi)

If Fitzgerald could write that in 1978, I wonder how many readers will swallow her argument that consistent use of words like "nigger" does not put one's "will. . . in danger on the score of racism," or if it will occur to them that being an integrationist is not the same as being anti-racist. And if Fitzgerald is able to deny or ignore something that blatant, I wouder what else she could ignore or edit out.

But the letters were written between 1948, and what, after all, could have elicited a different response from Flannery herself, given the times and her own situation? What might have helped her take the kind of journey out of her background that Lillian Smith, for instance, did? There were, as far as we now know, two great loves in Flannery's life: the Church and her writing.

The Church might have. It is true that in the early 60's, shortly before I escaped Milledgeville, the local Catholic Church was integrated. That is

to say, one black man, I believe accompanied occasionally by his family, began attending Mass. There were, to the best of my knowledge, no violent confrontations--no beatings on the church steps. But there was considerable talk in the congregation, which I heard and, to my later shame, mimicked; and there were exhibitions of feeling, such as refusals to kneel by the man at the communion rail and isolation of him in the pew. Perhaps there were threats of violence that I didn't hear. In any case, one Sunday the priest delivered a sermon which said, in essence: Catholics have certain obligations, among which is attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and I will not tolerate anything which interferes with any person's fulfillment of those requirements. That ended most demonstrations of hostility, and had a profound effect on me. It was the first time any authority in my life spoke out against racism in any form. I was still trying to be a good Catholic, though my faith in the Church had already been given its initial blows. Now, suddenly, for the first time, my church had separated itself sharply from the rest of my culture, including my family. I understood the priest's position, and for the first time I understood that segregation caused pain and was unjust. Shortly after that, I saw television accounts of Selma and other Civil Rights efforts, which reinforced the lesson, and also reinforced my alienation from my family and culture.

But again, like the library, this was an integration which accomodated racism. The issue was put in terms of church discipline, not as a question of justice. The priest's point was that there was no other Catholic church for miles (I believe the black man actually commuted from a town some 30 miles away) and therefore we had to allow this exception to the rules. He in no way, to the best of my memory, objected to racism or segregation in principle. I continued attending Mass in that and other churches for years, and while I heard plenty

of sermons on the evils of birth control, the necessity for women to wear hats in church, or the benefits of tithing, I recall no other urging to any kind of racial justice. The church might provide Flannery with the idea of "the redemptive quality of the Negro's suffering for us all," but not of her suffering for the Negro.

So what of her "responsibility to her gift," as Sally Fitzgerald puts it? Her writing was, in fact, the point on which Flannery wanted to allow no compromise. She claimed it was for the sake of her writing that she left home, and as noted before, it was the fear of losing it that haunted her return. But again there were few people to encourage her to understand and confront racism in her work. Her Southern friends and critics would be as immersed in the traditional ways as herself. Northern friends would be bound by both racism and their prejudices about the South. She would not allow herself to meet even a prominent black writer such as Baldwin, and segregation also prevented contact with local blacks who might have defied her categories, exciting her imagination or empathy. Given time and a changing climate, her own drive for improvement might have opened doors for her. Fitzgerald quotes from the last year of Flannery's life: "I've been writing eighteen years and I've reached the point where I can't do again what I know I can do well, and the larger things I need to do now, I doubt my capacity for doing." (p. xvii)

Fitzgerald says, "large social issues as such were not the subject of her writing," and yet those "social issues" informed Flannery O'Connor's writing as they must any work. Displaced persons, poor white Southerners, poor black Southerners, white ladies with cold blue eyes--whoever we write about, we are also writing about the society that forms them. The way we write, what we say about the characters and their surroundings, will reflect our attitudes. Radicals say, "Not to choose is to

choose," and feminists say, "The personal is political." That is as true in fiction or poetry as in "real life." Flannery herself knew her own viewpoint quite well:

> I write from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. Nothing is more repulsive to me than the idea of myself setting up a little universe of my own choosing and propounding a little immoralistic message. I write with a solid belief in all the Christian dogmas. . . . It is popular to believe that in order to see clearly one must believe nothing. . . It will not work if you are writing fiction. For the fiction writer, to believe nothing is to see nothing. I don't write to bring anybody a message, as you know yourself that this is not the purpose of the novelist; but the message I find in the life I see is a moral message. (17 March 1956)

Flannery once said, "All good stories are about conversion, about a character changing." Opening up her heart to darker people would necessarily have changed her writing, giving her access to some "larger thing." So might have opening up her heart to her own sex. But again all her heritage was working against her. Contempt for women is a main pillar of the church. A Catholic woman must either internalize that contempt, or in some way reject the church. Confronted directly with the Church's attitude to women, Flannery dealt with it by either denying emotionally that she was in the despised group, or by denying the contempt.

> What you say about there being two [sexes] now brings it home to me. I've always believed there were two but generally acted as if there were only one. I guess meditation and contemplation and all the ways of prayer boil down to keeping it

> firmly in sight that there are two. I've never spent much time over the bridegroom analogy. For me, perhaps because it began for me in the beginning, it's been more father and child. (11 Feb. 1956)

> On the subject of the feminist business, I just never think, that is never think of qualities which are specifically feminine or masculine. I suppose I divide people into two classes: the Irksome and the Non-Irksome without regard to sex. Yes and there are the medium Irksome and the rare Irksome. (22 Sept. 1956)

> I observe your militant Feminist reaction to the Rev. Whatshisname -- only one thing: don't say the Church drags around this dead weight, just the Rev. So&So drags it around, or many Rev. So&Sos. The Church would as soon canonize a woman as a man and I suppose has done more than any other force in history to free women. . . . (28 July 1956)

I think that the letters, like her stories, show another reason why Flannery O'Connor would have feelings about her own sex that were at best amibvalent. Added to the general societal hatred for women, and to the specific woman-hatred of the church, there was her relationship with her mother.

