IKON

creativity and change

SPECIAL ARCHIVE ISSUE

Editors' Introduction

IKON, the Second Series (1982 to 1994), was a feminist publication, both historical and timeless. It was comprised of artists, writers, activists, and organizations whose work would come to define a pivotal era in history including voices from New York to New Mexico to Nicaragua. These are voices of rebels, witnesses and lovers all rooted in a desire for justice.

The Archive of the Second Series is now available online thanks to support from *World Literature Today* and additionally now includes this online commemorative issue created originally in 2016 under the auspices of SEW (The Society for Educating Women). It comprises reprints from the original issues as well as new work.

Enjoy the read, the ride: you will touch that place deep within that yearns for revolutionary change, renewed vision, and creative action as we embrace new dreams for a different kind of world.

Susan Sherman, Editor
Demetria Martinez, Special Guest Editor

This special issue is dedicated to the memory of:

Meena Alexander (1951-2018)
Carole Byard (1941-2017)
Janice Gould (1949-2019)

Cover facsimile*: IKON #12/13. Artwork right to left counterclockwise: Clarissa Sligh, Regina Araujo Corritore, Sheila Hamanaka, Faith Ringgold, Beverly R. Singer*

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MEENA ALEXANDER

Darfur Notebook

I spent part of my childhood and growing up years in Sudan and had friends from the Darfur region. These poems were inspired by drawings by children from Darfur who lived in the relief camps on the Chad border. The children used crayons and paper brought by visitors from Human Rights Watch. I am grateful to Steve Crawshaw and Elena Testi of Human Rights Watch for allowing me to see the drawings kept in New York. In `Green Leaves of El Fasher' the image of a girl in the pink striped scarf was inspired by a photo by Ron Haviv.

Sand, Music

The wind is blurring our faces
We do not know who we are or what songs we might sing.
A stranger enters the village, lets go his horse.
A woman drags a cart filled with pots and pans,
Pulling the sky behind her.
When I was a young girl, I saw nothing,
My skin set fire to everything.
A tethered horse is pecked to death by songbirds.
In Muhagiriya everything's laid out
As if in a Japanese garden, the sort one dreams of –
Circles of sand, beaten rocks, tree stumps
Tilting into blue. A child's elbow pokes out of a well.
In a mosque, men kneeling, five beheaded.
And the daughters of music brought low.

In Our Lifetime

Flushed by the rose of flesh
Pierced by barbed wire, a wound that will not heal.
The iron of attachment cuts
What we take for ourselves, ways of living
That will not last for very long, untenable, yes.
A boy moves on the plain, his goats beside him.
Trying to find his way through clouds of dust –
Haskanita, where children rushed by men
On horseback discover the guns temerity,
Where stars startle themselves in broken water
And the boy with his goats, trying to turn home
Remembers what his father never told him –
Open your legs wide, run
Not *those staggering towards slaughter*

Green Leaves of El Fasher

Everything that's real turns to sun
Stones, trees, the jeeps they came in, those men.
In Jebel Marra, the leaves are very green.
Here, in El Fasher too.
I am singing, stones fill with music.
Do not touch my hair, I cried. They forced me
To uncover my head then beat me when my veil slipped,
Not the pink one I am wearing now, with stripes – this
My aunt gave me. I am not an animal,
They are more free, birds in the tree, horses too.
I am your language, do not cover me.
I am burning in what you take to be the present tense.
We are the letters *alif, ba, taa*, *mim* –
What the sun makes as it spins a nest of fire.

Nurredin

A garden bright with fruit trees,
Each tree, in its own shadow, singing.
Above our house, a cloud of locusts stinging.

Mother lay not moving, out of her throat
A black river. I saw a man with a gun
In his mouth trying to eat it.

From the cloud-ship- Antonov rain fell
We ran to the wadi, many people came.
Creatures too, camels, dogs, cats with no fur

Birds with torn wings. I curled up in the wadi house,
Hungry, with bones and ash to stay.
Remember me, Nurredin.

My name means light of day.

Last Colors

In another country, in a tent under a tree,
A child sets paper to rock,
Picks up a crayon, draws a woman with a scarlet face,
Arms outstretched, body flung into blue.

(Hashsha – to beat down leaves from a tree.)

The child draws an armored vehicle, guns sticking out
Purple flames, orange and yellow jabbing,
A bounty of crayons, a hut burst into glory.

(Yatima – to be an orphan, the verb intransitive.)

The child draws what's near at hand and common
Not what's far away – not the ghost house
In Khartoum where a father lies
Whose hands and ears are torn.

(Idhash-shamsu kuwwirat – so the sun is overthrown)

Darfur Notebook

I.

Preserved in the torn pages
Of a notebook (double leaved)
The houses start up.
Everything is emptied out.
Prickly pear, race around it
Ravaged -- blunt
Dashes of red
Men and women mingle:
A cactus bud
A bomb, a house, a haven
Horsemen, an unbegotten
Species, a desolation.

II.

On the facing page
A giant bird, an ostrich
Thighs pink, head tiny, staring.
A gunship clay colored, fires:
(Holes in paper
A pencil poked through).
Blue wings boil in sand
Where stick houses stand
And souls float, brighter than air
Where a child, seated on a stone
Reaches out her hand to draw.

There She Stands

On a cloud,
A child, arms splayed.

Beneath her, a field.
Red trees

With creatures clinging on --
Cat dog goat mother father too.

How are they all going to live?
A hard wind blows.

The camels don't get it,
They keep coming back.

One of them has a new
Hump -- guns poke through.

Close to the child
A thorn bush burns:

Celestial now
Witnessing damage.

Meena Alexander, (1951-2018) Distinguished Professor of English at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Quickly Changing River* (2008), *Raw Silk* (2004), and PEN Open Book Award–winning *Illiterate Heart* (2002), all published by Northwestern. She is the author of the book of essays *Poetics of Dislocation* and the critically acclaimed memoir *Fault Lines.*

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the *American Poetry Review*, *Nimrod*, and *Fence*, where these poems first appeared. The cycle as a whole, in slightly different form.

CHARLOTTE BUNCH

MAKING COMMON CAUSE: DIVERSITY & COALITIONS

This essay is based all a speech that was given at the National Women's Studies Association annual convention in June, 1985, for the panel "Common Causes: Uncommon Coalitions—Sex, Race, Class & Age." It appeared in IKON, Second Series #7.

In my twenty years of political organizing, I have been part of numerous coalitions. Some were successful, others disastrous, and most fell somewhere in between. I am not sure that any were really uncommon. For coalitions are one of the most common strategies of creating social change, and the problems that go with them are recurring themes in all movements. Discourse about when, where and how to build coalitions is particularly important when we seek to make change that is inclusive of diverse perspectives. For feminists, especially in a country like the U.S. with so many varied groups, the ability to create a movement that includes and responds to the diversity of women's lives is crucial.

Diversity And Domination

Patriarchy has systematically utilized diversity as a tool of domination in which we learn in childhood that such things as sex and race bring differences in power and privilege, and that these are acceptable. This idea that difference justifies domination is deeply embedded in society and defended as natural. Take, for example, the often heard refrain: "There will always be poor people" used to perpetuate class privileges. But as women who have challenged the so-called naturalness of male supremacy, feminists must also question it in other areas of domination.

When power hierarchies are accepted as inevitable, people can be manipulated to fear that those who are different are a threat to their position and perhaps even to their survival. We are taught to be afraid that "they will hurt us-either because they are more powerful or because they want our privileges." While that fear takes multiple forms depending on where we fit in the various scales of domination, all of us are taught to distrust those who are different. Some aspects of this fear may be necessary to survival—whites do lynch Blacks, men will rape women and we must watch out for such dangers. But fear and distrust of differences are most often used to keep us in line. When we challenge the idea that differences must be threatening, we are also challenging the patriarchal assignment of power and privilege as birthrights.

Opposing the ways that differences are used to dominate does not mean that we seek to end diversity. Feminist visions are not about creating homogenized people who all look like a blank middle class television ad. Many aspects of diversity can be celebrated as variety, creativity and options in life styles and world views. We must distinguish between creative differences that are not intrinsically tied to domination and the assignment of power and privilege based on the distinct characteristics of some. Diversity, when separated from power to control others, provides valuable opportunities for learning and

living that can be missed if one is embedded in an ethnocentric way of seeing reality.

Diversity among feminists today can be a resource for gaining a broader understanding of the world. We see more clearly and our ability to create effective strategies is enhanced if we move beyond the boundaries of our assigned patriarchal slot. Quite specifically, in 1985, white women can look to the growing women of color movement in the U.S. and to feminism in the Third World. But too often we fail to respond to each other's potential for enriching our lives because of unconscious fears of race, class, or national differences. It is not just a matter of learning about race and class—although that is important—but also of understanding women's lives and the world as viewed by others.

Making coalitions does not mean "watering down" feminist politics as some fear. Rather, it requires engaging in a wider debate about those politics and shaping their expressions to respond to more women's realities. I see this process as reclaiming the radical spirit of feminism that calls for going to the roots of oppression. In the U.S. for example, the present wave of feminism began in the 1960's in close connection to the Black civil rights movement and its demand for recognition of the rights of racially diverse groups, Yet, racism is all too often reflected in the lack of acknowledgment of those origins and the invisibility of women of color who were a part of feminism's resurgence. As Barbara Smith notes in *But Some of Us are Brave, (*Feminist Press, 1982) "Black women were a part of that early women's movement as were working class women of all races." This included famous speakers such as Florence Kennedy as well as women like the Welfare Rights mothers who worked in the late 60's in coalition with Washington D.C. Women's Liberation to achieve improvements in the city's health services for women. In the 1970's, efforts to develop diverse coalitions and a broader based agenda were often eclipsed by many factors including intense movement controversies and the media's emphasis on the pursuit of equality within the system. By focusing again on the diversity and depth of women's perspectives and needs in the 1980's, I see feminists reasserting the radical impulse for justice for all and thus strengthening the movement as a force for fundamental change.

There is commonality in the fact that all women are subordinated, but when we examine our diversity, we see that the forms that takes are shaped by many factors. Female oppression is not one universal block experienced the same way by all women, to which other forms of exploitation are then added as separate pieces. Rather, various oppressions interact to shape the particulars of each woman's life. For example, an aging Black lesbian who is poor does not experience oppression as separate packages—one sexism, one poverty, one homophobia, one racism, and one ageism. She experiences these as interacting and shaping each other, Seeing this interaction is vital for coalitions around issues.

Too often analysis of women’s oppression isolates single factors such as class or sexual preference in a simplistic manner, trying to show the effects of each separately. But this fails to take account of their inter-relatedness. Further, it often winds up in battles over a hierarchy of seriousness of forms of oppression or over how one really is the cause of the other. But a feminist method suggests the necessity of looking at their interaction—at how race, class, sex, and age oppression shape each other. For example, race and class affect whether an older woman’s problem is being abandoned in her house, trapped in an abusive nursing home, or entirely homeless. Or in looking at the exploitation of women's work, we can see the effect of factors such as race, homophobia, or physical disability, as well as class.

Strategies that fail to examine how female exploitation is shaped in different forms often set some women up against others. The interactive approach—taking into account female diversity—is thus essential for effective coalitions. However, it is often difficult to look at all the features of oppression because they are complex and demand continuous re-evaluation of our assumptions. Further, attitudes and emotions around diversity are deeply rooted and often volatile. Systems such as racism, anti-Semitism, classism, nationalism, and homophobia are so much a part of the culture that surrounds us from birth that we often have biases and blind spots that affect our attitudes, behavior, strategies, and values in ways that we do not perceive until challenged by others.

Many problems that arise in coalitions stem from resistance to being challenged about oppressive attitudes and reactions. These need to be approached matter-of-factly, not as moral judgments on someone's personhood, but as negative results of growing up in a patriarchal culture. We must change such attitudes and behavior because they oppress others and interfere with our own humanity as well as impede the process of creating feminist strategies and coalitions. White middle class North Americans are often unaware that their perspectives—which usually coincide with the media's portrayal of reality—are not the only way of seeing the world. Since these ethnocentric biases are reinforced constantly, we must make an extra effort to see other points of view. This does not mean that nothing of this culture is of value. It simply means that we must go beyond its limits to see what can be taken as useful and not oppressive, and what must be challenged.

In looking at diversity among women, we see one of the weaknesses of the feminist concept that the personal is political. It is valid that each woman begins from her personal experiences and it is important to see how these are political. But we must also recognize that our personal experiences are shaped by the culture with all its prejudices. We cannot therefore depend on our perceptions alone as the basis for political analysis and action—much less for coalition. Feminists must stretch beyond, challenging the limits of our own personal experiences by learning from the diversity of women's lives.

Divisive Reactions To Diversity

In the 1980's, various groups, such as the women of color movement, are expanding the definitions of and possibilities for feminism. But many women's reactions to diversity interfere with making successful cross-cultural, multi-racial coalitions. Bringing up race or class or lesbianism is not divisive to the movement. Rather I see the reactions to issues of diversity as divisive rather than the issues themselves. I want to outline here some of the reactions that I have seen interfere with efforts at coalition building and suggest ways of getting beyond them.

The most obviously divisive reaction is *becoming defensive* when challenged around an issue of diversity. If you are busy making explanations about how some action or comment was not really what you meant, it is hard to listen to and understand criticism and why it is being made. This does not mean passively accepting every critical comment—for in dealing with such emotional topics, there will be exaggerations, inaccuracies, or injustices that must be worked out. But these problems do not excuse anyone from struggling with the issues. If you remain open, while retaining a sense of your own authenticity, it is usually possible to deal with these by listening and responding constructively. If a critique does not make sense to you, ask about it, or try to figure out what led to it—even if it seems unfair. It

is not always easy to listen to criticism first and then sort through what it means, but it is the job of feminists to do just that. To listen carefully, to consider what other views mean for our work, and to respond through incorporating new understandings where appropriate—this is a feminist necessity if we are to make coalitions among diverse women.

Often defensiveness is related to another unhelpful reaction which is guilt. It may be appropriate to experience shame over the actions of one's ancestors or at how one has participated in another's oppression, but personal guilt is usually immobilizing, particularly if one sits with it for long. Successful coalitions are not built around feeling sorry for others or being apologetic about one's existence. Coalitions are built around shared outrage over injustice and common visions of how society can be changed. Few of us had control over our origins and the point is not to feel guilt about the attitudes or privileges that we inherited. The question is what are we going to do about them now—how are we going to change ourselves and work to end domination in the world! For example, white women feeling sorry about something like racism is not as useful to women of color as working to eliminate it in society as well as in one's personal life.

Often women are side-tracked by *over-personalization* when dealing with diversity. The issues raised are personal and do require individual change, but it is important not to get stuck there, Sometimes feminists get so involved in trying to be pure and personally free of any oppressive behavior that they become paralyzed and fear taking any political action because it might not be correct, Yet it is through concrete efforts to challenge domination—no matter how small—that we learn and can become more effective and more inclusive in our political work. For example, if a man tells me that he is becoming totally anti-sexist but is not in some way challenging the structures of patriarchal power that continue to oppress women, then his personal changes—if I believe him at all—are of minimal value to me. The same is true for women of color who see some whites talking about racism but not taking action against it in the world.

Another aspect of over personalization is *withdrawal.* Sometimes feminists have become so personally hurt by criticism or feel so left out when a group is creating its own space that they withdraw from political engagement. For example, some heterosexual women during the height of lesbian feminist challenges in the 1970's withdrew into their feelings of being attacked or left out rather than working on how they could fight homophobia while still being with men personally. This only reinforced the separation between us. I see similar behavior among some white women today. The hurt is often understandable because there is pain in confrontations around difficult issues, and feminists sometimes spend more energy criticizing women's oppressive behavior than opposing the systems of oppression. Still reacting to this by withdrawing prevents learning from what has happened and growing to the point where coalition is possible. This is sometimes like children who want to be center stage and pout when not in the forefront. Instead we need to see that at any given moment one group may be the creative edge of the movement but that will enrich all of us in the long run.