In her introduction, Sally Fitzgerald reports that when Flannery lived with the Fitzgeralds, she wrote her mother "every single day. . . . Her strong family feeling was manifest even then." Fitzgerald continues:

> On the subject of Mrs. O'Connor herself, I can report a remark that Flannery made to me the last time I talked to her. She

told me that she had fully come to terms with her confinement and with the physical danger in which she lived; that she had, in fact, only one great fear -- that her mother would die before she did. "I don't know," she said, "what I would do without her." The letters themselves are full of Mrs. O'Connor: she is quoted, referred to, relished and admired, joked with and about, altogether clearly loved. (p. x)

"Altogether clearly loved." Maybe. Or perhaps, just as she felt compelled to try to gloss over Flannery's racism, Sally Fitzgerald also felt obliged to explain away something else uncomfortable. My own memories, fragmentary as they are, are not of the kind of ideal mother-daughter relationship Fitzgerald implies. Rather, what I remember is a tenseness. The expression I remember on Regina's face as she watched Flannery was often something I identified as impatience and irritation; Flannery usually looked withdrawn or carefully, deliberately, politely controlled. I took it for granted that there was a good bit of friction between them. But I was only a child, while Sally Fitzgerald was an adult friend to Flannery; it would be easy to dismiss my perceptions as unfounded if it weren't for Flannery's own words in her letters and stories. I think the image of that relationship as it appears, repeatedly, in her work is closer to mine than to Fitzgerald's. There were jokes all right -- but jokes with a sting to them, and the "relish" was mixed with some resentment.

> We have got the bull, this one from Perry . . . . My mother has named him Banjo. I couldn't say why. I always thought that if she had a dog she'd name him Spot -- without irony. If I had a dog, I'd name him Spot, with irony. But for all practical purposes, nobody would know the difference. (9 August 1959)

> A softening of the top of the leg bone due to a failure of the circulation to the hip. . . . I got this straight, having seen the X rays and spoken with the scientist before the parental conference with him. (30 Sept. 1955)

> . . . the parental presence never contributes to my articulateness, and I might have done better at answering some of your questions had I entertained you in the hen house. That's a place I would like to keep two cane-bottomed chairs in if there were any way to keep the chickens from sitting in my absence. My ambition is to have a private office out there complete with refrigerator. My mother's contention would be that my own room looks enough like a chicken pen that I ought to be satisfied. (9 Jan. 1957)

I don't think it is an accident that some characters in Flannery's work are so much like Regina, determined ladies with cold blue eyes, and that such characters tend to end up humiliated and dead (gored by a bull, for instance). Flannery once said, "Perhaps you are able to see things in these stories that I can't see because if I did see I would be too frightened to write them." (24 March 1956) When Fitzgerald reports Flannery's fear that Regina would die before her, I remember myself a few years ago praying that I would never have to go on living past my husband. At some point I realized that my terror at the prospect was based in the fact that I was ready to fantasize what life would be without him.

In fact, it would be more surprising if there were not tension and resentment between Flannery and Regina, than that there was. Dependency is more likely to produce feelings of hatred than love, as most children and wives know but are rarely allowed to express. Flannery's disease made her again dependent on her mother, and the letters give

evidence of her struggle to maintain some adult space, literally: to keep her room the way she wanted, to choose her own curtains, to find a place to speak privately with friends, to know her own medical condition, to have respect for her work. For her work, Flannery would and did, on occasion, react against her mother:

> Your sale to the Post ought to impress your mother greatly. It sure has impressed my mother who brought the postcard home. The other day she asked me why I didn't try to write something the people liked instead of the kind of thing I do write. Do you think, she said, that you are really using the talent God gave you when you don't write something that a lot, a LOT, of people like? This always leaves me shaking and speechless, raises my blood pressure 140 degrees, etc. All I can ever say is, if you have to ask, you'll never know. (3 April 1959)

Or more humorously:

> My parent took advantage of my absence to clean up my room and install revolting ruffled curtains. I can't put the dust back but I have ultimated that the curtains have got to go, lest they ruin my prose. She looks forward to any departure of mine as an opportunity to ravage my room. . . . (17 April 1957)

But in a struggle for emotional independence from her mother, Flannery's writing was a limited tool. Because the respect for her work was not shared by her mother, it could not be used as a lever from within. Within her daily world, within the Milledgeville world, Flannery was usually regarded with affectionate, rather amused tolerance, or with pity for her illness, but not with respect as a writer. She knew that very well.

> I once had the feeling I would dig my mother's grave with my writing too, but I later discovered this was vanity on my part. They are hardier than we think. (19 Feb. 1956)

> The current ordeal is that my mother is now in the process of reading [The Violent Bear It Away]. She reads about two pages, gets up and goes to the barn. Yesterday she read a whole chapter. There are twelve chapters. All the time she is reading, I know she would like to be in the yard digging. I think the reason I am a short-story writer is so my mother can read my work in one sitting. (17 July 1959)

> I hadn't realized that life in Brazil might resemble life here in the South but I guess there are many similarities. We have a lot of students who come here from South America. A friend of mine who taught a special course designed for them. . . told me he found them much disgruntled at having to read the short stories he assigned. "Why do we have to read stories like these?" one of them asked him. "Nobody gets married in them." Which is an attitude I am right familiar with from hearing my connections estimate my own work. (13 Jan. 1957)

Local people did feel they had to read Flannery's work because after all, she was Regina's daughter, but the prevailing opinion was that the stories were neither nice nor particularly interesting--leaving aside the fun of recognizing local residents in the stories. But those strange stories won awards and attention from the establishment. So Milledgeville contented itself with being proud of her recognition without much pretense of agreement with the critics.

I watched the TV play, disliking it heartily from first to last. However, that was not nearly so bad as having to sustain all manner of enthusiastic congratulations from the local citizens. They feel that I have arrived at last. They are willing to forget that the original story was not as good as the television play. (6 March 1957)

My memory is that Milledgeville thought of Flannery's work and recognition as something of a joke on the critics, especially the Northern establishment. They liked to quote a comment she made when she was asked why Southern authors wrote about grotesque characters. Her answer was to the effect that in the South, we still know a freak when we see one. This was relished as a put-down on the North in general, and on Northern critics in particular, since they required a Southerner to show then reality.