One of the more infuriating reactions is acting *weary and resentful* when someone brings up "that issue" again. No one is more tired of homophobia and having to bring it up again than a lesbian like myself. I am sure women of color feel the same way about racism, Jewish women about anti-Semitism, the elderly about ageism etc. But the problems still exist and someone must address them. Until feminists can learn to include the concerns

and perspectives of those women whose oppression we do not directly experience, then others will have to keep bringing up those issues. We must strive to become "one-woman coalitions" capable of understanding and raising all issues of oppression and seeing our relationship to them—whites speaking about racism, heterosexuals about homophobia, the able-bodied about disabilities, etc. Only as we do this will we be able to build lasting coalitions.

The last divisive reaction that I want to include here is limiting *outspoken "minority women"* to *"their issues."* When someone speaks out strongly about her group's specific oppression, she often becomes a token whose leadership in other areas is restricted. For example, I have felt pressure either to work only on lesbian issues, or to downplay them if I am involved in other areas of feminist activity. Yet, while I am out of the closet and concerned about homophobia, there are many other topics that I want to address besides lesbianism, just as women of color have much to say about many issues in addition to racism. To counter this tendency, I decided in the late 70's that I would not write any more only about lesbianism, but instead I would address other subjects and include within those my lesbian feminist analysis. Women of all races, classes, ages, and nations have much to say on a whole variety of topics from their particular perspectives. If we limit each to one identity and approach feminism as a string of separate unrelated issues, we narrow the possibilities for insight, growth, and leadership throughout the movement.

Our chances of building successful coalitions are greater if we can avoid divisive reactions such as these and see diversity as a strength. As we struggle to learn from our differences rather than to fear or deny them, we can find our common ground. In this process, we also build the atmosphere of good faith and respect which is necessary for strong coalitions. For while we do not always need to love or even like one another or agree on everything, we do need to be able to challenge each other from the assumption that change is possible. Another requirement when diverse groups coalesce is that each must be clear about its bottom line. We must each know what we need in order to survive in a coalition and how to communicate that to others.

Coalitions that are successful must also be aimed at making meaningful action in the world. Coalition is not abstract. It functions when groups or individuals are working together around something that each cares about and sees as advancing their goals or vision, or at least protecting the space necessary to develop. When a coalition has some effect then it is worth going through all the trouble and strife of making it work. In any case, it is in the process itself that we often discover the common causes that make it possible to create common coalitions of women in all our diversity working toward both common and varied feminist visions.

Charlotte Bunch, Founding Director and Senior Scholar, at the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University, has been an activist, author and organizer in the women's, civil, and human rights movements for four decades. A Board of Governor's Distinguished Service Professor in Women's and Gender Studies, she was previously a Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in October 1996; the recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights in December 1999; and honored as one of the "21 Leaders for

the 21st Century" by Women's Enews in 2002 and received the “Board of Trustees Awards for Excellence in Research” in 2006 at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey . She is currently a member of the Advisory Committee for the Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Division, and on the Boards of the Global Fund for Women and the International Council on Human Rights Policy and served on the Advisory Committee for the Secretary General’s 2006 Report to the General Assembly on Violence against Women.

CAROLE BYARD

ON BEING A WOMAN ARTIST OF COLOR: The Sixties, The Seventies, Today

This essay was edited from an interview with Carole Byard taped in March, 1990. It appeared in IKON Second Series, #11

The Sixties

When I started art school in 1964, it wasn't at all what I expected. I lived in Harlem, and the school I went to (the New York Phoenix School of Design) was located on 30th and Lexington. When I left my house in the morning, I was in one world. When I took the bus all the way from Lennox Avenue along Madison Avenue to 30th Street, I entered a really different world. And I found myself divided in both of those worlds.

I expected an art school in New York to have a variety of people. I expected to find students of different ages from all over the country or at least different parts of the city. In fact, there were very few people of color, particularly in positions to make decisions about what we were going to study. The New York Phoenix School of Design was a very small school—maybe five out of the 150 or so students were Black. There was one faculty member who was Asian. We had several Black models in my illustration and drawing classes. I think the teachers felt they were exotic, so they would get Black models when they could. But even though we learned a lot about painting and drawing the figure from both Black and white models, they were each approached from a different perspective. You weren't expected to bring in things that showed images of yourself or of Black people. In the courses I took the white image always dominated what we were studying.

I was out of high school five years before I could go to art school, so I felt I'd missed a lot and was very interested in everything being taught. Art history was something I was particularly interested in. Not only were there no artists of color included in art history, here's a graphic example of how things were: One day I can remember distinctly my Art History teacher, Miss Melody, teaching about different cultures—I guess this was her time of wanting to say there were other people in the world. She said you can always tell when people are civilized by the colors they wear. She said bright colors will let you know that people are uncivilized. And subtle colors—the tans and the grays and the blues—will let you know that these are civilized people, (People of color basically like bright colors and have taught a whole lot of people finally to wear color—I've watched that transition since Miss Melody said these words.) Our whole class just gasped, because here I was, the one Black student in the classroom, and she's saying that.

It was so embarrassing for almost everybody in the classroom, and she never even dealt with the fact that it was a racist remark. She just kept on going. And laughing and talking. I never said anything because that was the way I was in those

days. First of all I was a little stunned. But it worked on me. After all, I still repeat it. That was one of the ways I guess I could describe some of the insensitivity in art school.

Ironically, the very thing the school prided themselves on was being in touch with the students. They were rigid in many ways and had strict rules. For example, you couldn't wear jeans to school. For the most part, the people who ran the school were elderly. They were also caring—I have to say that too. When I went there, I only had enough money to pay for the first ten weeks of school. I was older than the other students and when I moved to New York for good, I quit my job and stayed with some relatives. I felt very firmly I made the right move. That it was what I was destined to do—to go to school and to spend all my time working on my art. I was the monitor in the class. I was the oldest student there, I was a very hard worker, I got along well with everybody and the students looked up to me for advice. So when the time came for me to pay, they didn't ask me to leave. The school gave me a work-study scholarship for the next four years. Every year they extended it. They found a job for me in the library and in the school store and that's how I got through school. So I have to say they were sensitive in that way, but they were from the kind of old tradition that excluded Blacks or non-whites from any real artistic consideration, even though they had an Asian instructor, and when I finished school they hired me to teach.

At that time, involvement in the galleries just wasn't happening for Black artists. I was only aware of Richard Hunt as being a Black artist who had achieved that kind of recognition. He was in the galleries and acceptable to them. He was a part of their world. I loved his work and was very proud of his having "made it." There were certainly some other artists who were headed in that direction, but not like him. His work was abstract so there was very little for them to fear in terms of having to confront a Black image. But that didn't deter me or make me think there was no room for me in the art world. I just felt there were other audiences.

At that time I was very naive really about how things were controlled. I was trying to do two things: I was working as a fine artist as well as going from one commercial publisher to the next with my portfolio trying to get work. It was very difficult. It was really the Civil Rights Movement and afterwards the Black power movement—really the militancy of those movements—that changed things, that made the publishers start publishing material by Black writers. And it was Black authors insisting that they wanted Black illustrators to illustrate their material that eventually opened the doors for me in 1969.

My world from 1963 to 1967 basically involved going to school and going home. I spent a full day in school—from nine to three- thirty or four o'clock—and I didn't know a lot of people in New York until I met some photographers and musicians who were working with the organization that Malcolm X founded in 1964, '65, *The Organization of African American Unity.* Artists like LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka) belonged to that group.

The Seventies Begin

In 1970, I moved here to Westbeth from 142nd Street and became part of an organization called *The Black Artists Guild.* It was started by an actor, Preston Bradley, and

the core organization was basically the cast of LeRoi Jones' wonderful play, *Slave* Ship—Gilbert Moses, Bill Duke, Garrett Morris, Maxine Griffith, Frank Adu, Seret Scott, a number of people who were doing a lot of things then and have continued to do a lot of wonderful things today. My aunt took me to see it when it played at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and it was one of the most moving experiences I've ever had,

The theater was set up like a slave ship and the people in the audience were a part of the production—things were going on behind you, beside you, in front of you. There was the inside of a slave ship. There were auction blocks. The play was incredible, At one point, they tried to auction the children off to the people in the audience, and there were songs and people were singing and people were crying—Oh, it was something. It was something. We were on our feet. It was very, very engaging. And I was very moved by it. I'd never seen that kind of production that was 360 degrees of intense involvement for everybody. I did a sketch when I came home of a scene from the play, I felt so close to it.

When the cast of *Slave Ship* went on tour to Italy and other places where people didn't even speak the language, the play had the same effect. Preston Bradley started the *Black Artists Guild* because the cast felt so connected to one another and the experience of doing the play was so powerful, and when I was asked to join the Guild, I met all these people I felt so close to anyway. I was asked to be a part of the Council, the decision making level of the organization. There were a number of women in the *Black Artists Guild*—such as Marilyn Worrell, a dancer/actress—who were on the council, although it was really Preston's vision that guided the organization.

The Guild was very interesting because it was a group of actors, actresses, dancers, visual artists, a few musicians, and we all felt very strongly about Black awareness and the need to be assertive—the need to do something positive with our work. The whole thrust of the Guild was to do things for Black children, to be really effective in the community. And we did do some things, we did do some productions.

Another thing that was good about it was we would bring our work to the Guild—our peers—and we would do works in progress and people would comment, not exactly critique, but you could get some feedback. Everybody in the group had a talent, something to do in the arts, so we did a production here at Westbeth. We did a couple of things where we invited people to raise money. We were much more of an arts organization than a political kind of militant organization. The group was particularly helpful to me because I joined right after I came out of school. Finding myself with a whole family of artists who were Black helped me focus on what I wanted to say with my work.

The Guild was based on the "Seven Principles of Kwanzaa" created by Dr. Maulana Karenga: *Nguzo Saba.* That was our creed. We would do as much as we could to be of service to our community, and we would try to get people to remember these principles. One of them was *Kujichagulia* which means self- determination. That was a very big part of what we were doing with our work and my painting *Kujichagulia* came after *Slave Ship* and other pieces similar to it in vision. The "Seven Principles" are: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), *Imani* (faith).

The first time my work was seen in a major exhibition was in a show that Benny Andrews curated at the New York Cultural Center. Benny Andrews is a very fine Black artist whose work is always conscious of what time it is, what is going on with Black people. He had started an organization along with Cliff Joseph and one of the things he did was organize this exhibition. He had a few artists who were well known and a few artists who he called unknown, but who one should look out for. There were two artists in that category and I was one and Melvin Etrick was the other. Lots of people saw the show and I got good reviews.

I did exhibit my work a bit during those years, but not a lot. It was very, very hard—you didn't have many options at that point. First of all, I didn't even know where the artists were before I got in the *Black Artists Guild* and the only visual artists in the *Black Artists Guild* were the two artists I invited, Ed Towies and Geo Smith. Later Charlie Abramson was with us.

In 1971 I got a grant from Ford Motors to travel anywhere in the world. I went to Africa for five months, and when I came back we had an exhibition at the New York Cultural Center. It was the first time I was reviewed in the *New York Times.* But that was a singular experience—Ford Motors sponsoring a grant designated for Black artists. You got involved in it by invitation. They had a few select people they had sent applications to for recommendations, and then they selected based on support material and your project. They picked five artists. You had to spend three months wherever you went. All five of us chose Africa. Two of us were visual artists and three were writers. I don't know of anything like that today. It was wonderful to travel, to have money and a round-trip ticket in your pocket, to be able to know where you were going to stay—to not have to worry. That was a remarkable thing for me to have happen early on in my art career. Going to Africa is something I will always have with me. I went by myself with just my paint case and some clothes and brushes and paper, and I just traveled around and met people. It was right at the time when everything was about Black pride. And there I was in Africa and able to see what we referred to as "The Motherland." My work was definitely affected by it, how I felt about myself, my vision of what I wanted to do in the future. I'm still reaping some of the benefits from that first trip as I see my work today leaning more and more towards African influences.

When I came back from Africa I met Valerie Maynard. She was working at the Studio Museum. In 1973 and 1974 I got to exhibit my work at the Studio Museum because I was one of their Studio Artists-in-Residence. But other places to exhibit, for the most part, were all alternative places at that time.

The Nineties, Feminism & Coast To Coast: The National Women Of Color Artists' Project

The question of gender was very hard for anyone in the Black movement, particularly Black women, to even consider in the Sixties. The focus at that point in the Sixties, and even into the Seventies, was still on the men, with women being supportive. Women, certainly, were leaders in some areas, were doing a lot of the work, but they were usually not as visible. I wouldn't even have thought of calling myself a feminist. I saw feminism as something white women did. I didn't think of it as something Black women did. We were still just in the middle of trying to liberate our

human rights. It was very hard to then start thinking I had to be liberated as a woman. Our issues had more to do with the whole family. To then separate yourself and say, as a feminist I need this and I need that, at that time meant you were watering down the issues, was seen as being divisive. And that wasn't what we wanted. We felt if the needs of the Black man were met then we would all be better off. If we talked about gender at all then it was about men.

Also, we had many strong determined Black women in our families. Real life Tubmans and Sojourners. Aunts, mothers, grandmothers doing everything they could to keep families together, keep the children safe and healthy.

We were very serious about our role in the movement.

It took a long time really for me to evolve to speaking about myself in terms of being a woman. It took a long time because I didn't focus on myself, I focused on children, the community. I focused on other things. I really didn't think of my plight as an individual being. Maybe it didn't even really get to that until recently—in the past ten years, maybe not even then. I think I was really slow in getting to that point. It is really hard to sort it out. There were so many feelings wrapped in the original vision of what one wanted.

Faith Ringgold started a group of Black Women artists in the late Sixties, in 1969 I guess. It was called *Where We At Black Women Artists*. That was the first group of Black women artists that I'm aware of. The group came out of an exhibition, "Acts of Art" that was at a gallery a Black man owned in the Village. When I went to see their show, I was really surprised to see that there were eight or nine Black women artists, and I didn't know any of them. I liked some of the work a lot, so I went to meet them and they invited me to be part of the group. But even when I was in *Where We At* I saw myself as a woman, but not in a feminist perspective. We were just a group of Black women artists who were very supportive of each other.

Now it's different. I see the need, the void. It would be very difficult for us to have the experiences we have in *Coast to Coast* in terms of how we can support one another and really listen to one another and make decisions for ourselves if it was multi-cultural—all cultures, not just women of color—and if men were involved too. It wouldn't have the distinction it has now. *Coast to Coast* needs to be the way it is now until things get to be right.

There is a tremendous void in the lives of artists of color. I really don't believe you create solely for the act of creating or for yourself. It seems to me it's incomplete if the work isn't experienced by someone other than the creator—that that is very much a part of the life of the work. The work is a form of communication. You are saying something. I wonder often what all the many artists of color who are creating do with their work. I wonder what makes us continue to make art that doesn't get seen.

Coast to Coast exists because we feel everybody's being shortchanged—the artist who creates the work and the public that never gets to see it. And not just Black people. White people, Asians, Hispanics, everybody. Because what we have to say says a lot about how we feel about ourselves and how we feel about others. We're speaking not just from a perspective of "what happened to me personally, but "this is happening to me and all of us."

Everyone has written books about women artists of color and defined us and we have not really defined ourselves and written the books that comment on what we do,

what we are like, who we are. The feeling there is no interest in work by people of color, that what people of color create is not worthwhile, not “sellable,” or not of interest and the fact that the artists continue to make it—these are some of the things that drive us to work harder in *Coast to Coast*. We want to create a forum, a place where the work can be seen in an atmosphere that is deserving. I don't know how else to say it. I mean after years of hanging your work outdoors or in school corridors or in the lobbies of libraries or other kinds of alternative spaces like restaurants, you eventually want the work to be seen in a different way-without the distractions, without the work being simply a decoration or a secondary element for something else. You also want it to be respected. You want to have respect for what it is you have done. You want people to “get it." What it is you're saying.

We feel that there is a lot of “curating out" of women and of women of color in particular. If it is difficult in general for women in the arts, then what is it like for us? Because if it's hard for women period, and if it's certainly hard for people of color then after the white man got in, then the white woman would probably get in, and then the man of color would probably get in. And then lastly the woman of color. So we working artists decided to do something. I say “we" but I didn't start *Coast to Coast*. Faith Ringgold started *Coast to Coast*, and Clarissa Sligh and Margret Gallegoes worked with her to put together our first exhibition, the *Coast to Coast: A National Women of Color Artists' Book Show* which opened at the Women's Caucus National Conference in Houston, Texas, in 1987. A call went out to women of color all over the country to participate in that exhibition.

Before that though Clarrisa Sligh had called a very special meeting. I got an invitation in the mail that said it's time we got to know each other. It was a card that had an archival photo of Black women on it with antique clothing. Clarrisa was inviting every Black woman artist she could find who lived in New York to come to a dinner. They videotaped it. And it was wonderful. Really wonderful. I mean I had to go. I was in California, and I had to jump on a plane and come back early. I was quite ill when I got here—I had some kind of flu—but I had to stay long enough to say my name and to say my piece in the video about how delighted I was that something like this was happening. Just for us to be assembled together was a wonderful thing.

It was after that *Coast to Coast: A National Women of Color Artists' Book Show* opened. The theme of the show was somewhat autobiographical. Each artist made a book about herself or something that concerned her at the time. Some worked in collaboration—mother, daughter, friends, visual artists and writers were some of the combinations. And women from all over really loved the concept and the fact we were coming together. Asian, African, Native and Latina American women were invited to be in the exhibition. Once the show was up, we realized it was more than just a show. It was something very vital, something really necessary. Women sent letters about how glad they were to participate.

At that point, I volunteered to be in the working part of the group, not just the exhibit. I wanted to be a part of helping to shape it and keep it going.

It's amazing it didn't occur to us earlier that as women artists of color we should get together in this way. We could get together as Latina women, as Black women, as Asian women. We had our own ethnic communities. We all had friends, alliances, lovers, family with white women or white men. We knew white people, but none of us knew each other. White men and women were free to move in and out of Native

American culture or be freely involved in writing about and speaking Spanish and interacting with Hispanic women or Asian or African Americans. Or Africans. But we never thought of getting together collectively. And that's one of the things that makes *Coast to Coast* so unique. Finally we've found out we have so much in common. I mean not just because we are "the other" or however you want to define the fact that we're not the majority in this country—yet. But even culturally, there are some things that are very interesting, very closely related. Symbols. Stories. Fables. Folklore. Beadwork. A lot of things that traditionally people do with their hands.

So it happened that when we moved from being a group of Black women coming together to celebrate "here we are all in one city, we're here in New York and we don't know one another to saying nationally, "all women of color come together." That took a long time. I don't know what made Faith take that jump to saying we should expand in this way. But it was a wonderful to have that idea. Because I never knew any Native American women, and I knew very few Asian American women. I knew some Latina women because Blacks and Latinas are closer in terms of African-based religions and music. Also one community often borders and overlaps another. But *Coast to Coast* has really pulled us together. Now I'm talking to Native American Women in Seattle and Texas and Chicana women in Southern California and it's very different. It's really something,

Men always had had a tendency to act like they were patting us on the head. Very paternal. Not as equals. In *Coast to Coast* it's openly acknowledged that we are there to support one another and we really appreciate each other's work. We don't see our work as being anything "less." We see it as being the best. And so we put our energy into it in that way. We try to make whatever we do or whatever we send out reflect the high quality of the work our artists create.

The Sixties, The Seventies, Today

When I try to compare the late Sixties and early Seventies with today I move from one position to another. For example, when I was talking about the Ford Motors grant, nothing like that exists now and there were other opportunities like that then. Earmarked for Blacks, they existed for a few years and then they disappeared. The same thing in publishing. A lot of Black material was published. And then it dried up. And Black Studies too. Often you go into a book store today looking for something in Black Studies and they send you to the African Section. They don't have the materials anymore, not put together.

When there's conflict, people start listening again. Today we seem to be headed for even more terrible times racially. I think there's going to be even more conflict. This is what I'm sensing,

I think the Nineties will be very different from the Sixties because in the Sixties people had hope. Things were pointed out to people and they'd say—oh, no, I'm not like that, I want to change. And somebody would reply—well, you are like that, and this bothers me. There was dialogue. People were fighting, but they were also talking. The Sixties and the Seventies were a terrible period—a vicious time. But they were also a wonderful time. A time of growth. A time when a lot of new voices were heard. The Civil Rights movement of the Fifties and early Sixties paved the way

for people everywhere to make a stand—the Womens, Anti-war, Native American, Gay and other Liberation Movements came after and used similiar tactics and gained momentum from the Black Movement. We all thought people wanted to change. I think individual people did. I also think some people in the government really didn't want things to change. Otherwise, things might have developed differently. Instead, they have become even more violent.

Today I see people very hard-lined about racial issues. In that way, it doesn't look good. In another way though, in terms of what's happening in places like the cultural world, there seems to be an attempt to do more things that include people of color. This doesn't mean that these people's hearts have changed, but they are to some extent printing things, reviewing our work—they are interested. Perhaps they see us as an untapped market. But buyers still look toward white curators or gallery owners to pull things together before they look at artists of color's work.

In *Coast to Coast*, we're doing it ourselves and people are looking at our work. We don't need to be introduced by a white institution to make these people feel that we've arrived. And that's different. That's really different.

It's hard for me to really trust these things—to say this is going to last, because I thought we were on before and we weren't. The dialogue that we can have now is better. I'm just trying to figure how that translates to the people who are unwilling to listen.

In *Coast to Coast*, as individual artists, we're keeping up the dialogue because we care. Because it matters to us. How effective it is, and how long it will remain effective, I can't really predict. But I have to believe that as the wheel turns things do get better.

CAROLE BYARD (1941-2017) is a painter, muralist, sculptor, illustrator and earthworks artist. Lucy Lippard in *Mixed Blessings* wrote that "Byard's subject in all of her media has long been 'social madness and inner strength,' survival and persistence, and the transcendence of the human spirit over material obstacles." She was co-coordinator of *Coast to Coast: Ancestors Known and Unknown Box Show* and contributed art work including two covers to IKON magazine as well as coordinating the material for IKON #12/13 which focused on *Coast to Coast: National Women Artists of Color*.

JAN CLAUSEN

The Alice Poems

Alice Anna Buehler Clausen, 1892-1952

I. Particle

Wo bist du?
As if I'm playing hide and seek.
Alice, you sank so low.
Away with self you did.

Here we are.
There you go.
Pitching woe.

Yet you were just *one,*
a pip of frightened energy.
A dark and potent particle
that bent vicinity.

Your small girls dragged
a common pillow
over huddled heads,
not to hear raw voices
pitching blame.

There was no help
for you or anyone
who off her rocker slid
with money none—
the "rest home," then the pit—
no haven, then or now.

There you are.
Here we go.

Alice, you baked
a lovely cake. What else?
You played piano.
Liked a symphony—
majestic, German—
on the radio.

While harnessed to Grandpa's
Lutheran rectitude,
tried tincture
of Christian Science
on a plague of cellar rats,
coal furnace, hand-
wrung washing, bedbug strife.
The blue-eyed certainties.
The Minnesota snows.

Alice, why is there
Hell?

Your offspring,
spawn of grief,
sprang up and fled the scene:
they'd rather hug a war
instead of home.
And who could blame them?
--on we have to press!—
for shirking obloquy.

Alice,
you blew it
big time.

How could you falter?
All were pitched to glide.
How could you shirk
when all were pricked to shine?
How could you sink?
They strained so hard to sail.
How could you sport
corsage-deformity
and magnify our blight?
How could you fly the coop?
You stank of home!

II. Action Figure

Alice, you skipped, skedaddled.
Having torched the premises.

They scattered lies
to throw the pack
(the pastor!) off the scent--
executive negation
prettied up: an "accident."
In fact, you'd seen
the matter darkly through.
You gulped the stuff,
sank down beside the stove
and, coming home from church,
he found you so.
No note. My Grand-
Enigma, Matrix-Flaw—
They flung a doily
or a drape to hide
the Family Fistula.

I'm telling what I know.

Alice, you rind
of madness, ruck of grief.
How could you do it, dear?

Your issue drudge and flail,
drive on through modern pain.
Alice, you sank so low as if
you could not rise again.
And still you war,
above, below,
and set the boats ablaze.
I dream you sinking—
hankering, oblique--
fifty years on or so,
with all of us in tow.

You did as you would do, dear.

Alice, you are my Mother
Grand-Debased,
my wordless Author,
vast and mere,
my lamp of rage,
my baffle-ground,
o meek and wild
and minus grace.

You rest your heart.
You hold your peace.
I rest my case.
You hold my hand.

JAN CLAUSEN'S publications include the novels *Sinking, Stealing* and *The Prosperine Papers*; the memoir *Apples and Oranges: My Journey Through Sexual Identity;* and the poetry collections *From a Glass House* and *If You Like Difficulty. Veiled Spill: A Sequence,* was published by GenPop Books in 2014. Clausen teaches in the Goddard College MFA in Writing Program.

ALEXIS DE VEAUX

excerpts from Yabo *(Redbone Press, 2014)*

Between Here And Nowhere:

Eagle and Leopard lazed on the beach.
They stared out at Great Water, at its see-through green close to shore, the white heads of its waves, its slate blue at the horizon, its mysterious endlessness. They tasted its salt with every breath, listened to the geology of its haunting. Neither was sure how long they'd been there. A day? A century? Was it all one moment? Was it all the same moment?

Eagle cuddled against one of Leopard's front paws. She said,
have I been a good companion?
Entertaining. Leopard stifled a yawn.
Do you recall why we came here? Eagle asked.
To remember.
Well then, we need a story. Eagle sat up, looked about, assessed
the attentiveness of the sand.
She cleared her throat.
No, no, Leopard said. She was tired of Eagle's long-winded
stories. I will tell a story.
You?
Yes, I. I will tell a story. The story of The Spirits' Revenge.
Ah yes. Eagle nodded.
And so Eagle nestled into Leopard's spotted neck, into a quaking
of words, as Leopard began:
There came a day when Great Water became full of the spirits
of our humans, swimming about, lost, confused, angry. They
were so lost and confused they began to confuse the habits of
the underwater beings.
This they knew was wrong, for every world has its own order.
This they believed, as they had when they were among the living.
It vexed them, more than anything, for it was disrespectful to the
memory of them. And how could they be properly remembered,
their living lives properly accounted for, lost at sea as they were,
between here and nowhere, without the anchoring rituals of kin
and community? How could they take their true place in the
spirit world?
When word spread among them they would be lost for eternity,
the knowledge of this fate drove them instantly mad.
Leopard paused.
Is that it? Eagle shouted.
I was just wondering how long eternity is, Leopard said.
Finish the story.

Leopard sighed. And that is why, every year, there is a season of madness, the hurricanes, in Great Water. They begin as thunderstorms off the west coast of our world.
They follow the path of the bones.
Eagle nodded. It was not a satisfying story, but some time had passed.

ONE HEART WALKING:

Wayland stopped in his tracks.
Minny, his Belgian horse, was dead. Stretched out in the pasture.
He slumped down beside his friend, his heart overcome by yet another death. He began to sob.
And sob. And sob.
He cried for Ezrah, for himself, for Minny.
He'd bought Minny from a Kentucky horse trader when she was a three-year-old filly.
He'd put her to work, making use of her good disposition, her willingness to chase after the two errant cows he once owned, to let him saddle and ride her back.
When had she died?
When had he seen her last?
How long had he been in the house?
He rose to his feet slowly. Looked around, at the grass, up at the screeching buzzards, the fading morning. He felt empty, forsaken. Left behind.
All that wanted what he'd wanted, that loved him, that made him feel solid, was gone.
Wayland brushed away his tears. And began walking.

Two days later, he appeared at his mother's door.
Mar-ma, he said, I'm leaving.
Where you going son?
To the edge.
Son—
Goodbye, he said.

THE GRAMMAR OF A PERSON:

Zen told Jules to meet her on 110th Street, at the Fifth Avenue entrance to Central Park. She thought a walk in the park would be a good way to get reacquainted.
She leaned against the park's stone wall. It was Saturday, warm, mid-morning.
In the summer, people in the city were even more hyper-frantic. Despite the heat they moved about as if they had espresso in their veins.
Although she'd grown accustomed to living in Buffalo, she'd never quite gotten used to how early that city closed down, how long it took to wake up, the self-deprecating attitude of its residents; or that, though the second largest city in New York State, it was economically depressed, encased in the strangling memory of its once glorious, industrial past. Buffalo was, she'd concluded, a city without an ego. New York City, on the other hand, constantly reinvented itself. Not even 9/11 had tarnished its verve, its swagger.

Zen studied the person running toward her from Lenox Avenue, grinning and waving. Only the face looked familiar. Jules slowed down, caught a breath, shouted out, Zennie!
Zen gaped at the person standing before her in the gray fedora. Jules?
Jules hugged her. You look amazing.
So do you, Zen said. Love the hat.
Thanks. I thought I'd dress up for you, Jules said, I wore my best tie.
I'm flattered, Zen said.
They walked into the park making small talk past the lake and the busy playground. Zen let her memory lead them up a winding path to the Conservatory Garden. She hadn't visited it in years. An explosion of colorful perennials and succulents overlooked the lake.
My grandmother used to bring me here when she came up in the summer. She loved flowers, Zen said. She always told me stories about flowers. She indicated a bench and sat.
I remember Ezrah. Jules sat next to Zen. I always thought she was sexy.
As I recall, you had a thing for older women. You still do?
Jules looked at Zen. I'm not into fixed categories. Obviously.
Jules sounded offended. Zen was immediately sorry. She was glad to see Jules.
When they were younger, she'd thought there was something familiar about Jules, something familiar between them, something she felt deeply but didn't have words for. But there'd been fifteen years between those summers in Shadow, North Carolina and now. Was Jules a he? Or a she, then? What was Jules now?

After a moment, Zen said, what should I call you?
Listen to what I call myself.
I mean—
I know what you mean, Jules interrupted, then took a breath. I have my own pronoun.
I'm a bn. Jules pronounced the word the way Ruby and Ramses always did.
To Zen it sounded like "being."

They fell silent, each gazing out at the lake, at the lone boat with its two passengers gliding over the lake's green-brown surface.
Jules took off bn's hat, fanned. Nice spot, bn said.
Zen nodded in agreement, inhaled. Fragrant. I feel Ezrah here.
I waited for you that summer. You never came back.
Wayland cremated Ezrah, Zen said. On his mother's property. I couldn't handle that then.
I heard something about that, much later, I'm sorry Jules said.
Waited, then said, when I was in college I wrote a poem for you.
I didn't know you were a poet.
I'm not. Want to hear it?
By all means.
Jules reached into a back pocket, took out bn's wallet and extracted a folded, worn piece of paper, unfolded it and read, "my heart orbits from a distance, she has beads on her hips, she is afraid I will find her."
Zen laughed. It's a sweet poem but I don't think it's really about me.
Okay, it's not, Jules admitted. But you inspired it. Then, grinning, said, you still love me. I can tell.
I do not. You still crazy, Zen said. Laughed again. Felt a stirring.

They decided to stroll through the park some more. Jules talked about college and getting an MBA in North Carolina, leaving there, arriving here; how a small bundle of savings and some loans bought the brownstone and the bar.
It sounded exciting to Zen. She'd lived with her mother through college. She'd gone to graduate school in Buffalo because she hadn't gotten into Berkeley. She'd chosen a field of study, a profession, that seemed conventional, safe.
They walked for some time before they came to one of the park's many footbridges.
Its gothic arch spanned a bridle path underneath. The limbs of trees on either side of it were full with lazy, bright green leaves.
Jules and Zen were half way across it when Zen felt a series of shivers.
The bridge became an unpaved street, and they, as Mary 3 and Trickster, scurried close to its shadows.
At once, Mary 3 stopped, sensing the night. She shoved Trickster into an alley. There, flattened against the side of a building, they waited; their eyes darting back and forth, listening to the

hammering of feet approaching.
A ragtail band of men with guns, torches, and oil lamps marched
past them. The men shouted and banged on the doors of houses and shops along the street.