Among those freaks, of course, was Flannery herself, since she wrote from a complete acceptance of the patriarchal ideal. She said once, "If I were to live long enough and develop as an artist to the proper extent, I would like to write a comic novel about a woman--and what is more comic and terrible than the angular intellectual proud woman approaching God inch by inch with ground teeth?" (24 Sept. 1955) The picture she drew of Hulga in "Good Country People"--proud, intellectual, crippled, female, "bloated, rude and squint-eyed"--is too much like Flannery herself to be ignored, in spite of her own disclaimer:

> She is full of contempt for the Bible salesman until she finds he is full of contempt for her. Nothing "comes to flower" here except her realization in the end that she ain't so smart. . . Further it's not said that she's ever loved anybody, only that she's never been kissed by anybody--a very different

> thing. And of course I have thrown you off myself by informing you that Hulga is like me. . . . but you cannot read a story from what you get out of a letter. Nor I repeat, can you. . . . read the author by the story. You may but you shouldn't. . . .
>
> That my stories scream to you that I have never consented to be in love with anybody is merely to prove that they are screaming an historical inaccuracy. I have God help me consented to this frequently. Now that Hulga is repugnant to you only makes her more believable. (24 Aug. 1956)

I never heard talk in Milledgeville about any romantic attachments for Flannery. I don't think anyone thought it was possible, given her distance from the social norm. Barbara Grier says that when all records of someone's romantic interests are missing or deliberately destroyed, that in itself is evidence of a sort. Romantic or not, Flannery's longest and most affectionate correspondences were with women. She was not unaware of the possiblity of homoerotic attachments. Speaking of her stay at Yaddo, she wrote, "if you do not sleep with the opposite sex, it is assumed that you sleep with your own. . . . You survive in this atmosphere by minding your own business . . . . and by not being afraid to be different from the rest of them." (23 Dec. 1959) But in love or not, with anyone, Flannery O'Connor wasn't very likely to express those feelings physically. From a Catholic stance, such emotions were to be simply repressed, and Flannery was very clear about how Catholics were to deal with themselves: "This is surely what it means to bear away the kingdom of heaven with violence: the violence is directed inward." (4 Aug. 1963) If internal vigilance failed, there was always her own sense of herself as "terribly comic" and ugly, which has a tendency to repress one's willingness to be vulnerable. Finally, in Milledgeville and living with her

mother, there would be little chance to admit or explore such feelings. But if she did, and if the evidence is anywhere in writing, we are not likely to learn of it from the people currently in charge of her papers. As usual, Flannery herself took comfort for her loneliness from her writing, saying "There is a great deal that has to either be given up or be taken away from you if you are going to succeed in writing a body of work. There seem to be other conditions in life that demand celibacy besides the priesthood." (22 Sept. 1956)

Reading these letters reminded me of what "home" in the patriarchy meant for me: the loneliness, the repression, the internal and external violence. I am also reminded how hard it is to leave home emotionally, even if we can move away physically. Most of us will be unlearning "home" for the rest of our lives, as feminists and lesbians and anti-racists. Along the way, it is important to remember the ones like Flannery, who didn't make it.

Calling Myself Home. Linda Hogan, The Greenfield Review Press, 1978, paper, $3.00. Reviewed by Mab Segrest.

"From my family I have learned the secrets/ Of never having a home," writes Chickasaw and white poet Linda Hogan. Her poems in Calling Myself Home remember growing up on Chickasaw "relocation land" in Oklahoma. Loss and absence fill the poems, but also magic and presence. In her land of the turtle, crow, firefly, tadpole, hackberry tree, "Everything speaks." Listening, the poet shows that land can be stolen, but the spirit of the land cannot be.

Anger at the theft of land and home sounds most clearly in "Blessing," through the father's voice:

> work he says
> all your damn life
> and at the end
> you don't even own a piece of land.

The daughter reflects:

> Blessed are the rich
> for they eat meat every night.
> They have already inherited the earth.
> . . . . . .
> Blessed are the rich
> for they don't have the same old
> Everyday to put up with
> like my father
> who's gotten old
>
> Chickasaw
> chikkih asachi, which means

they left as a tribe not a very great while ago.
They are always leaving, these people. (pp. 26-27)

Not only have white people stolen the land, but also "trees at night/ stolen by the dark silhouettes of men" ("Stolen Trees," p. 10).

In "Going to Town," a lovely memory poem, the speaker tells of rising early for the ride to town with her sister and father. In the wagon,

> The dust moves closer to us,
> the place is dark
> where we have disappeared.
> Our family returns to us
> in the bodies of children, of dogs
> stretched across the road,
> cats who ran away from home.
>
> What do we have left
> except the mirage of sound,
> frogs creaking over the night land.(pp. 8-9)

But if there is loss and grief--"disappearance"--in these poems, there is also presence: spirit and vision, the "mirage of sound" in a place filled with life. "Close your eyes and it comes/ The music of old roads," the poem concludes. The music of the poems is part of this "mirage," not an illusion but a different level of reality. "The sound is all that can find us," help locate us, relocate the spirit in this place.

Loss in Hogan's world takes place against a background of elemental cycles, of natural regeneration. The first half of the book is called "By the Dry Pond." In the dry season, the pond is "an old bowl of earth." The turtle--"that pupil in the eye we called water/ that watched us grow dry"--has left. Or, in winter, the turtle buries itself at the pond's bottom, "growing/ a larger shell, calcium/ from inside sleep." The moon above, likewise, grows "layer on layer/ across iced black water" ("Red Clay," p. 5). Everywhere, life reforms—like the red dust clouds (that could "put flesh back on the birds,/ red organs drumming inside") rising from the dried pond's bottom which holds the bead-like small bones of birds. ("Finding Beads," p. 7). The "clear thread" of life everywhere joins tadpole, firefly, turtle, crickets, locusts, the poet, all beads on its string.

Nor does dryness last forever. Sometimes the sky "rains fish":

> It's morning and the children
> in loose cotton pajamas
> let screen doors slam behind them.
> Bare feet are slipping,
> clear scales and roe
> pressed into pavement.
> Rusty pails fill up. ("Rain," p. 31).

Or wetness comes in "Celebration: Birth of a Colt":

> while the liquid breaks
> down Lady's dark legs
> and that slick wet colt
> like a tadpole
> darts out. (p. 13)

This is much-loved landscape, "Land that will always own us" (p. 13).

In these poems the poet changes too. She is calling herself home, to name and claim her people and her place. She is also leaving, saying her goodbyes:

> My house-cut-off people, I'm saying good-bye
> to that person behind me.
> She's the one
> who tried to please her father,
> the one an uncle loved for her dark hair.

All my people are weeping
when I step out of my old skin
like a locust singing goodbye,
feet still clinging
to the black walnut tree.
("Leaving," pp. 22-23)

If the locust has left one shell, it still sings in its new, softer body. Nor has the poet taken her heart away; she still watches the mosquito bite her arm, "my blood carried into air." Blood becomes air. The speaker becomes the place spoken of.

The poet's voice is, then, part of the "mirage of sound." It is also one of the old voices of her tribe. "I think I can hear them/ speaking/ up the long steps of my back" (p. 33). This voice inherits a different earth than the rich "who eat meat every night," for her people can

...go live in places
a rich man can't inhabit,
in the sunfish and jackrabbits,
in the cinnamon colored soil. ("Blessing," p. 26)

In "Left Hand Canyon" she takes her place with Chief Left Hand:

Left Hand returns to speak,
wind in the blood of those
who will listen.
If his words were taken from him,
I'm giving them back.
. . . . . .

Everything speaks.
Pút your ear to the earth
and hear it, the trees speaking,
mining for minerals.

You can't take a man's words.
They are his even as the land
is taken away

where another man
builds his house.

And the night animals,
their yellow eyes
give back words
while you are sleeping
when all the old animals
come back from their secret houses
of air. (p. 28)

With her ear to the earth, Linda Hogan has written a beautiful book of poems. As she herself realizes:

Blessed
are those who listen
when no one is left to speak. (p. 27)

The Chickasaws were one of the Southern tribes "relocated"--forcibly evicted--from what was becoming the Southern "states" by the U.S. government. In Oklahoma, again, they were vulnerable to having their home stolen by "rich men." But there is not defeat in Linda Hogan's poems. Nor is there homelessness. There is instead a deeper hearing and seeing, and a oneness with the world that is her home.

The Black and White of It. Ann Allen Shockley. The Naiad Press, Inc, 1980, paper, $5.95. Reviewed by Merril Mushroom.

"Old fashioned" is the description that immediately came to my mind and stuck there as I read Ann Allen's stories. I liked them. They are about me, about women I knew in the 50's when I was coming out, and about women I know today. The characters and the situations are typed into almost perfect studies, and I was able to relate with both through my own perspective.

I am 40 years old, and my teeth are starting to go. The fact of bridgework has become a new and highly significant age-related part of my life; so I immediately identified with Penelope Bullock, the first character in the first story, "Spring into Autumn," on the first page of the book, when an entire sentence is devoted to her partial plate --and I am further delighted when it is mentioned twice more in the story, once in relation to Penelope's need for privacy in the bathroom. These "insignificant" things are meaningful to some of us, and we don't often read about them.

My identification with Penelope is far from total, but it is enough so that her story touches me in a very personal way. Penelope is 42. She no longer takes minor disturbances in her life with ease; however she still manages to flow with the tides of her existence, doing what she does, experiencing the pleasures and pains and the different emotions aroused by different incidents, experienced enough in life to maintain her equilibrium. She is comfortable with herself as she is,

regrets the loss of her lover because of the way she is, but exhibits no pressing need to be different than she is.

I liked reading, for a change, a story about a middle-aged lesbian who is not in a state of crisis, who lives a rather ordinary existence, and has a love affair which she ends when it is time to end it, with no catastrophes, no breakdowns, no high drama, histrionics, or tensions, but a clear and open understanding of what she is and what she feels.

Penelope is the lesbian of the 50's; JD, the student who seduces Penelope, is the dyke of the 70's. I have known both of them, and I have been both of them -- I have been a young, sassy, aggressive dyke barnstorming my way into a relationship with an older woman, and I have been an older lesbian myself allowing myself to be seduced by a sassy, high-spirited, smart young woman, knowing how little we had in common aside from our thorough enjoyment of each other and good sex. I liked a lot that neither Penelope nor JD is conventionally beautiful. Penelope is aging, and JD is fat. Both are presented as sensual, sexual women, as whole women, and this neither in spite nor because of their physical characteristics.

Penelope is the lesbian of the 50's -- careful, hidden, closeted. JD is the dyke of the 70's -- out, blatant, obvious. JD, in the voice of the 70's, says in reference to coming out, "'What's there to be ashamed of?'" (11), and Penelope responds in thought with the 50's attitude, "What indeed? But there is that to be afraid of."(11) "She couldn't afford to come out like others of her colleagues. To catch harrassment from the administration." (12)

This same fear is expressed through Mattie

Brown in "Play It, But Don't Say It": "Fear of what might become known and defensiveness against the possible hostility of those who discovered." (32), and also in the younger, more modern dykes in "Home to Meet the Folks": "There was always the nagging fear that someone had guessed -- or knew. " (56).

I came out as a lesbian in the 50's. Dyke, lesbian, queer were all dirty words, and being one was nothing to be proud over but, rather, something to either hide or else to be defensively aggressive about. Most of all, it was something to be terrified over being found out about. I will never forget the newspaper photograph of a young gay man impaled on the spikes of an iron fence, after jumping from a second floor window of the police station in his terror, because he was arrested in a raid of a gay bar. Today, when gay activist groups are pushing for acceptance on college campuses, when gay lawyers and gay rights groups are pushing for social, political, and professional equality, I remember back to the sickening investigations of state universities in Florida in the 50's -- the Charlie Johns investigations -- to purge the campuses of lesbian and homosexual faculty and students. Informers were paid to trap and turn in queers, motel and dormitory rooms were bugged with microphones and recording equipment, guilty faculty members were dismissed amid a great deal of scandal, and students either kicked out of school or sometimes permitted to stay if they went to a psychiatrist for "help". I was one of the queers caught in this mess, and it was extremely unpleasant.