Mary 3 and Trickster slipped behind several houses unseen.
They ran in the opposite direction.
They headed for the powder house. To set it ablaze was also part
of the plan. They reached the woods adjacent to The Common.
A caravan of horse-drawn wagons careened into the clearing. A
mob of colonists followed them. Silently, Mary 3 and Trickster
sunk neck-deep into the swamp at the clearing's edge. Watched.
Some of the wagon drivers snatched the captives by their clothes
and hair. They pulled them from the backs of the wagons,
dragged them before the jeering crowd. One of the captives spat
at his captor. His face was sullen. There was a rope around his
neck, his chest, the handless stump of one arm.
One of the drivers shouted, behold citizens, what is left of the
rebels!
Their leaders have abandoned them! shouted another.
Killed themselves, lest they be made to surrender, said the young
man who'd been spat at. His eyes flitted about.
We will break those we have flushed out, said the constable
John William Clark. Then he grabbed the black woman closest
to him. He untied her and commanded her to stand in front of
a tree. He bellowed, name the others and you will go free! Name
them or die!
The woman stared at him.
Then he aimed his musket and shot her in the chest.
Return to your homes, Constable Clark instructed the onlookers.
These will be tried and punished. There will be order, he assured
his neighbors. There will be control.
The crowd dispersed. The wagons thundered away.
The captives were dragged through the street.

Some time later, Mary 3 and Trickster crawled out of the swamp. Others, also hidden,
followed behind them. They crept toward
the dead woman. Surrounded her body.
She had not been one of them but she was known to them:
She arrived in the colony on a ship from Africa only two years
before.
An Englishman bought her for his wife at a slave auction on
Wall Street.
She spoke little and her mistress assumed she was dumb.
She was forced to cook, clean, wash, carry water, and go to market
for food. She was beaten, sometimes, for no other reason than
that she was belong-to.
On Sunday mornings, she carried and attended to a foot stove
with burning coals, so that her mistress's feet would stay warm
in church.
The Englishman and his wife called this African Elizabeth.

Among her kind she was known by her name. Eyabo.

The whites of Eyabo's eyes were still showing. Trickster bent down and closed their lids. Then one of the men carefully picked Eyabo up into his arms. Carrying her body away, the rebels, led by Trickster and Mary 3, hidden by a world unseen by the colonists, slipped through the cracks in the colonists' illusions and headed toward the outskirts of the colony. To the place known as Negros Land.

❄ ❄ ❄

Caesar, the carpenter's assistant, built the coffin of stolen tacks
and wood.
His wife Sarah, Mary 3, and some of the other women washed
the slain woman's body. They sung to her spirit, for its safe journey
to the ancestors' world.
They wrapped Eyabo's body in a shroud held together at the
head with tiny copper pins.

Then the men lowered her into the plain wooden box.
Before the lid was fastened, Simon de Congo turned her head to the east.
The men carried the coffin to the Burying Ground. Trickster let out a penetrating prayer for the dead. The others joined in, their ritual cries sharp, bruising the hills surrounding them, bruising the surface of the freshwater pond nearby, the empty road leading back, bruising the sleep of colonists; especially that of Constable Clark, who worried as he slept he lacked the manpower to watch their every move, to enforce the colony's laws against the will of the Africans.

FLESH:

There are openings in that we call flesh.
We call the openings in flesh, pores.
Minute orifices; vents.
Time, too, has pores,
openings in its flesh; vents.
Through which we cross into
our multiplicities, lives
happening at the same time.
In some moments, we are conscious of these lives:
dreams, nightmares, visions, hallucinations, reincarnations.
Hauntings.
We have a need for them.
They have a need for us.
In other moments, consciousness isn't critical to need.
Though time has needs, just as humans have needs.
In such moments, co-evolutionary moments, time and humans
advance their own needs.
Alter each other.
Trade points of view as subject, as object,
of the other's desire, of the other's will.
And which of the two is subject, which is object
is of no particular significance.

ALEXIS DE VEUX's work includes poetry, children's literature, plays, essays and journalism as well as two award-winning biographies: *Don't Explain: A Song of Billie Holiday* and *Warrior Poets: A Biography of Audre Lorde.* She is also an activist recognized for her lifelong contributions to a number of women's and literary organizations. Her work is defined by two critical concerns: making the racial and sexual experiences of black female characters central, and disrupting boundaries between forms.

RACHEL GUIDO DEVRIES

Becoming Elder

When you have no more uncles
to lean on or cook with or argue with
at holidays meals, no more commari,
no aunts, no feisty old women telling you
what to guard against, what to watch out for,
what to do with your men, your women, your kids,
your sauce, your life, your soul, your heart

No more stuffed artichokes, no braciole the way
Mamma made it, no more obligatory visits
to the tables of love and fury, no more kids who'll
remember a thing you know, no more language
in gesture of shoulder and chin, no more laughter,
no smoke, no poker games, no macaroni, no gravy,
no ricotta pie, no more wounded hearts, no secrets
tumbling like fists pummeling the air, no more sobs
long stranded in throats bulging with rage and love,
with disappointment, with pride, no more rich, raspy
cigarette voices, no one to blame, no one to praise,
no one to see, no one to know how old you've become,
or how you've failed or succeeded, no one to tell
how much you miss what you swore you would forget.

Brother Poem

What cells are left I rub against my chest,
your big Yankees' tee now what I sleep in,
often, and those the nights when you appear
beside my body. Your stubbly chin, your
cheek on mine, your hand upon my elbow,
and then your baby cheek I brushed with all
my love. So small and tender, always, but
inside your frame where you would not be seen.

Sometimes I make myself recall your laugh,
its occasional booming joy, the boy
you were. I called you mine.

I come upon myself all full of tears,
not dreaming. I'm roaming through our years
remembering you. I welcome you, cell to cell.
I'd like to tell you that you're safe, and I am too.
Curl up your lonely self and feel just love.
It must be lovely to hold that kind of faith,
to picture you somehow above, in these blue heavens,
your soul set free. Awaiting me. No sorrow,
no need, and no desire.

                                        Earthbound,
I hold my hands to catch some rain. I dig
the springtime trowel into muddy earth, see how
dirt clings under nails, fills each crevice on my palms,
and so we join. Perhaps like this we meet, just here,
where I press my lips to warming earth.

Missing Jersey

Gone the small gentle hills of North Jersey,
the fall lifting off the forest floor,
needles of pine alive and breathing. October
and love and pathos in blooming colors
along the paths. We were young.
We held hands. We strolled along

•

Gone the simple mornings in the oven-heated flat.
Mamma's kitchen, smoke and coffee
and the talking low, we two alone. Gone
too the little brother I could not save.

•

Gone the aunts and eggplants, the sexy talk
six sisters loved. Dark heads and cigarettes
and laughter only women know. I listened.
All our black eyes glisten across the table
and the years. What I know best, I learned
right there. Five bucks among them always
would be shared.

•

Gone the uncles and their boyhood tales, their
army lives, their wounded hearts, their numbers
running, their perfect ties, their haircuts,
and their rights. Served from table to bed. Still,
their smooth shaven cheeks and Old Spice linger alive
behind the doors age opens.

•

I forget about the violence, some mornings
alone. Forget the whine of belt, the words
that will forever sting. Some mornings
it all softens: a sprawl of time with rules

and secrets and fears, and under all was love,
distorted and confused, but love the same.
In Jersey, the place I miss, and where I imagine
nothing has changed.

RACHEL GUIDO DEVRIES collection of poems, *Gambler's Daughter,* (Guernica, 2001) was a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Award. Her poetry collection, *How to Sing to a Dago* (Guernica) appeared in 1996. Her novel *Tender Warriors* (Firebrand Books, 1986) is still in print. She has been anthologized in several collections and her first children's book, *Teeny Tiny Tino's Fishing Story* (Bordighera Press, 2007) was the winner of the Paterson Prize for Book for Young People Award. For several years she was fiction editor of IKON magazine

KATHY ENGEL

I Will Not

write about the killing of Troy Davis or
the years he claimed innocence so many times
the words fell from his mouth like drops of honey.
Not about the last minutes when he said
may God have mercy on those who do this thing, or
the penultimate breath as he claimed
innocence. I will not talk about the
executioner or the cheering crowds,
the family he left behind, breakfast
unfinished at the table, the excavation of their
daily yearning, each bite of bread a reminder. I
will not speak about innocence or the sound
of his voice through incarceration, the look in his eye,
the shirt he wore the day he was hauled in or the one
he was instructed to wear on any given court date – was
it prison-ironed, plaid, blue? I will not write about
innocence. I want to look back and write about the day
the killing stopped, how we as animals rose

after June Jordan and Suheir Hammad

Inaugural

Now is the time
to be generous,
now is the time to be brave
and patient,
to watch how the dove
tails up, blinks, sits
tight over invisible eggs.

Now is the time to protect,
a time to risk,
now is the time to mother,
to become curious,
now is the time to father,
the time to be a child
and hear the world's
breath striped as a zebra,
now is the time to caulk blood
and worship water.
The time to build,
to speckle and spackle
enough love to keep the species,
all the species
going, now is the time to listen
to a porcupine,
follow a lizard,
now is the time to undress,
now is the time to redress,
dance to the music of our youth
as if we're still young
accepting our turtle bodies.
Now is the time to hear our children's music.

Now is the time to grow garlic
and give it away,
to see time as a lover,
acrobatic, responsive, torso
familiar as a soft vowel.

Now is the time to remember when you were an animal
lying in a field in the warm horse snort,
newly cut grass turning to hay.

Now is still the time to lie down in the street
to stop war and also construct new
consonants out of carrots, cement, unknown
particles, and compassion, shielding that
word in the body as the closest companion,
the time to build windows
ushering edible light and to mirror
the bonobo.

Now is the time to knock on the door of
a neighbor whose mouth and hands
you've never studied as she speaks her
map of days from the corners of her mouth
to the opening of her palm,
a time to inhale the swallows' cacophony
in treetops and imagine the listening
of a whole world.

KATHY ENGEL, for over thirty years, has been a cultural worker, writer, educator, producer and consultant in the meeting place of imagination and social justice/change. Her books include *Ruth's Skirts* (IKON, 2007) and *We Begin Here: Poems for Palestine and Lebanon* co-edited with Kamal Boullata. (Interlink Publishing, 2007). In 2012 she was Featured Poet at the Split This Rock Poetry Festival, and a fellow at the Hedgebrook Women Writers Retreat.

"I Will Not" was published in *Split This Rock* online Poem of the Week, and "Inaugural" appeared in *Foreign Policy in Focus*, online and *Spare Change.*

JANICE GOULD

SIXTEEN

At sixteen, I fell in love with an "older woman" eight years my senior. We had met on a pack-trip into the Sierra Nevada. She had been to college, was still taking classes, had been briefly married and divorced. She wore sandals like Joan Baez and had travelled in Mexico. Her long brown hair she twisted into a bun. She lived in a farmhouse in Oregon, but like me had grown up in Berkeley. We corresponded almost daily, her letters written in deep red ink on a narrow-ruled yellow pad. I depended on those missives, which, as I think of them now, were wise, helpful, funny, and informative. I stored them in the shoebox my crepe-soled hiking boots had come in.

My friend was a visual artist. From time to time she sent me a silkscreen or drawing she had made, but she also included poems copied out in her elegant printed hand. Once she sent me a reel of recorded songs she liked—Richard Dyer-Bennet singing, "So We'll Go No More A-Roving," the Fariñas doing "The Falcon," and Gale Garnet crooning, "Brandy, Leave Me Alone." I quickly learned to play this music, working out an accompaniment on my guitar.

It impressed me that she had studied Spanish and Italian, so because of her I read Unamuno and Lorca, but also Prévert and Ionesco, Millay and Frost, Rexroth's translations. Before they understood how I loved my friend, my parents allowed me to spend a couple of weeks with her during the summer before my senior year in high school. I took the train to Eugene—a long and exciting adventure—and when I arrived at the depot, there she stood in a seersucker dress and dark glasses, having driven to the station in a borrowed blue Volkswagen "bug" with a sunroof.

We had a grand time driving that little car to Silver Falls and McKenzie Bridge, but we took the big car, a 1955 Studebaker, to the fossil beds in John Day, and to beaches along the coast. We bounced along back roads into logged over forest camps. She taught me how to develop film and print photographs—we had similar cameras—and the rudiments of how to play a five-string banjo in the Pete Seeger style. I read books and practiced music while she was at class, and I played with the baby goat, Godot, and with the teenaged neighbor girl who came down the hill to visit every now and then. Sometimes my friend and I would take the motor scooter out after dinner—and ride around the hills west of Eugene. I memorized the land then, and could find my way back to that farmhouse even today.

I don't remember at what point we first kissed or held one another. Perhaps it was the night, sitting by an open campfire, I spelled out in pine needles the words "te quiero." As

the years wore on—perhaps three at most—my feelings remained as intense as when I first met this woman. But I could tell no one, not even my best friends. The word "gay" was not part of my vocabulary. I was afraid of the word "homosexual," still more of the word "lesbian." No term seemed to fit what I felt or knew to be true, the very normalcy or naturalness of my delight in and devotion to my friend. Not wanting others to know how I felt, I cut myself off from my girlfriends and, as much as I could, from my family. My grades, already low, slipped; I hardly bothered to study. I stopped speaking to anyone.

One day my mother discovered my stash of letters. That afternoon, Mom stood in my room, arms akimbo, and repeated in a voice thick with disdain the intimate lines written to me by my lover. "Maybe we should get you a sex change," suggested Mom.

When I confessed to my friend how things were at home, she decided to end our relationship. She feared that the emotional abuse would lead me to commit suicide. She did not want to be blamed for it. I understood this. But there was no one to whom I could confide my grief, my utter despair.

Janice Gould (1949-2019) grew up in Berkeley, California. Her tribal affiliation is Koyoonk'auwi (Concow). Named the Pike's Peak Poet Laureate for 2014-2016, Janice was recognized with a "Spirit of the Springs" Award. Her poetry has also been honored by National Endowment for the Arts, the Astraea Foundation, the Pikes Peak Arts Council and the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, where she was the Native American writer in residence in 2012. Her most recent book of poetry, *Doubters and Dreamers,* was a Colorado Book Award Finalist and a Milt Kessler Book Award Finalist. Janice was an Associate Professor in Women's and Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, where she directed the certificate in Native American Studies.

GALE JACKSON

Migrations.

1.
Below skirts of light from a dying sun
you meet me where star dust
becomes a river
on the floor of a room
in a war time tenement building
on a street in a town on an inlet island
called home
in the Natick language
a place once
overrun by Dutch and English
mercenaries
and renamed New York's Brook land.
Here
the great great grand daughter of an African woman,
clothed in the waning light of a distant sun
lay in her lover's arms.

2.
The great great grand daughter of an African woman
in a tiny apartment
in a city sprawled from a town
build on the bones of a hunting ground
or on a morning rush hour bus
traversing a mountain in a sea resounding
the names of Carib and Arawak
warriors, farmers, fishers and artisans who first
called this place *Xamayca*
home
before pirates, Italians, Spaniards, then
English speaking fame and fortune seeking migrants
who knew no borders of language
drew a noose of fire, gun powder and words
around us. A woman traveling between places renamed
Hanover and Westmoreland
her small family farm and a job as a hotel receptionist
this woman or the other
rising from her lover's arms in Brooklyn
a woman blinks across lines of image and text

in the international news
takes the cover story photograph
of a wounded baby
in a hospital in Kenya
into her arms
and weeps.