Gay bars and beaches were also periodically raided by the police, especially in election years. Lesbians and gay men were arrested, held in jail overnight, and publically humiliated by having their names, addresses, and places of employment

published in the local newspapers as having been busted in a raid on a queer establishment. Many lesbians and gay men lost jobs, families, and friends as a result; and a few even took their lives because they couldn't face the stigma of being known as a queer.

We were all very closeted in the 50's, afraid that anyone should know or even suspect; and Ann Allen writes about us and about the things we did to hide our lesbianism -- the denial, the hiding and sneaking, the sex with men, the games, the signals, the deviousness and deceit, all of which were necessary, because we were so intimidated by the threat of exposure. There was too much that could be lost. This is all a real part of our pasts, of our lesbian herstory, no matter how distasteful this fact might be to some modern-day lesbians. In those days there were few gay activists, no strong role models to help us raise a feeling of confidence in what we were. Back then it was not a point of pride to be "in the life": it was queer to be queer, it was all the things that Roz hears from her family when she comes out to them in "Home to Meet the Folks" -- it was against god, against nature, morally wrong, psychologically sick, emotionally disturbed, undesirable, and something for which blame must be placed.

Many lesbians who have come out recently are critical of the way things were then; many of us who are not as politically aware or outspoken have lived through it, may still be living through it. Ann Allen writes about the realities of our lives. The only things missing are the blackmail and extortion attempts, the buying of temporary safety from exposure as a queer by someone who Knew. I knew, I know women alone and isolated, women in a relationship because there was no one else, and women like Penelope and Claire, like Mattie, Holly, and Lynn, who deny being lesbians even while they

are loving other women.

"The Play" took me back 20 years to a similar situation in my own life. Both Robin in the story and I in reality lived with a lover who had to go out and have sex with men every so often to prove she was not queer. The difference was that Robin's lover Lynn takes her along; my lover only came home and verbally, sometimes physically, purged herself of it to me afterwards. I understood immediately from my own memories the look in Lynn's eyes, the plea, her "way of saying despite what happens, it's you."(43)

In the same manner, "Holly Craft Isn't Gay" because she married a man, even though she continues to love women, to sing to women, to pick up women in gay bars, remaining in love with Adrienne who brought her out. There was an often used saying in the 50's that once a woman had been with another woman, she'd never be satisfied with a man again; and there was, among many lesbians I knew then, a somewhat melodramatic acceptance of "the life" as tragic and the fact that once we were in it, it was part of us forever.

This once-a-lesbian-always-a-lesbian philosophy is also reflected in "One More Saturday Night Around" which follows the 50's real life theme of college sweethearts later on. A series of 5 classic white lesbian novels was written in the 50's around this situation -- the Ann Bannon books about Beth, Laura, and Beebo. I read them and reread them. I loved them. In Ann Allen's story, Marcia and Bethany are college lovers, closeted. After graduation, Marcia remains a lesbian, Bethany marries and has children. They meet at a reunion and renew their closeted relationship, sneaking hours together at a motel on Saturday night when they can. The relationship is special for them both, but in different ways. Marcia

accepts what she gets and does not push Bethany, although she wonders how long they can go on that way: "She realized that Bethany would never leave him. . .another might, but not Bethany who lacked the strength to leave.

But if crumbs were all she would have, then crumbs she would take. . . In the morning she would get up and leave to go home where someone waited for her too." (86)

I have lived through "A Special Evening" myself many times. I loved the way that Ann Allen set forth the courting rituals, the fears overcome by anticipations, the hoping, the drama, the foreplay through conversation, the savor of the situation. I loved the part where Toni lights Letia's cigarette and pokes fun at herself about it being butch of her. The lighting of the cigarette was a very important part of being butch in the 50's, and my friends and I used to practice for hours to become adept at the fancy use of the zippo lighter or pack of matches. I have experienced the caution and fear of misinterpretation that Toni feels -- the few past mistakes she had made in approaching another woman as a lesbian being "Enough to have left a bottomless reservoir of hurt inside her brimming with the painful words: I'm not like that." (99). Holly Craft says those very words in her own story, as she slaps a woman who has made a pass at her: "I'm not like that." (75) Women who are terrified of the potential lesbian within themselves can be extremely hurtful to those of us who spot them -- after all, it takes one to know one, to use another popular expression of the 50's -- and act openly with them. But this is a happy story with a happy situation, Letia is gentle and patient, and Toni overcomes her fears. The theme of the story is set forth in the last line, which is also the last line in the book: "... for wasn't waiting and wishing and hoping the vine of

life -- in the life?" (103). Indeed it was; and this philosophy and the drama and pathos associated with it was common among many of the lesbians I knew, rich, poor, middle-class, working-class, educated, uneducated, living inside or outside the law.

"Home to Meet the Folks," a more up-to-date story, is about younger, more confident lesbians who are coming out to their families with pride and strength, while "A Birthday Remembered" is a sweet story that shows hope for the future. Teenaged Tobie comes to visit her "Aunt El" on Ellen's birthday. Tobie has had to leave Ellen and go live with her father after living for ten years with Ellen and Tobie's mother, Ellen's lover, Jackie, when Jackie died. Tobie brings a friend with her to Ellen's and she acknowledges the relationship that Ellen and her mother had in a very lovely way.

Radical black lesbians I knew in New York City associated superficially, if at all, with non-blacks. They were fortunate in having a strong group where there was support in numbers. Lettie and Patrice in "A Meeting of the Sapphic Daughters" don't know any other black lesbians. The futility of trying to make do with the white lesbian community is pointed out in the story, as Lettie and Patrice go to the meeting to hear a lesbian poet who Patrice was interested in and experience basically absence of other black lesbians, white women's hypocrisy, awkwardness, condescension, hostility, superficiality, phony liberalism, overpriced sandwiches, and warm beer. Lettie has warned Patrice: "I don't care how friendly some of them are, when push comes to shove, they're white first!" (62)

The problems in acceptance by black straights, even radicals, was told almost verbatim the way I heard it from the black lesbians I knew in New York City in the 60's: Lettie says to Patrice in

"A Meeting of the Sapphic Daughters," "It's bad enough being looked on as lepers by whites, let alone by blacks. You know how blacks feel about -- bulldaggers!" (62). Louie tells Roz how when she comes out to him in "Home to Meet the Folks": "I can't own no sister who's a bulldagger. You're not even a woman --" (57), and his wife Kitty gives the reason why: "It's a white trick for black genocide. Lesbians can't get babies. Black women should have black men to get black babies and build a strong black nation!" (57). I can relate with this last especially as a Jewish woman who was supposed to have a Jewish husband and get many Jewish babies to help make up for the numbers lost in the Holocaust.