3.
The great great grand daughter of an African woman reads and weeps
holding the photograph of a baby, barely a toddler, her dandelion stem neck
no bigger than the palm of the woman's hand holding her below a crescent moon of scar
that runs, curled below her hairline, from little ear to little ear where her small head
was hacked by a machete. A baby called Rahema and her mother by the grace of embrace
in the international edition reports of "ethnic warfare" where "neighbor kills neighbor"
over "borders" in a town called Malindi, in a far distant country called Kenya

A place also, not so long ago, overrun by Brittan's imperial invasions
land grabbers and cartographers, thieves and kidnappers, who only recently
in this same publication, have apologized for their long reign of terror in Kenya
posthumously absolving the alleged crimes of those who would not be dispossessed
the maroons called Mau Mau, their son Jomo Kenyatta, and his defense attorney,
Dudley Thompson, a man from the Jamaican parish of Westmoreland, who
fought the horror and are now among the ancestors. There. In Kenya.
The place, some say, where "man" was born.

And the woman, grandchild of forced migrations, of Kenyatta and of Dudley Thompson
in a place called Jamaica or a place called Brooklyn, keens. Dear God. "Dear Editor"
What the hell is a border?
And what line is more sovereign
than the contours of a child's being?"

4.
A trail of tears blurs the topographical demarcations
Malindi, Nairobi, New York, Brooklyn, Westmoreland, Kingston
each place name marking centuries of history and geography rising
and converging in national and international news reports emperors
are devouring their people, corrupt officials, priests, senators and generals
in Damascus, Albany, Washington and Azerbaijan, strut their hour of tragedy
and shame for the camera, the global rich and famous fly between drama
and metropolis, between brutal assaults on women, in Johannesburg, Delhi, Utah
and perpetual war in the redrawn borders of North Africa.

What a strange creature we are poisoning our drinking water thirsty for love dying
for love killing our children naming stolen land for the places we left behind or the owners
dispossessed in Arizona closing the gate behind the wolf in Mississippi, in Texas, another
state killing by lethal injection police helicopters hover over a residential street in Brooklyn

another unarmed seedling obliterated by an unmanned drone and assassins killing boys
bearing candy and stones claiming innocence and self defense in Florida, Jerusalem, Gaza,
Lebanon explosion, implosion Port au Prince, Kingston, war and rumor, Pong Yang,
Bamako, KarachiCairo, Aleppo, Lahore, Bagdad, Mogadishu, Tunis

A young man's self immolation a blinding sun sweeping through corridors
of grass fed American innocents in oversized sunglasses, illuminates the dungeons
where the imprisoned refuse the jailer's rations, shoots from the mouths of girls
risking young lives to learn in a school room, and those flames lick the eyes
of dark hooded women, pushing shopping carts, collecting bottles for redemption.
They say that the poet who to dared speak was decapitated and thrown into an ancient
river. That river flows from ocean to ocean into the mouth of the Hudson
and the Nightingale continues to sing.

5.
In local news on the far east end of this inlet island
the Shinnacock alone hold a small patch of reservation
Canarsie, Lenape, Manhattan hidden within generations
of Africans buried below the city grounds watching
one and then another yearning band of travelers move on
migrants from a killing Southland, Irish, Jamaicans, Italians
Barbadians, Sudanese, Nigerians, cornered or pushed out
by waves of real estate speculation and European discoverers
returning. Still the Russians are here and coming, the Yemen
Tibetans, Tai, Jordanians and Albanians, "majority" out numbered
the Anglo slum lord don't know where he came from
fires the old Puerto Rican super who replaced the Cubans
and hired a young Dominican who appears late at night
car double parked as he goes from property to property collecting trash.
Absentee owned, itinerant maintained, a hundred year old structure
sags under the weight of dust and neglect.
Dead chicks fall from precarious nests in the stone face. The Ukranian super
next door complains bitterly. The Mexican plumber shakes his head.
"The owner is cheap he won't pay for good work."
The great grand daughter of an African woman watering her plants
at midnight peers into darkness.

6.
Day becomes evening becomes morning. Mexico City, Ramalla,
in a town, this side of a victor's spoils drawn in the sand across sections
of an ancient nation lost in the wars that consolidated a rapacious
new one, the great great grand daughter of an African woman packs
quickly for a long planned journey, wakes her children, or does not, kissing
them, and follows a well known secret path from her town to the border
a new life, or death by suffocation, to be found in the crossing.

A city arises from a mirror lake. A plumbed serpent marks the spot.
Here the restless may rest. We who have walked the long arc of justice.
Welcome home to this home so long ago stolen under the hail of gun powder.
Under skirts of light from a dying star someone is being born, someone is kicking at the gates of stone and bone, someone is singing, someone is a rocking a baby who will not be silenced.
We embrace.

GALE JACKSON, the author of *Put Your Hands on Your Hips and Act Like a Woman: Song, Dance, Black History and Poetics in Performance*, *MeDea, Suite for Mozambique, Bridge Suite: Narrative Poems Based on the Lives of African and African American Women*, and *A Khoisan Tale*, has appeared in numerous collections and journal publications including *The African American Review, Freedomways, Callaloo, Artist and Influence, Ploughshares, and Essence*. She edited the *Collaborative Voice: Art in a War Time* anthology (CollaborativeVoice@Goddard.edu) and co-edited *Art Against Apartheid: Works for Freedom*. She is currently serves on the MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts faculty at Goddard College, as storyteller in residence at The Hayground School, and as facilitator of the "Poet in the House Collaborative" with public school students, and has been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for her work in African American history and griot traditions.

HETTIE JONES

MINOR SURGERY

Mrs. Thompson had hold of her middle daughter's feet, which were cold. She moved closer, hugging them to her side, and managed to tuck one under her left arm. But when she put her two warm hands around the other it felt so familiar she was momentarily surprised, as though having unexpectedly come upon another naked limb of her own. Even the texture of the skin was so like. She turned and stared as if to corroborate what touch had told her, but looking at it then, encountered his foot, saw once more the shape and arch of the father of the child.

Briefly but as always she gave in to memory, and her mind leapt with images that would put him at this event. Mrs. Thompson saw them all in an instant and made them fade just as fast. She went back to rubbing the feet she loved—which became once again themselves, as the child was inevitably not either parent but her own self—and turned her attention once more to Mrs. Weinberg, the pleasant-faced, fiftyish nurse at the front of the room.

"Look, we're all human," Mrs. Weinberg was saying matter-of-factly, in the middle of her lecture on birth control. "But we're also all different, and it's up to you to find the method you can live with, and stick to that."

The girl in the next bed was staring in a bored way at the ceiling. Her boyfriend reclined beside her, caressing her thigh. She raised a hand.

"Yes?" said Mrs. Weinberg.

"How long before I can get another IUD?"

Mrs. Thompson resisted the sympathetic, bitter laugh that rose in her throat. If the one the girl already had hadn't prevented her pregnancy, perhaps a different one might. It had happened before. But clearly she was sticking to the one method she could live with, even if it hadn't worked.

"How many other people here got pregnant through birth control?" Mrs. Weinberg asked without preamble.

Mrs. Thompson's daughter raised her hand. "Diaphragm," she said with a rueful little smile, then lay back, looking tired and only half avoiding her mother's worried frown. Several weeks before, when they had first discussed the problem, and Mrs. Thompson's company had been requested for this trip, she had said, offhandedly, "When people get pregnant with a diaphragm it's usually from not using it." But her middle daughter's eyes had turned angry and she had scoffed, "Are you kidding? I'm not *like* that." And Mrs. Thompson had dropped the subject with another offhand response, a shrug, because she knew that she herself had been, at one time, like that, incautious, hating it so.

Another of her daughters had admitted to it. Said, self-deprecating and disgusted, "But I only fucked up *once*."

"Once is all it takes." But she had been reminded not accused, and thinking of it Mrs. Thompson bit her lip in rage and sorrow now, recalling that one collapsed asleep in a public park, waiting, waiting for it to be over and done with.

But this one was to be fast. Except the doctor—who else?—was late. Mrs. Weinberg was using the time to run a group, Mrs. Thompson could see, and she was good at it. Exuding good humor and reassurance, she had produced a cup of coffee for Mrs. Thompson, and had her patients undressed and in bed in a matter of minutes. They were all now drinking orange juice, and on a first-name basis.

"Yuriko, were you using any birth control when you got pregnant?" Mrs. Weinberg asked, speaking slowly and raising her voice a bit in the hope of making herself understood. The Japanese woman to whom the question had been addressed sat up in bed saying "Pardon? Pardon? I don't understand," but smiling pleasantly. A mother of two, in her thirties, she was apparently unworried. After a few more tries Mrs. Weinberg gave up the question, as she had several others, and made a note to ask this also of Yuriko's husband, who spoke English but had declined to sit in the hospital room where now four patients lay, in a row in their snap-at-the-back gowns, awaiting, on this bright May Thursday, that which was called, in what Mrs. Thompson saw as a typically ironic euphemism, "Minor Surgery."

Mrs. Thompson's middle daughter's feet were, she knew, too cold for comfort. At last it occurred to her that she could remove her own socks and place them on the feet of her daughter. She bent to untie her sneaker, disgusted with herself for not having thought of this sooner, and thinking again, "Minor Surgery."

Her daughter had used the term earlier when Mrs. Weinberg approached them in the waiting room, where they sat huddled together sleepily, the first arrivals. The patient was supposed to have a light breakfast, so after rising at dawn and driving to the hospital they had gone to a local store and then eaten in the car, and then, not quite sure of where they were supposed to be, had come up ahead of time. Mrs. Weinberg had looked from one to the other and Mrs. Thompson's daughter had spoken first. "Thompson, for minor surgery," she had said.

But the authority in the young woman's tone (which was all Mrs. Thompson really heard as it gave her such pleasure), did not take away the remaining question from Mrs. Weinberg's gaze, which returned to Mrs. Thompson and rested there. "And this is my mother," her daughter said, seeing, and on top of, the problem.

Mrs. Weinberg's welcoming smile broadened. "Oh I was wondering, I didn't—" Mrs. Thompson interrupted her with a patient cold smile that she had learned how to use to deal with other people's confusion when confronted with herself plus child or children, who were all different shades.

But Mrs. Weinberg, to Mrs. Thompson's interest and relief, didn't, like some, succumb to embarrassment and fumble around to cover it up. "I can't tell you how much it means to me to see a mother here with her daughter," she said, showing them into the then empty room.

Now her words, as she repeated this sentiment, caught Mrs. Thompson with a sock in her hand. "It's still uncommon, even though everything's legal, to see a mother with her child. Here anyway," Mrs. Weinberg said, this time for the benefit of the other three patients and to extend the range of the discussion, which was floundering.

Mrs. Thompson looked up to find all eyes on her, expectantly. But she thought seeming unusual or heroic might divert too much attention to herself, and she suspected this might embarrass her middle daughter, of whom she was exceedingly fond. So she said,

with a smile, "Well, thank goodness things are different than they used to be, we're at least here," and turned to her daughter's bare foot.

There was then a sudden and prolonged rapping at the door and Mrs. Thompson watched the patients all relax into their pillows, relieved to be resting silently and ignored for a moment, as plump and efficient Mrs. Weinberg bustled to deal with the interruption. Which proved to be a young couple for whom there was no bed. But again Mrs. Thompson had a chance to admire not only Mrs. Weinberg's intelligent and calm cheerfulness, but her resourcefulness as well, for she soon had the new arrival gowned and ensconced in a large overstuffed chair. Crowded in with this girl was her lover. They snuggled down, making an easy adjustment, wriggling and giggling until they had it all right, whence they appeared, to Mrs. Thompson's concern, like a pair of pretty doll babies put out for display. "I know that girl," her daughter said sotto voce, and as she raised her other foot to be clad she wiggled her toes at her mother. Well misery loves company, Mrs. Thompson thought, and then chastised herself mentally for the sarcasm when after all that was nothing but true. And in this instance particularly, the usual words of comfort consisted in naming who else it had happened to. True confession time for real.

Mrs. Weinberg obviously had similar thoughts and still intended to discourse on them after the arrival of the new couple, whom she was now introducing. "And this is Mrs. Thompson," she said beaming, and then not quite repeating herself, said: "It's a wonderful thing to see a mother here with her daughter. That's hardly ever so, and I hope it's a trend."

Mrs. Thompson looked up. "I like seeing the men," she said, and then half regretted the remark because she wasn't sure she actually did. This hadn't anything to do with her daughter's friend, who though not with them was aware and concerned. But she had wanted in some way to include the two present, who seemed at once loving and attentive as well as embarrassed and uncomfortable and guilty and still vaguely extraneous despite everything, which of course made each one defensively sexy. She felt unexpected pity for them, and generosity, and pleasure when both smiled at her remark.

Still the presence or absence of a man among all those here increased some ambivalence Mrs. Thompson could not help feeling. She looked at the lone young woman in the bed near the window, who had a book she read in from time to time. At the foot of her bed was the chair with the beautiful children entwined in it. Mrs. Thompson saw the set of the lone girl's face, and thought of herself. Had she too appeared that way once, that first time, so quietly unwavering, so outwardly unaffected and calm. But no, that couldn't have been, for though it was only the sight of his face she could remember, the pull and taste of tears came back to her, as still in her mind he sat, young, thin and forlorn, his familiar cropped head bent, in the bus terminal, occasionally lifting his eyes to the window, as if hoping that at the last minute she'd get off.

Mrs. Thompson rested her cheek against her daughter's feet, dispelling the image. Mrs. Weinberg was looking at her. "It's a question of choice and timing," the nurse said, and by thus hovering on the edge of rhetoric brought Mrs. Thompson squarely to the present. "Too often we don't see the long run," she said. "The decision to have a baby will also probably come up." She nodded toward Yuriko, to Mrs. Thompson, and then informed them in a satisfied—though not smug—way, that although she firmly believed in abortion she'd had four children herself. One was a nurse at this very hospital, she revealed, adding happily, "And I expect my ninth grandchild next week."

There was a murmur of appreciation round the room—nine!—as if this albeit casual association with such fecundity alleviated the negativism in the air. Mrs. Thompson, who was not thinking of grandchildren, grinned.

"This is not to say you're not making an important decision," Mrs. Weinberg cautioned. "Or that you may not experience certain feelings of loss. But of course part of that is physical. ... " She went on, explaining.

Mrs. Thompson stared at the floor between her now bare ankles and tried to focus on a square of linoleum tile. But only he was there again, outside the dirty bus, and they were twenty-two years old. And then with great tenderness, as though touching the petal of a rose long pressed, she remembered how he had taken her home, to his family doctor, for the swollen, leaking breasts, the bloated belly had taken her by surprise.

And then she had gone to Pennsylvania, because the freedom so recently gained she could not relinquish, though he thought only that she would not have his child. She glanced across at the lone girl, who lay reserved and patient, her fingers holding her place in the book. In Pennsylvania, Mrs. Thompson remembered, there had been shock and concern on the part of whoever had asked the questions. "No one with you? You've come alone?" Some part of the willfulness that others took for courage now rose up in her and flew across the room. She wanted to seize the lone girl by the shoulders, hold her in her arms. But others have done that, Mrs. Thompson thought, lapsing into her own rhetoric, think of all the women who marched, and testified, and died. The Pennsylvania doctor's daughter had died, she remembered. Or so the story went. Suddenly every event of that time came flooding like a river from her memory: the night-before pills, the hotel with its Gideon Bible, a phone call—what had they said?—panic before the needle, gutfire, drugged sleep, grief.

"Marmie!" Mrs. Thompson's middle daughter suddenly whispered. "Mami! Dame jugo! Ah mant chuice!" It was a joke between them.

Mrs. Thompson patted her daughter's leg and reached for the container on the Formica bed table. Mrs. Weinberg had gone to the doorway and was conferring there with someone unseen in the corridor.

"Did you ever have an abortion?" the girl in the next bed demanded suddenly, addressing Mrs. Thompson in an accusing petulant way. Her boyfriend stared interested and hostile. Demanding acknowledgement of the sins of the fathers, Mrs. Thompson thought briefly and inaccurately, with a quick, hesitant glance at her middle daughter, as if for permission to speak. But that one's eyes were also amused and waiting. I know you didn't abort me, she seemed to be saying.