Ann Allen writes nice love scenes -- some pretty, some not so pretty, about real bodies and what women do in bed with them, how we look, how we feel, what we say, all different. The sexuality of the women in the stories is very much in keeping with their characters. Mattie in bed rubs Alice's breasts and talks of politics and power, then tells Alice "OK -- Babes -- do your thing." (34), while Alice was ". . . wishing Mattie would kiss her. Kisses were important." (33). With Penelope and JD, although JD is more stereotypically butchie and is the aggressor at first, the older, more experienced Penelope takes the sexual lead when they finally do get it on. Bethany's and Marcia's life together revolves around making love in the motel room. Roz and Marge are in love, are demonstrative, comfortable with each other and with their relationship in general. Nicie, trapped beneath a man, fantasizes a woman making love to her. Adrienne is both tender and forceful with Holly, caring and seductive. Holly is in love with Adrienne but "isn't gay" and plans her straight future while they make love.

I liked the fact that I, as a white Jewish lesbian who came out in the 50's, could relate

with aspects of both the white characters and the black characters. Ann Allen shows me in her stories ways that we are alike and ways that we are different, shows me ethnically individual expressions of a common situation and feelings that we all have, and shows me experiences that are a unique part of one's culture. She shows me that there are aspects of ourselves where we differ and points where we can come to common understandings, and that we can see ourselves and one another in terms of these differences and in terms of these similarities.

The women Ann Allen writes about, black or white, are privileged, career-oriented, comfortable materially, and striving to succeed according to the criteria of the dominant society; but the situations they are in were common to many lesbians I knew, regardless of their income level or life style. Ann Allen does not represent all lesbians in her stories (who does?), but those she does characterize are real people with real feelings and real lives that other lesbians can relate with. The fact that some of us don't have demons screaming in our souls does not necessarily make our reality any less relevant or our lives any less uncomfortable.

Ann Allen is writing about what she knows, not about something outside her own sphere of experience. To attempt to do more than she does would be dishonest. Her characters are both stereotyped and individual, the stories simple and blatant, the situations obvious, honest, and up front. The characters do what they have to do, make their compromises, display their weaknesses, and take what they can get of what they want from life. Like them, most of us are rather ordinary people, doing our best to keep our trip together, doing what we have to do, and trying to create as little discomfort as possible for ourselves in the

process. Ann Allen shows me through her stories the past when I came out, the present when more dykes are becoming strong and proud and open, and hope for the future. She writes to me from her own experience, and I'm glad she had the strength to not try to step out from that element in order to satisfy literary and political requirements of women who may not be sympathetic to where she's coming from. Simply and without frills, she tells how it was and how it is for some of us. She writes in plain, stark language, almost stream of consciousness in many places, in unpredictable sentences (which I sometimes had difficulty with) and a detached manner, presenting her stories the way they were, presenting her characters as I knew them and as I know them.

SOURCES AND RESOURCES

Native American Resources:

Strawberry Press
Box 451
Bowling Green Station
New York, New York 10004

Greenfield Review
RDI Box 80
Greenfield Center, New York 12833

Council of the Southern Mountains Bookstore
104 Center Street
Berea, Kentucky 40403

Mountain Life and Work--newspaper published
by Council of the Southern Mountains
Drawer N
Clintwood, Virginia 24228

Haitian Resources

Haitian Refugee Center
32 N.C. 54th Street
PO Box 370543
Miami, Florida 33137

Women's Task Force for Haitian Political Prisoners
PO Box 2293
Washington, D.C. 20013
202-544-7475

Haitian Legal Hotline
Florida: 800-432-4337
Elsewhere: 800-327-7519

Haitian Refugee Project
110 Maryland Avenue NE
Washington, D.C. 20009

Resistance to Reagan's Housing Policies

National Low Income Housing Coalition
215 Eighth Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Farmworkers/Migrant Workers Resources

Farmworkers Legal Services
Box 398
Newton Grove, NC 28366
(919) 594-0437

BOOKS RECIEVED

Adler, Margot. DRAWING DOWN THE MOON, herstory (Beacon Press), $8.95 paper.

Albright, Mia. A SCRAP OF ROYAL NEED, poems (ananke's Womon Pub.), $4.00 paper.

Alta. THE SHAMELESS HUSSY: SELECTED STORIES, ESSAYS, AND POETRY (The Crossing Press, Trumansberg, NY, 14886) $5.95 paper).

Anzaldua, Gloria and Cherrie Moraga, eds. THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR (Persephone Press, PO Box 7222, Watertown, MA 02172), $8.95 paper.

Beck, Evelyn Torton. NICE JEWISH GIRLS: A LESBIAN ANTHOLOGY (Persephone Press), $8.95 + $1 postage.

Baetz, Ruth. LESBIAN CROSSROADS: PERSONAL STORIES OF LESBIAN STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS (Morrow),$10.95.

The Bloodroot Collective (Betsy Beaven, Noel Giordano, Selma Miriam, Pat Shea). THE POLITICAL PALATE: A FEMINIST VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK (The Crossing Press) $8.95 paper.

Boucher, Sandy. THE NOTEBOOKS OF LENI CLARE, short stories (The Crossing Press) $5.95 paper.

Brittain, Vera. CHRONICLE OF YOUTH (Morrow) $15.50.

Brown, Lindajean. THE RAINBOW RIVER: STORIES OF CULLURED WOMYN IN NORTH AMERICA (Iridian Press, 314 East 91st St., #5E, NYC 10028) $3.00 paper.