"Well yes," said Mrs. Thompson, and then searched her mind for some story they could appreciate. "I went once to this famous doctor," she said. "He was kind and charged very little, $25 I think, but he had to practice way out in rural Pennsylvania where the authorities wouldn't find him. Or maybe that was the only place where he could afford to pay them off sometimes," she added, speculating, "because he spent a lot of time in jail."

"But anyway, it was a small town, with only one main street, and right behind that the mountains, sharp and sudden and dark." Mrs. Thompson, gesturing, drew the mountains in the air. A lonely forbidding place, she thought. Why was I not frightened? "But as I was waiting for the bus to go home," she continued the story, "a car drove toward me, and slowed down, and it was full of guys—" Mrs. Thompson flashed an amused glance at

the young man. "—and one of them leaned out the window and yelled at me, he yelled, "Oh you must have been a BAAAADDDDDDD GIRL!"

So when Mrs. Weinberg rejoined them they were all laughing. As though she had told them a tale of the Gold Rush, Mrs. Thompson thought. As though it had been that long ago. And why should they not think those times distant, she reflected, as Mrs. Weinberg repeated a few points about the "procedure" they would soon undergo. Why should they not think barbaric and untenable such moral hypocrisy and the danger in it. To say nothing of the pain, of course, she reminded herself, that void surrounded by circumstance. The core of it somehow, yet also, and mercifully, unrecollectible.

She was still thinking of this when a few moments later Mrs. Weinberg's daughter poked her head in the door, and after graciously acknowledging her mother's introductions, informed them that the doctor had at last arrived. He would be with them shortly, she said, so the first patient could now come in and get ready.

"Your companion may come with you, if you wish," Mrs. Weinberg announced to the room, while looking straight at the Thompsons.

Mrs. Thompson, unprepared, turned to her middle daughter with the question. For answer she got a wrinkled nose and an almost apologetic, negative shake of the head. And so it was settled. Mrs. Thompson preferred to let children lead their lives. She would go down to check the car, she told her daughter, since the meter where they'd parked was broken, and get the rest of the breakfast they had left. So she watched as Mrs. Weinberg and Mrs. Weinberg's daughter led away her daughter, the red and green striped socks jaunty and incongruous below the hospital gown. And then after some difficulty finding the elevator, she got to the street.

The sun had warmed the car and the food in its paper bag looked soggy, but Mrs. Thompson took it anyway and was about to go back inside when she noticed a traffic cop and went to explain about the meter. They had a friendly conversation, though not a long one, and so she was taken aback when she reached the hospital room and found her daughter already returned to bed. Mrs. Thompson threw down the paper bag and bent to embrace her, and only then, stepping back, saw the pain.

"Oh it wasn't bad," her daughter said mildly from the middle of a bloodless, disillusioned face. "It was over quicker than I expected and I thought it would hurt much worse." Then she closed her eyes.

Mrs. Thompson's heart contracted and she tried to put what she felt into the squeeze she gave her middle daughter's hand. But though the pressure was returned she knew her sympathy wouldn't lessen anything.

Meanwhile the next girl had had her turn and was carefully helped back to bed. Her boyfriend had been with her, but now he too went to see about his car. "You said it didn't hurt you?" the girl asked of Mrs. Thompson's daughter. "It hurt me a lot."

Her voice was small, as though all the arrogance had been sucked out of her. Along with her uterine lining, Mrs. Thompson thought, and her IUD. Sitting amid all this pain she tried not to move much, and spoke quietly to the girl of home remedies, herbal teas and the like, that might relax her when she got home.

"It was worse than I expected," the girl said reproachfully, with some of the tense anger that seemed to be part of her nature. "It really hurt," she said, and turned away.

"Well yes," said Mrs. Thompson, who heard the hollow sound of her own voice accepting another generation's blame. She too looked away, but only to see Yuriko being

brought in, accompanied by her cheerful, apple-cheeked husband, who stayed to see her in bed and then left again. Yuriko's arms lay like long pale columns outside the covering sheet, and she was staring at the wall.

The lone girl was out in surgery, the couple in their chair were silently and fearfully embraced. Mrs. Thompson couldn't bear to look at any of them, and not knowing where to put her eyes, could not prevent their turning inward to the comparisons. How much better that they are lying here, even if they have to be in pain, she thought, and then could not keep from thinking of the subway platform.

Her friend had taken her to Brooklyn, to the nurse. They had with them one of the children, perhaps the middle daughter now lying here. In the dark, low-ceilinged apartment the procedure was done on a large double bed, its dust ruffle and satin coverlet not quite hidden underneath the rubber sheet. There was no anesthetic, just true grit, a metal probe, and a rubber tube. But there was also the warm, silent room and a sympathetic woman, risking her freedom and her future for $50. Pain was beside the point, yet to be expected. They did not speak of it, or the trembling of her elevated legs. But on the subway platform, when the cramping began in earnest, as the still-inserted tube leaked air to bring about miscarriage, Mrs. Thompson had leaned against her friend. "You okay?" her friend said in a low, worried voice, with an answering pressure of her arm. "I'll be okay," said Mrs. Thompson, who was not thinking, amid the dirt and noise of the old elevated station, under the pale spring sun, that this time she might be one of the ones to die.

Because she had had her children and there was no choice. Yet she could not die either, could only do what she had done. Mrs. Thompson looked once more at Yuriko and imagined the children for whom she was lying there. Yuriko still had not moved.

By now the girl in the next bed had directed her hurt and angry gaze out the window. Her own daughter lay silent and limp. Overriding the sunny room, images of pain crowded Mrs. Thompson's mind. Images of fear. Of hemorrhaging on street corners, of the time the nurse's tube had taken two weeks to do its job.

And before the Supreme Court decision, the doctor's mill in the suburbs of the legal state, where the waiting and recovery room had only a few beds, so most of those recovering had to lie on the floor, while those waiting who could not find space to sit, stood. Their clothing had been taken except for dresses or blouses, and so those who had worn pants were naked below the waist. There must have been twenty-five of them at least, but the one Mrs. Thompson remembered was a southern girl, a young belle as hairless as a ten-year-old, and exhibitionistic about it. She had stood naked but for a skimpy sweater, displaying her shockingly virginal pubes, to everyone's astonishment and no doubt for the benefit of some. But she had been far along, too far for this procedure perhaps, though not too far for the doctor's money, at $100 a pull. Mrs. Thompson, after the familiar unbearable pain complicated by the new, terrifying noise and vibration of the machine, had recovered quickly. But on her way out had encountered la belle, on a toilet. A nurse stood nearby but still the child seemed alone, mascara streaking her cheeks and a pool of terrible memory in her eyes. Mrs. Thompson had stopped to stroke the pretty blond head. "You'll be all right soon," she had murmured, but as the girl nodded, and two large tears welled out of her eyes, Mrs. Thompson could see that the source remained, that memory would hold it, dark and unfathomed amid circumstance, like her own. And she had left the place angry and bitter that even legality could assume the price was pain.

And who is responsible, she thought now, angry again and tired of being always indignant about foams that didn't work and were despicable (like diving into a bowl of whipped cream he had said) and the tasty jelly and rubber baby buggy bumpers that for some women spoiled all pleasure, every ability to work that thing. She went on, raving in her mind, at the pill with its fake pregnancy followed hard by embolism, the IUD of babies and untreatable infection. And still—*still* — two of the five in this room, she thought furiously, and no one even knew about Yuriko.

But Yuriko was married, maybe she made three. Or maybe she and her handsome husband had seized each other one morning between the kitchen and the bathroom, after the children had left for school. And of the others —the remaining two —it had been known, even back then, that there were some who could not deal. "You'll be back," the Pennsylvania doctor's nurse had said to a friend of Mrs. Thompson's some twenty years before. "You'll come back, because there are some who do, and I know them, I know who."

But of what use is sagacity if only to condemn and condemn? Mrs. Thompson remembered the Fox woman, who had told her story to the anthropologists around 1910. She was married young to an older man. We didn't want children, so a woman gave me something to drink, she had said. Some years later, after this husband's death, she married another, drank a different potion, and bore five children before she drank something else. It was all written in plain Indian, opposite the English translation, and it had seemed to Mrs. Thompson that there could have been no reason on earth for her to lie.

But now the arrival of the lone girl interrupted her thoughts again and she watched the nurses put the girl in bed. A ruddy, freckled brunette, her face now was drawn; she seemed older, and dazed. In shock, of course, Mrs. Thompson thought, they're all in shock. The girl sat unmoving at first on the edge of the bed, until Mrs. Weinberg's daughter helped her to lie down.

And here came Mrs. Weinberg herself, puffing a little and with her curly gray hair frizzed some, to check whether Mrs. Thompson's daughter felt well enough to get up, since in the large, world renowned medical center they had given over only this small room and this one good woman, and this busy morning were even minus a bed that the doll children would soon need.

"I'm okay really," said Mrs. Thompson's daughter, and disappeared swiftly into the bathroom with her clothes. After one worried glance at the closed door, Mrs. Thompson began getting herself together. Until suddenly Mrs. Weinberg was there, leaning close across the bed table.

"I wanted to ask you— " and she leaned even closer—"your daughter's—isn't she — black?"

Mrs. Thompson reared back, jolted from the broader direction of her thoughts. "Why yes," she said, with her customary vague hostility, for liking Mrs. Weinberg's work didn't mean she had to accept all her opinions.

But Mrs. Weinberg seemed relieved. "Well, I thought maybe— " She hesitated, then stammered, "I—I just wanted to say"—and then it came out: "My ninth grandchild will be black," she said.

The first thing that came to Mrs. Thompson's mind was "Well I expect all of mine will be honey." And in most instances would have been followed by "Well what of that you wanna fight?" But right in front of her was Mrs. Weinberg's round, kindly face, and there was her good work, and at least she had not said "half-black."

"My son has married a Haitian girl," Mrs. Weinberg explained, before Mrs. Thompson had quite come up with an answer.

"Well then, give them all your love," Mrs. Thompson replied.

"Oh well *that* goes without saying!" Mrs. Weinberg said a little louder, as if tired at last of Mrs. Thompson's suspicions.

So that Mrs. Thompson herself felt, finally, ashamed, having again underestimated this woman, all the while entrusting her middle daughter to her anyway. "Look, the world— " she said by way of apology, with a dismissive gesture, and then laying her hand on Mrs. Weinberg's warm, competent arm, "Let's hope the world will catch up, somehow, eventually …." Yet she wanted to add, harshly, would you have aborted this one, for that reason, would you? She saw once more his face at the bus station, thought of him thinking that. And then, a vision she had long forgotten, the contorted face of her father, weeping, begging her to abort, not what as a woman she had not been ready to have, which was long gone, but the first real baby, the child made, carried, birthed, loved. "Just love them," she said again to Mrs. Weinberg, "there is nothing else you need do."

Unconvinced, with a half-smile, Mrs. Weinberg shook her head, but Mrs. Thompson knew that she would learn the lesson easily and soon. And at that moment the bathroom door opened, and out marched her middle daughter, sophisticated, bemused, and still quite gray beneath her brown. She held the brightly striped socks on high.

"Don't forget to call me if you need me," Mrs. Weinberg said, giving her a hug. "Don't forget your instructions, don't forget your pills."

Then smiling they said their goodbyes, and Mrs. Thompson and her middle daughter spied another elevator down the hall. There they stood, waiting, as the pretty children came from surgery to claim the bed.

Outside, in the brilliant nearly summer morning, someone down the block was cutting grass. They didn't speak but walked slowly, arms around each other's waists. Just that way Mrs. Thompson had also walked with another daughter: silent, supportive, and relieved. But now she was wearier than ever of the problem, warier of failed preventives, and angrily, endlessly aware that their lives, like the lives of all women, still depended on a house of cards that could any day come tumbling, tumbling down.

How long must we wait for what must be done for us! Mrs. Thompson cried in her mind, and though unspoken the words seemed broadcast into the pleasant, warming air.

And whatever her middle daughter picked up of them, her reply, the statement she made, was in any case a testament for those with the only right to life, those already born. She said, in a language they had now perfected, "Thank you for being my mom."

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HETTIE JONES' celebrated memoir of the Beat Scene, *How I Became Hettie Jones*, is widely regarded as a model of the genre. Her poetry collection, *Drive*, was the recipient of the Poetry Society of America's Norma Farber First Book Award. She is the author of twenty-three books for children and adults. She teaches in the New School's Graduate Writing Program and at the Lower East side Girls Club and the 92nd Street Y.

IRENA KLEPFISZ

'67 REMEMBERED

for Khane

In '67 you visited with your sister.
I was in Chicago.   Richard Speck had just murdered
seven nurses.   We were scared.   The war was only
a few days over   and everyone said
how well you and Gitl looked.   Who would
have thought   you'd just come
from a war-torn country
dressed chic   in late '60s fashion
smiling   easy   relaxed
confident   the worst was over?
I still have the photographs.

How different   that war
from that other   in your life:
Siberia   the Germans at your heels
your father chopping trees in the forest.
You learned Russian in the street
spoke Yiddish at home   wrote Polish
in the segregated schools.   You were
a linguist at eight   ready to master
even more tongues   for the sake of survival.

But in '67   you'd already mastered
it all.   You were so relaxed   so easy.
It was a joke   this war
despite the casualties.   It was a joke
how relaxed   you were.

And wasn't I too?   Weren't we all?
Didn't we all glow from it
our sense of power finally achieved?
The quickness of the action
the Biblical routes

and how we laughed over
Egyptian shoes in the sand
how we laughed at another people's fear
as if fear was alien
as if we had known safety all our lives.

And the Bank?
I don't remember it mentioned
by any of us.
We were in Chicago—it was hard to imagine.
But twenty years later
I hear how they picked up what they could
placed it on their backs
how they marched through the hills
sparse coarse grass pink and yellow flowers
rough rocks defying cultivation
how they carried clumsy packs
clothing utensils images of a home
they might never see again.
A sabra told me who watched
their leaving as she sat safe
in an army jeep: it looked no different
than the newsreels at school
of French Belgian roads. It was simple
she said: people were fleeing and
we egged them on.

Time passes. Everything changes.
We see things differently.
In '67 you had not married yet and we all
wondered why never worrying about
marriage laws or rabbinic power.
And now more than 20 years later
you live in Jerusalem ruling
from your lacquered kitchen and sit
in that dream house trapped:
enough food in your mouth
in your children's and enough warm things

for winter (coats shoes woolen stockings
good for Siberia)
and there's no way out no one to call
about a bad marriage. It's simple:
a woman without bruises
your lawyer says there's not much hope
and you accept it:
I can't say I'm happy but
I've got a truce.

Things fester. We compromise.
We wake up take new positions
to suit new visions failed dreams.
We change. Power does not so much corrupt
as blur the edges
so we no longer feel the raw fear
that pounds in the hearts
of those trapped and helpless.
In '67 in Chicago we thought we'd be safe
locking the windows till Speck was caught.
We did not know there was a danger
in us as well that we must remain vigilant
and open not to power
but to peace.

IRENA KLEPFISZ is a poet, Yiddish translator and teacher. She is the author of *A Few Words in the Mother Tongue* (poems), *Dreams of an Insomniac* (essays) and most recently *Her Birth and Later Years* (Poems). She teaches Jewish Women's Studies at Barnard College. “67 Remembered” is reprinted from IKON #14/15 (1994).

JESSICA HELEN LOPEZ

The Bodysmooth Consumer Is A Woman

For we are all factory with smooth metal legs and consumable parts
Necks like smokestacks and Bic blades pink on a frosty Sunday morning
We are sexy consumers and passive violent offenders, sleek credit card swipe and mad jangle of the gold coin rising. We are third world racketeers. The bodysmooth consumer of a first world woman.

We are debt and glory. We are wrinkle free foreheads and frozen crow's feet.
We have no time for time.

For we are hot breath hangover and hot yoga class two for one
so we take our best hung over friend and sip Bloody Mary's post-bliss

For we are all about dancing on barstools and kissing cigarettes into ring shaped smoke.
We are ass shake and bend-over-hos. We are bendable.

For we wear ladders for shoes and tower over our competitors.
We are stealth and young forever.

Praise the artificial breast and its swooning sloshing beauty. The rhinoplasty and the third first world nose job. Admire the toe worship. The bejeweled cuticle. The summer diet. The winter diet.

The spinach puree cleanse. Admire the summer house in the Hamptons. The ski season in the Aspens.

The Mexican maid. The Korean maid. The Honduran maid. The Venezuelan maid.
The breast milk by proxy.

Praise the glitter song. The tiara. The sexy five-year olds on parade. The barroom brawl lyrics and the maddening microwaves and UV lighting. Keep clipping coupons girl. You are almost there.

You are 957 Ways to Turn Him On. You are 101 Recipes for a Skinny Bitch. You are the latest anti-aging technology. You are obsession. You are infatuation. You are beautiful neurosis.

For we are Summer's Eve mask-the-smell make-overs. The polite douche bottle beneath the bathroom sink. The tucked-away tampons. We are hairless bodies and waxed, tucked,

plucked, fucked, goosed, and chemical peel. We are overcrowded mouth and bleached cusped.

This is for all the women whose hearts hum electric.
Whose hearts are shrink wrapped cadavers.
Whose hearts have been deodorized.

We who palpitate with key strokes and Facebook posts. We who stir with caffeinated online purchases. We who gulp pharmaceuticals and green-eyed margaritas. We who haunt drug stores and strip malls.

Go to sleep.

Sleep. Sleep soft.
Sleep hard. All the signs are mounting.
They point to sleep. The mellifluous halo of stillness.
The small explosions behind the eyelids like white static chrysanthemums.

Your middle name isn't happy hour. It isn't Eau de Parfum. You are not your nervous breakdown.

You are 200,000 years of slanted rain. You are Lilith rising, bald and golden-headed baby. You are Thought Woman and a satchel of eggs webbed to your eighth leg. You are the squall and thunderous storm.

Your femur, the longest mile. Your body, anything but smooth, and never a factory.
Never a cog or mechanic fulcrum. Never a this for a that.

We are rough-patch hewn of the fossil. The calcified woman.
We were here first.

Jessica Helen Lopez is Albuquerque's former Poet Laureate. She presented this poem at the Kosmos Factory on Fifth for "an AMAZING arts collaboration" called, "Outside the Margin - *Art for Refugees in Transition,*" at KOSMOS. She is a four-time member of the Albuquerque City Slam Team and also was a member of the 2008 championship UNM Lobo Slam Team. She has been the "Poet-in-Residence" at several New Mexico High Schools. Her poems have appeared in anthologies and small press mags and she was the co-editor of the *Earthships Anthology.* She has a book of poetry *Always Messing with Them Boys* from West End Press, and her new poetry book is *Cunt. Bomb.*

DEMETRIA MARTINEZ

CORY

You wake up one morning to discover that you can roll your r's. You say your name, Socorro, Socorro as you gaze in the mirror like a girl testing her mother's lipstick on the sly. You open the curtain to let in more light then glance around the room. Towels, toallas. Bathtub, bañero. Window, ventana. Two-by-two the words come at you, creatures paired miraculously as in Noah's ark. Soap, jabon. Shower, ducha. Mirror, espejo. Gracias a Dios, you whisper, thanks be to God..

But come to think of it, God has nothing to do with this gift of tongues.

"Enough bitching about not speaking Spanish, Cory," says your husband, Peter, an Anglo fluent in five languages. He sits down at the computer. "I'm going on line."

A day later a package arrives: flashcards for Latinos who grew up hearing the language but not speaking it; the tongue-tied who ace classes but can't ask for directions to the nearest laundromat; the guilt-ridden for whom Spanish is a pre-existing condition that flares up when ordering food at a Mexican restaurant, then recedes when the Margaritas wear off.

For a week the package stays unopened in its brown wrapping on the piano. You look at it, embarrassed, as if it were a sex toy.

"Come on, open it," says Peter.

"Stop telling me how to run my life," you answer, heading to the backyard hammock to watch the sun set. Why did I marry the man, you wonder, flicking a mosquito off your wrist. What did I see in him the night he stood up at the Quaker Meeting House to debut his film on union activists in Oaxaca? Peter, with his goofy ponytail barely rooted to his balding head, sporting a Guatemalan peasant shirt and $125 sandals made of recycled tires. Still, you had to admit the film was brilliant and, thankfully for you, it had English subtitles. And ever since then, you have felt like Peter's English subtitle.

After the sun sets behind the west mesa, you return to the house. Peter has left a note, saying he's at a meeting. You stare at the flashcard package. "This is no way to live," you say, razor blade in hand. You slit the box open. You spread the cards on the kitchen table as if to read the Tarot, terrified of false promises of fluency. A statue of St. Anthony, finder of all that is lost, looks on as you read each word then flip the card over. Stars, estrellas. Flames, llamas. Stones, piedras. The hours pass. You stretch out on the couch and doze. You dream of summers with your bilingual grandma—how English went in one ear, Spanish in the other, mellowing inside you, a beautiful mole of sound.

You wake up and return to your game of linguistic solitaire. At midnight Peter comes home and smells the burnt black beans you've left simmering on low. You're asleep at the table, your head cradled in your arms. Saying nothing, Peter makes you an omelet. Gently, he shrugs you awake and hands you a fork. Next to St. Anthony he sets up a small TV he's rescued from the garage so that you can watch telenovelas or hear the rosary recited in Spanish on the Catholic station. He kisses you on the head then leaves for Brazil.

Night, la noche, turns into day, el dia. Summer, el verano, turns into fall, el otono.

The kitchen table, meanwhile, becomes a country all its own: with Spanish-language newspapers from around the world; grammar books your friend Maritza brought you; and CD's of Cuban music—with printed lyrics—that Flor dropped off. Lupe drills you on common mistakes new Spanish-speakers make, so that you will not say you are embarasada, pregnant, when you mean to say you are embarrassed.

Things begin to happen. When you go for your mammogram, a nurse runs out to the lobby, asking if anyone speaks Spanish. You follow her to a small office. A Mexican woman had misunderstood the doctor's words; she thought she had cancer. You take the chart from the nurse, sit beside the woman and hold her hand. You deliver the happy news. Soon the two of you are glorying in the mysteries of benign cysts and calcium deposits that cloud up an x-ray like the milky-way.

Socorro, succor. Assistance in times of distress, you think, peaceful as your own breasts are being crushed between the metal hands of the mammogram machine.

One day Peter returns from Brazil.

"It's over," you say.

"What do you mean?"

"I've had it up to here. Teaching Shakespeare at a prep school. I've decided to volunteer at Enlace Comunitario. They need some English as a Second Language teachers. It's your turn to get a day job, Peter. It's my turn to live my dream."

"I'll look at the classifieds tonight. Jeez, I thought you were about to ask for a divorce."

"Don't exhale just yet."

"What?"

"No more Cory for short. It's Socorro. All my life I've—."

Peter draws you into his arms. Cory, that dry shrub of a name. floats away as Peter, with a kiss, draws out the succulence of the name you had almost lost.

After making love, you walk with him around the corner to El Bandido. As always you order water, agua, por favor, but this time, without ice, sin hielo. Before, you had only enough words to get half way across a situation, like a car stuck on the railroad tracks. You were unable to cry help in any language that might save you.

A steaming platter of shrimp arrives at the table with tortillas de maiz, frijoles de olla, and pico de gallo. Across from you on the wall hangs an Aztec calendar. "Here's to my other ancestors. We'll study their language, Nahuatl, together," you say, the lip of your wineglass touching Peter's. At last you have discovered the opening in the fence that divides Mexico from the United States, kin from kin, era from era. Tlen titlatoa moyollo? What does your heart say? your ancestors ask. The opening was there all along, at the tip of your tongue.

Hope

In memorium Paul Rudd April 28, 2020

Sometimes the pain
Is so great that the word
Hope
Must be buried
In the dust
Like a dog's
Bone.

So for now
I offer these words
From my land:
Cottonwood,
Parsley,
Fig, Dandelion,
Pink Cosmos.
I offer the
Howl
Of coyotes,
The aroma
Of a bonfire,
And a blue
Egg from the
Chicken coop...

Sometimes the pain
Is so great
That the word
Hope
Must be
Buried
Like a
Dog's bone.

Demetria Martinez is a poet, writer and activist based in La Cienaga, New Mexico. Her books include essays, *Confessions of a Berlitz Tape Chicana*; short stories, *The Block Captain's Daughter*; poetry, *The Devil's Workshop*. Her novel, *Mother Tongue*, is based in part upon her 1988 federal conspiracy trial when she was charged with smuggling refugees part of the Sanctuary movement. She faced a potential 25 years in prison and 1.25 million in fines. Martinez, a reporter at the time covering the movement, was acquitted on First Amendment grounds. She is currently at work on a collection of poetry, "For English Press One (A True Story)."

ANDREA L. MAYS, PH.D.

GENDER THROUGH THE PRISM OF INHERITANCE

The women in my family weren't afforded the luxury of daintiness or blind adherence to mainstream notions of femininity. My grandmother, Laura, raised thirteen children as a single parent after my grandfather died of a heart attack at barely age forty. Laura did what she had to do to feed her family and keep the walls up around them. She cleaned toilets, manned lunch counters, worked at a nursing home, assembled parts at a Zenith factory. She sold Tupperware™ and Amway™. In so doing, she set the example for my two aunts and my mother—the only girls—about what a woman was and could be in the face of mean odds. Laura's girls weren't damsels.

My Aunt Beverly, the middle daughter, started work at Nabisco™ on the cookie line in her teens. She left that shop a forklift driver—the first and only woman—she'd proudly declare, as she tidied her platinum-dyed Pointer Sisters-era Updo, sporting a pencil skirt and 3-inch pumps that put her at an altitude of 6-feet. Her laundered and starched uniform was folded neatly in her oversized purse next to her cosmetics bag.

Beverly was the first woman I ever saw hit a man—back—balled fist, cold-cocked, hard. He didn't raise his hand to her again when he finally got up. She was the first woman I ever saw pull and fire a gun—once while defending her older brother.

Before the term 'cougar' existed, she'd shacked up with a 'boy' a decade her junior—she was maybe 32, and when he gave her reason to doubt him, she put him out of her two-story brownstone.

My Mother, Brenda, the oldest daughter, and Aunt Carol were more conventional, but not entirely so. How could they be? Black working-class women growing up in the 50s and 60s.

My uncles were more like damsels. They were a sensitive, pretty, taciturn bunch—a bit overly concerned about their appearance—clothes, cars, and women. Nearly all kept a good house: cooked, cleaned, and well-polished, having learned under the strict hand of my mother, who also rather unfairly served as a disciplinarian in my grandfather's absence. These uncles also did the jobs Black men were permitted: construction, security guard, The Vietnam War, house movers, house painters, landscapers, and rehabbers.

Long before the terms "Gender Fuck", "Gender Fluid" or "Gender Queer" were affirmed part of the Feminist lexicon, or vernacular culture, these 'elders'—sometimes peers—many close to me in age—imposed and informed what I understand about 'being gendered.' They gave me many a model of gender identity from a broken mold. You see, back then structural inequality didn't allow us the luxury of musing too long on the burdens of normative gendered behavior.

Because these people were Black and poor and striving—nobody thought what they were doing was transformative or transgressive. Nobody thought of them at all—or considered their behavior trans-anything—even when they boldly dressed in drag. They were too busy living and trying to survive, souls in-tact, to be bogged down with trying to describe the muck they were mired in or why.

These women regarded the reality, sure, and kept keeping on. Perhaps in the same way that Sojourner Truth elucidated the racial dimensions of gendered oppression to her White middle-class sisters at the Seneca Falls Convention by simply claiming her womanhood, despite having been worked like a 'man' and regarded as a 'mule' by so-called civilized society.

In middle age, during this period when so much seems dependent on descriptors, I draw on my people and these memories to remind me that my gender-identity emanates from me, not me from it. I feel increasingly less concerned about naming myself, or having others name, reference, or understand my gender expression. I am a queer, Black woman who embraces Wingtip shoes, good scotch, and Tweed vests as readily as I do flowing silk Kimonos, lace bras, a good facial foundation, and a smooth eyeliner pencil. I play basketball on most Saturday mornings in the mild seasons, Chess when I can, and dance alone to Nina Simone in re-mix around the house. Bow ties for me are simply another form of silk scarf.

Very little of this has to do with what the world prescribes for my gender, or age for that matter. I regard these habits instead as accumulations of wealth from the life I have lived, realizations earned in the process, and the people I have been blessed to know. The decades have been generous with pain, and alternately, expanded my capacity for strength and my appreciation for beauty—both necessary to continue in this life. I believe in the dignity of work, the humility of kindness, and the elegance of pearl earrings and Panama hats. The latter are mere accessories that punctuate the story of my gender, more than society's prescriptions do. In this—like my Mother and Aunts before me—I am one of Laura's Girls.

Dr. ANDREA L. MAYS is an award-winning Senior Lecturer in the Department of Africana Studies at the University of New Mexico. Mays is a Mellon Foundation Fellow and Aspen Institute Alumnus who holds a Ph.D. in American Studies and an M.A. in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies. She teaches courses on Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality, Film and Literature Studies.

JULES NYQUIST

Twilight Hour

for Bébé La La *and Jaded Hearts bands at Casa Flamenca, Albuquerque, July 16, 2020.*

It was defiant, that first act
the act of getting there
we noticed the spaced apart polka-dot chairs
flesh overwhelms us, the thought of what to wear

the act of getting there
we clutch our masks
flesh overwhelms us, the thought of what to wear
I stare at her dress

We clutch our masks
the woman who flaunts her cleavage
I stare at her dress
the band sings “don’t run away”

the woman who flaunts her cleavage
where were we when it all shut down?
the band sings “don’t run away”
we carefully chose something to adorn our soft bodies

where were we when it all shut down?
we’re here now, changed
we carefully chose something to adorn our soft bodies
a spider clings to the metal mic

we’re here now, changed
we noticed the spaced apart polka-dot chairs
are we all that spider, clinging?
It was defiant, that first act

Her

in respect to Anne Sexton's 'Her Kind'

I have dressed up in the desert
high heels sinking into sand
fabric billowing home-sewn inserts
catching on yucca blades gone mad
radioactive mountains purr
this woman thing is not a fad.
I have been her.

I have been the other woman
the white praying mantis on your back;
in August, the turtles were my totems
broken hopes, at home stroking my cats
I sat in my car, a voyageur
a woman like that has ice in her hair.
I have been her

I have gone out alone
rising with the roosters, a crow
my strong tongue sings with the bones.
I'm with you sisters, I know
that taste of blood in my mouth, no amateurs,
my mother and my sister-in-law falling from vertigo
I speak with the dead, I have been her.

Oscillation

“All that is solid, melts into air.”—Karl Marx

What is heavy
stays put as a fluctuating earth
undergoes a suspension
of national borders to change
a yellowed letter into a porous light
on-line —a cardboard box of space

antiquated postage stamps disappear into the space
of a digital divide, hard-wired into a heavy
minority status, brought to light
with a planet-wide pandemic unearthing
an ephemeral call to change
a weightless movement of diversity and inclusion

striving for full participation
while billionaires travel privately into space
out-of-touch with change
faded Post-it® notes are heavy
with tasks here on Earth
cubicles filled with fluorescent lights

humans caressing their iPhone glass, a light
transmitting eternal conversations
wrapping webs of energy around the Earth
Google word clouds suspended in space
working from home to avoid heavy
traffic and mandated in-office change

A tender touch can change
a life, a candle in a power outage lights
a feeling of reflection — pauses heavy
resistance to discuss differing opinions
more time to sit under trees on Earth’s

dirt, a forest floor of bark and needles at the hearth.
A comforting touch can change
the narrow garden space

of a city apartment from artificial light
to a metamorphosis of healing function
a tactile encounter weighs heavy—

moonlight falls heavy through a clerestory window
a celestial body dances in the space of that cut-out paper Earth
exchanged for a cardboard box in motion.