Bulkin, Elly, ed. LESBIAN FICTION: AN ANTHOLOGY (Persephone Press) $10.95 paper.

Bulkin, Elly and Joan Larkin, eds. LESBIAN POETRY: AN ANTHOLOGY (Persephone Press) $10.95 paper.

Califia, Pat. SAPPHISTRY: THE BOOK OF LESBIAN SEXUALITY (The Naiad Press, P.O. Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302) $6.95 paper.

Childress, Alice. RAINBOW JORDAN, novel (Putnam) $8.95.

Clausen, Jan. MOTHER, SISTER, DAUGHTER, LOVER, short stories (The Crossing Press) $4.95 paper.

Cooper, Jane, Gwen Head, Adelaide Morris, Marcia Southwick, eds. EXTENDED OUTLOOKS: THE IOWA REVIEW COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY WRITING BY WOMEN (the Univ. of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA) $7.50.

Darr, Ann. RIDING WITH THE FIREWORKS!, poems (Alice James Books, 138 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138) $4.95 paper.

Deming, Barbara. REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE, essays (Pagoda Publications, dist. by The Crossing Press) $6.50.

Dykewomon, Elana. FRAGMENTS FROM LESBOS, poems (Diaspora Distribution, P.O. Box 272, Langlois, OR 97450) $6.75 paper. For womyn only.

Faderman, Lillian and Brigitte Eriksson, ed. and trans.. LESBIAN-FEMINISM IN TURN OF THE CENTURY GERMANY (The Naiad Press) $5.95 paper.

Faderman, Lillian. SURPASSING THE LOVE OF MEN, herstory (William Morrow) $10.95 paper.

Fenton, Lisa Howell I SLEEP WITH TRAINS, poems, (Words Out Press, Houston).

Freespirit, Judy. DADDY'S GIRL: AN INCEST SURVIVOR'S STORY (Diaspora Distribution) $3.25 paper. For womyn only.

GAIA'S GUIDE, 8th edition (Bookpeople, 2940 7th St., Berkeley, CA 94701) $8.50 paper.

Gidlow, Elsa. SAPPHIC SONGS, poems (The Naiad Press) $5.95 paper.

Grahn, Judy, ed. TRUE-TO-LIFE ADVENTURE STORIES: VOLUME TWO (The Crossing Press) $5.95 paper.

Hanscombe, Gillian E. and Jackie Forster. ROCKING THE CRADLE: LESBIAN MOTHERS, A CHALLENGE IN FAMILY

LIVING (Alyson Publications, PO Box 2783, Boston, MA 02208), $5.95 paper.

Healy, Eloise Klein. A PACKET BEATING LIKE A HEART, poems (Books of a Feather Press, dist. by The Crossing Press).

Hoffman, Nancy. WOMAN'S TRUE PROFESSION: VOICES FROM THE HISTORY OF TEACHING (The Feminist Press) $6.95 paper.

Hooks, Bell. AIN'T I A WOMAN: BLACK WOMEN AND FEMINISM (South End Press, Box 68, Astor Station, Boston MA 02123) $7.00 paper.

Jelinek, Estelle C. WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM (Indiana U. Press) $9.95 paper.

Karen, Jeanine, and Sue Skope, eds. SAPPHIC TOUCH, lesbian erotica (Pamir Productions, PO Box 40218, San Francisco, CA 94140) $6.00 paper.

Kaye, Melanie. WE SPEAK IN CODE: POEMS & OTHER WRITINGS (Motheroot Pubs., 214 Dewey St., Pittsburgh, PA 15218) $4.75 + .50 postage.

Lederer, Laura, ed. TAKE BACK THE NIGHT: WOMEN ON PORNOGRAPHY (Wm. Morrow) $7.95 paper.

Lumpkin, Katherine DuPre. THE MAKING OF A SOUTHERNER, autobiography (The Univ. of Georgia Press) $6.96 paper.

Miner, Valerie. MOVEMENT, novel (The Crossing Press) $6.95 paper.

Rich, Adrienne. A WILD PATIENCE HAS TAKEN ME THIS FAR: POEMS 1978-1981 (Norton) $4.95 paper.

Roberts, J. R., compiler. BLACK LESBIANS: A BIBLIOGRAPHY (The Naiad Press) $5.95 paper.

Rowbotham, Sheila, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright. BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS, theory (Alyson Pubs) $6.95 paper.

Rule, Jane. OUTLANDER, stories and essays (The Naiad Press) $6.95 paper.

Sarton, May. HALFWAY TO SILENCE, poems (Norton) $12.95

Segrest, Mab. LIVING IN A HOUSE I DO NOT OWN, poems (Night Heron Press, PO Box 3103, West Durham Station, Durham, NC 27705), $3.00 paper.

Scott, Claudia. LESBIAN WRITER: COLLECTED WORK (The Naiad Press) eds. Frances Hanckle and Susan Windle, $4.50 paper.

Schockley, Ann Allen. SAY JESUS AND COME TO ME, novel (Avon) $2.95 paper.

Sisley, Emily. THE NOVEL WRITERS, novel (The Mosaic Press, PO Box 41502, Tucson, AZ 85717), $2.95.

Snively, Susan. FROM THIS DISTANCE, poems (Alice James Books) $4.95 paper.

Sternburg, Janet. THE WRITER ON HER WORK: CONTEMPORARY WOMEN WRITERS REFLECT ON THEIR ART AND SITUATION (Norton) $14.95.

Straayer, Arny Christine. A BOOK OF ONE'S OWN: GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING (Metis Press, PO Box 25187, Chicago, IL 60625).

Straayer, Arny Christine. HURTIN & HEALIN & TALKIN IT OVER, short stories (Metis Press).

Straayer, Arny Christine. THE ROCK & ME, children's fiction (Metis Press).

Tax, Meredith. RIVINGTON STREET, novel (Wm. Morrow) $15.50.

Tatum, Emily. NO BLUE RIBBONS FOR RACES WON BEFORE DAWN, poems (Brindle Claire & Co., PO Box 8178, Kansas City, MO 74112), $4.50 paper.

Thomas, Sherry, Ed., WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH, BUT WE SURE HAD PLENTY: STORIES OF RURAL WOMEN (Anchor/Doubleday) $7.95 paper.

Willis, Ellen. BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT, essays (Wideview Books, 1633 Broadway, NYC 10019) $7.95 paper.

Wolf, Deborah. THE LESBIAN COMMUNITY, herstory (Univ. of California Press) $4.95 paper.

Taylor, Valerie. PRISM, novel (The Naiad Press) $6.95 paper.

Taylor, Valerie. JOURNEY TO FULFILLMENT, A WORLD WITHOUT MEN, RETURN TO LESBOS, the Erika novels (The Naiad Press) $3.95 each.

Van Bronkhorst, Marie. HOW TO STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT: STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN ON THE JOB. (Facts for Women, PO Box 15113, Seattle, WA 98115) $3.50 paper.

Wilson, Barbara Ellen. AMBITIOUS WOMEN, novel (Spinsters Ink, Rd. 1, Argyle, NY 12809) $7.95 paper.

CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

MAXINE ALEXANDER is an editor with Southern Exposure. She has been writing for a long time and not doing anything with it. Now she's looking for all kinds of praise.

ANN BLACKFORD grew up in Washington, D.C. She teaches creative writing to writers from elementary school through college and thinks 4th grade poets are the finest she's run across. She has a poem in a recent collection of women's writing published by The Iowa Review called Extended Outlooks.

LINDAJEAN BROWN is a black lesbian writer; co-editor of Azalea, a magazine by Third World lesbians; and author of The Rainbow River, short stories, and jazz dancin wif mama, narrative fiction.

CLAUDIA CANUTO came from Brazil to the U.S. four years ago, and she's been struggling with the English language ever since. Some of her work appears in Cat's Eye and in The Equinox. She's a feminist dedicated to women's spirituality.

ELAINE returned from Chile to Arkansas in 1980.

FLYING THUNDER CLOUD, RDOC: "i am a 26 year old black womon of native-amerikan-west indyan heritage. i'm a biological motha (co-parent of my mate's daughta). i've often lamented about not writing in a form that would be reminiscent of my bloodcultas as a red womyn/brown womyn/black womyn. i write in urban."

KATHLEEN HALL, a graduate of Durham High School (N.C.), lived a long time in California and recently took the Trailways to Atlanta.

SARA HESLEP lives on women's land in Oregon.

SUSAN JACOB lives in Atlanta.

MERRIL MUSHROOM used to be a 1950's South Florida Lesbian. She is now a 1980's Tennessee Lesbian.

CATHERINE RISINGFLAME MOIRAI lives on a women's farm in east Tennessee.

AMY OPPENHEIMER: "I have lived in many parts of the country. The most important thing I've brought with me, everywhere I've gone, is my identity as a lesbian and a Jew. Although I'm currently practicing law, theatre and writing are my true loves."

RUTHANN ROBSON is a member of the collective which publishes Kalliope: A Journal of Women's Art. She has published in feminist publications such a A Room of One's Own, Maenad, off our backs, Day/Tonight Night Today, and Sojourner. She's been moving around Florida for the past several years.

SUE SILVERMARIE: Currently in transition from rural West Virginia to city life in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I am trying to learn that every part of my homeplanet has something about her I can love. I say to the city, Teach me to feel this part of my mother that holds us both!

CLASSIFIEDS

UMOJA: Support network for moms (parents) of physically/emotionally handicapped kids. i am looking for contact dykes to reply to letters of distraught parents, specifically kids of color as well as interracial kids. special outreach is to physically/emotionally challenged children. for information contact FLYING THUNDER CLOUD RDOC, #j-3 broad river terrace apts, columbia s.c. 29201

A REAL PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S THEATRE COMPANY of Portland Oregon is soliciting plays and other original material for their upcoming theatrical season. Submit your work to: A Real Professional Women's Theatre Company, c/o Nancy S. Vanderburgh, 555 N.C. Fargo #1, Portland, Oregon 97212.

LEFT BANK BOOKS in Seattle sponsors a Books for Prisoners project. Through donations and a postage grant they are able to send free miscellaneous books to inmates everywhere (provided the institution allows them in). They offer special order books at cost (usually 35-40% off). Prisoners and people interested in contributing books or money write Books for Prisoners, Box A, 92 Pike St., Seattle, WA 98101.

WANTED: Apprentice Small Engine Mechanic. Experience unnecessary. We are a lawn and garden/power equipment business looking for an energetic, pleasant, creative, ongoing lesbian/feminist with an interest in mechanics and experience with hand tools. Beginning salary minimum wage with increase and future profit sharing as business progresses. Must be able to deal diplomatically with public and be discreet about life style. Send resume to Sunrab Enterprises, 1578 Hal Greer Blvd., Huntington, WV 25701.

TURTLE GRANDMOTHER BOOKS: A wonderful collection of mail-order books, specializing in words by women of color. An extensive catalogue for $2.00 full of books you've heard of or will be glad to hear about. Write P.O. Box 33964, Detroit, MI 48232.

Need poems, short prose, fiction, graphics for anthology on Mastectomy. Send work with self-addressed stamped envelope for return to L. Lifshitz, 22 Waverly Place, Monsey, NY 10952.

Monika Kehoe, of the Center for Research and Education in Sexuality, at San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94132, is conducting a study of lesbians over 65. Dr. Kehoe would appreciate any referrals from those acquainted with lesbians over 65 who might be willing to respond to an anonymous questionnaire.

THE SOUND OF ONE FORK, poems by Minnie Bruce Pratt, is available from Night Heron Press, P.O. Box 3103, West Durham Station, Durhan, NC 27703 for $2.00 plus $.50 postage. LIVING IN A HOUSE I DO NOT OWN, poems by Mab Segrest, is also available from Night Heron for $2.50 plus $.50 postage. Bookstore orders discounted 40%.

RIPENING: AN ALMANAC OF LESBIAN LORE AND VISION, a sourcebook in eight seasonal sections, weaving pieces of who we are as Lesbians, of what we know to be true, is available for $4.95 + .50 postage from Word Weavers, P.O. Box 8742, Minneapolis, MN 55408-0742.

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