Jules Nyquist, the founder of Jules' Poetry Playhouse in Placitas, NM, a place for poetry, writing classes, and readings, in the spirit of play, took her MFA in Writing and Literature from Bennington College, VT. Her latest book *Atomic Paradise,* winner of the 2021 NM/AZ Book Award for New Mexico History, explores growing up in the Cold War living in the Land of Enchantment surrounded by nuclear secrets. Jules' handbook on sestina writing, *The Sestina Playbook*, won the 2021 NM/AZ Book Award for Activity Book. *Zozobra Poems*, won the 2019 NM/AZ Book Award in philosophy and *Homesick, then* was 2018 NM/AZ Book Award winner in poetry. She is co-editor of the Poets Speak Anthology series co-published by Poetry Playhouse Publications and Beatlick Press. More info new website: https://www.poetryplayhouse.com/

MARY OISHI

broken frame

three children clutch their pregnant mother's skirt
this time the explosions, not fireworks,
landing oh so close
boom!   boom!   boom!
how can she protect? where can they run?
in danger/fire/fresh corpse/rubble streets
boom!   boom!
if a bomb falls here
will below ground be a furnace
or a fallen beamtrap
with none to rescue from the horror
from the pain, the stench of burning flesh?

this poem is a graphic picture on a sign
in front of every senator, every candidate
who calls for escalation, for "tough measures"
this is a pro-life poem.

THIS is a PRO-LIFE poem.

he hasn't yet said his first word, just
a few coos but today his eyes are
scanning his mother's face
he sees something's wrong
he doesn't know she chose to
end her last pregnancy
 (to her step-mother's older brother)

she just couldn't bear
her daddy being grandpa and uncle, both
she was a teenager trying to get to know
his new wife's family
but it all went way too far, too fast
alone in the house:
the flattery, the alcohol
her desire to be a part of things.

she had an escort, a compassionate

courageous woman to walk her to the clinic.
she wished she didn't have to make that choice
but she knew it was the right one.

she always knew if she ever conceived in love
she would gladly have the child and
she loves this baby's daddy like life itself
she loves the little miracle
looking up at her with intent brown eyes
jewels amid the rich chocolate of his skin
she loves him more than she can ever tell.
she wants him to grab life, stand tall, be
a good man, maybe be President someday

but this day she thinks skittles and iced tea
she thinks hoodies
she thinks walking down the street
a few days before college
she thinks four hours in his own blood
she thinks I can't breathe, I can't breathe
she thinks of public calls for assassination
images of lynchings in effigy
she thinks of twenty-first century
James Crow Jr. in his suit and tie
on a mission to end voter fraud
she thinks court-ordered end to
affirmative action, to voting rights
charges of reverse racism.

with no friends in high places
she wonders how he will ever
get his foot in the door
even with shoes high-shined
headful of learning

she wonders if her pro-choice sisters
will stand with her now that
she has made this choice,
will they demand her chosen child
have a chance to get through, that he and she
have choices matching theirs?

this poem is a pro-choice rally
in the face of militarized police
by the gates of private prisons
by the broken glass of underfunded schools

by the precincts with single voting machines, long lines

also by the manicured lawns, up the circular driveways
of those who claim not to see color
whose responsibility ended when they voted for a black man
who are so glad to live in a post-racial world

this poem demands all women's right to choose,
ALL women, to really have choice, choices, opportunity
this is a pro-choice poem.

THIS. is a PRO-CHOICE poem.

This is a pro-life/pro-choice poem
looking for a new frame.

Mary Oishi is Albuquerque Poet Laureate Emeritus. She has long believed in the power of art to shine a light on injustice and illuminate a vision of a just society. Lifelong performance and published poet, her poetry collection *Spirit Birds They Told Me* (West End Press, 2011) was reviewed in the Women's Review of Books and she is co-author of Rock Paper Scissors (Swimming with Elephants, 2018), a finalist for the New Mexico Arizona Book Award. Oishi is also a veteran public radio professional and radio personality on KUNM-FM, Albuquerque.

Michelle Otero

The Cheerleaders

I.
November 14, 1960, four
federal marshals drove
a six-year-old girl five blocks
to school in New Orleans.

That morning and afternoon
    and every morning and afternoon,
the road to first grade was lined with
white women waving Bibles and placards
like pom-poms.

At first glance, the child thinks
it must be Mardi Gras.

The cheerleaders
    they called themselves
stood behind barricades. One carried
a black doll
in a wooden coffin.

Looking back, Ruby
Bridges says, "They never saw
a child."

II.
One morning in April, 2014
in Nogales
or Brownsville,
a six-year-old wakes on concrete
in a heap of other boys, dark
limbs tangled in Red Cross
blankets and donated sheets.

The boys from Guatemala City, Tegucigalpa, San Salvador board
buses to Murrieta,
to Dallas,

to Birmingham,
New Orleans,
Las Cruces,
St. Louis,
Springfield—it doesn’t matter
where they go. The cheerleaders
block the buses
wave American flags, as if to say
“Welcome.”

Michelle Otero is the author of *Malinche's Daughter*, an essay collection based on her work with women survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Oaxaca, Mexico. She is a member of the Macondo Writers' Workshop, and her work has appeared in New Mexico Magazine, Brevity, and Puerto del Sol. She is Creative Director of Valle Encantado, an organization promoting sustainable development initiatives in the Atrisco historic core in Albuquerque. She was the Albuquerque Poet Laureate and is also the author of *Bosque.*

MARGARET RANDALL

ART AS INFORMATION:
Parallels From The Sixties to The Nineties

Contemporary interest in the Sixties comes not simply from our periodic fascination with anniversaries - two decades, a quarter century, thirty years - but responds to deeper parallel connections. Now, as then, we are clawing our way out of the strictures imposed by a period of repressive conservatism, dangerous conformity, censorship and its byproduct, self-censorship. Now, as then, socially conscious artists respond with our work, passionately committing our creativity to change. Now, as opposed to then, electronic advances have given those in power more complex weapons against us.

Back when IKON's first series was a clarion voice among the little magazines, independent publishing ventures, cafe readings, exhibits, performances and happenings of all kinds that together defined the Sixties renaissance, the long death chill of McCarthyism had just begun to thaw. Great artists had been silenced by the anticommunist witch hunt, many of them permanently. Others were changed forever, after years of not being able to find work, publish, speak. The consequences of those years for our national intellect and creativity will probably never be thoroughly understood.

When things "get better" most of us tend to breathe a sigh of relief and happily retreat from trying to dissect events or the forces that shape them. How often have Americans massively voted for those whose only solutions are a string of utterly empty promises? It isn't in our nature, our profusion of dime store psychologists tell us, to dwell on how things went wrong or how to make sure they won't again or - more important - the crippling effects such deformations may project into a future tense. The notion that such analysis doesn't come naturally to Americans is most certainly produced and nurtured more intensely by our media images than by any rational look at our experience or by an assessment of our most profound feelings.

The McCarthy-era chill of the Fifties didn't lift of its own accord; the energies unleashed by artists who dared to raise their voices created a dialectic that itself produced the new avant-garde, one that vowed, once again, it would not be silenced. As is true with every struggle to throw off the forces of repression, those who demanded voice and space, those who insisted upon making themselves heard, brought many others into the arena. These pioneers were the men and women for whom the witch hunters reserve such epithets as blatant, vulgar, strident, obscene, belligerent, angry or just plain willful. These artists, in turn, provided context and courage for those to come.

Raw questions also surfaced in our art back then. Were they really any different from those which artists have asked and for which we have sought answers since art exists? In the larger sense, perhaps not. The major issues continue to be integrity,

community, love, fear, death, contradiction, sorrow, antagonism, fulfillment. It's the composition of society, and how we perceive our relationship to it, that changes from generation to generation. The movement from Fifties to Sixties brought with it, among much else, a more open, cruder discussion of the contradictions between societal norms and human need. This new honesty, this willingness to lay bare our innermost landscapes - ugliness, abuse, need, shame, pain, revolt - became a central theme in our arts ("Airing dirty laundry in public... Making things up..." "Lying..." our male-defined elders would say, when much later this search led some of us to write about battery, rape, incest, ritual abuse: the previously protected terrains of a patriarchal society.)

Neither did the Sixties themselves happen in a vacuum. Remember that Ginsburg's Howl battled for its right to print as early as 1956, a precursor to similar struggles over the freedom to publish and read which would be fought later over classics as D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterly's Lover, Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer, and William Burrough's Naked Lunch. (These, of course, are all books by men. Women's creativity and thought were still overwhelmingly absent from the literary canon and only tokenly present on the best seller lists. Black writers were tokens. Gay and lesbian culture was still camouflaged or underground. Great Midwestern poet and novelist Meridel LeSueur tells a story of having to wait twenty years for The Girl to find a publisher. "You couldn't sell a book about a woman protagonist who wasn't a victim," she says.)

The late Fifties produced those courageous women and men who would foreshadow the explosive decade: Beat and Black Mountain poets, The Living Theater, Action Painting, the Happenings and early performance pieces, Merce Cunningham - the list is long and an artist's position as forerunner or disciple may, in retrospect, be a matter of opinion. But by the early Sixties individual talents had once again coalesced into movements. The little magazines were one of their most authentic and enthusiastic showcases.

In New York City, from February of 1967 through the same month in 1969, a magazine appeared which was both within the context of the Sixties literary renaissance and quite different from other littles. This was the first run of IKON. In its first issue IKON described itself as "a magazine of information about works of art (literary, performing, visual) and about the process and problems concerned with art by those involved in that process. "

It shunned what its editor, Susan Sherman, called the "professional critic, the professional middleman, the professional observer." "There is no longer a place for the uninvolved," it proclaimed.

IKON's seven issues of the Sixties were true to that initial promise, becoming a forum for the most exciting and far-reaching conscious art, regardless of the medium. On its every page it declared that meaningful art and a consciousness of the world we live in are inseparable. And the magazine grew beyond its physical form. In late '67 through '69 there was also the IKONstore, a storefront next to La Mama ETC on Fourth Street between Second and Third Avenues.

In the art of those times, a recognition of the American was essential. In painting, in music, in theater, and especially in literature we no longer looked to Europe. Europe, in fact, started looking to us. And so our eurocentric vision began, ever so slightly, to crack. In New York City, institutions like The Artists Club were born in an old industrial loft, where painters, sculptors, writers, musicians and even critics came together to share ideas and concerns outside the confines of the establishment. A few blocks on East 10th Street, from

Fourth Avenue over to Second or First, housed alternative galleries, some of which were artists' cooperatives.

The first Cedar Bar, on University near the corner of Eighth Street, was the scene of less formal discussion: Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Franz Kline, Milton Resnick, Pat Passlof, Robert and Mary Frank, Larry Rivers, John Cage, Alice Neel and others held forth. Ornette Coleman's white plastic sax made sweet music at the Five Spot, Odetta sang at the Village Gate, and slightly further North and West, Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theater was a constant source of energy and inspiration.

I had come to the mecca of the art world from the provinces (Albuquerque, New Mexico) in 1957, so I knew that outside of New York City, artist's communities were also generating important work. Such work had a proud history where I lived, ever since the 20s when the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad opened the Southwest to people like D.H. Lawrence, Mabel Dodge Lujan, and Georgia O'Keeffe. And it was happening in California, Illinois, Minnesota, Georgia, and many other places as yet unconnected with the metropolis. But the San Francisco and New York renaissances were surely the most visible and vocal. The Beat road map connected both coasts, and poets went on the road, reading to one another, high on the mind-expanding (and in retrospect fairly harmless) artists' drugs of the decade.

Some of us even dared define America more broadly: as including what we perceived as a culture of Latin America, and - although unevenly - of our own multiracial history. Some of us explored the roots of Latin American, African, and Asian artistic expression and developed working relationships with those continents' contemporary artists. After four essential years in Manhattan, in 1961 I would travel south to Mexico. There, with a Mexican poet Sergio Mondragon and immersed in a multinational group of young writers and artists, I founded EI Como Emplumado/The Plumed Horn, a bilingual literary journal that for the next eight years would bridge cultures and mark a decade. My contact with the first IKON and its visionary editor Susan Sherman dates from this period.

But I'm still talking about New York City, late Fifties and early Sixties. In 1959, Fidel Castro and a ragged group of bearded rebels had taken power on the island of Cuba. Some artists, as their predecessors in the Thirties had done, broke from the peculiarly U.S. constraints that proclaimed art as "pure" or "beyond politics," divorced from social concerns. They visited or even lived in Cuba. (After her death in 1986, the Cuban period in the work of the great people's artist Rini Templeton has come to light.) In New York and in response to the 1961 U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of that country, African American poet Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones), Elaine de Kooning, Marc Schleifer, and myself authored a protest signed by hundreds of artists and writers.

We would need yet a greater historic distance from the civil rights movement, as well as from the Black, Hispanic, Native American, women's, and gay and lesbian movements that reemerged or would surface in the late Sixties, in order for us to recognize cultural contributions defined not simply by our "generosity" but by these peoples themselves. In this sense, I knew then about the artists who had come from the East and became known as the Taos School (Lawrence, Lujan, O'Keeffe, and others), but wouldn't have thought to explore the work of New Mexico's San IIdefonso potter Maria Martinez, or the makers of storyteller dolls that were first sculpted by Pueblo Indian artists in the Sixties. Just as there was more than a single culture in Latin America, African American and

Hispanic cultures in our own country were never what a mostly liberal white male art world assumed them to be.

From the Fifties to Sixties, art in its various contexts—as well as peoples' perception of traditional academic canon (history, literature, art, the social sciences)—changed radically. In the transition from Eighties to Nineties we can see a similar shift, but now we also have our Sixties history upon which to base the next leaps. The book-banning atmosphere of the Fifties gradually ceded to the Sixties renaissance, just as the tendency to retreat or pull back that was forced upon artists in the Eighties gives way to the exuberance which today seems just around the corner. (Witness radical multi-media art itself, such as that made by Guerrilla Girls or Tim Rollins + K.O.S. Witness artists', writers' and musicians' enormous efforts to support the struggles of victims of colonialism and imperialism in other lands, as well as our own farmers, homeless people, and those with AIDS.

Struggles to distort our cultural history (by some) and retrieve it (by others) follow a similar curve. Against the Alan Blooms and Saul Bellows of this world, we accumulate and unleash a fountain of energies that won't be stilled. (Bloom's fundamentalist crusade for a return to "the basics" and against all indigenous faces of our culture is well-known. In the case of Bellow, I am referring to his derogatory statement in the context of the efforts to diversify curriculum at Stanford University that "he did not know 'the Tolstoy of the Zulus; the Proust of the Papuans,'" (New York Times, January 19, 1988).

Poetry, fiction, and artwork that brought form and content into a single focus was at the cutting edge of that creativity expressed on the pages of the independent Sixties press. Time and space also joined forces in new ways, or at least we were more conscious of how they affected one another. This could be seen in the pages of IKON's first series, where the layout of each contribution creatively balanced meaning with visual impact. In what might seem to be a very different genre, it was also apparent in the varieties of ephemeral art that emerged throughout this period: a renewed interest in the found poem, body-painting created and washed away in a night, a new type of audience participation in experimental theater, happenings with a single evening's life span, the role assigned to change in performance pieces, music, "pop" and other expressions among the visual arts.

This Sixties art was rooted in experience, in the present. The beginning of the decade was marked indelibly by the civil rights movement in the South. That extraordinary struggle by African Americans and whites affected American culture throughout the country. By 1968, intense student protest ignited hundreds of campuses, and by the late Sixties Vietnam provided the disturbing images on the evening news. Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., My Lai, Selma, the four Sunday school students in Birmingham: These were encoded into our national memory. The art rooted in these images, in these events, spurned preciosity and armchair observation - the experience itself was the thing.

This Sixties art stood in defiance against the withering formulae of timid predecessors, as it began as well to search out and use the legacy of previously ignored forbearers. In the following decade we would unearth our thoroughly lost and unsung female visionaries (some of the strongest women poets began to retrieve these women's voices in their work). We would begin to read gay and lesbian voices as such, artists who began to write or publish past midlife, battled disability, or dealt with other politically risky conditions. Later, with the advent of the AIDS epidemic, we would embrace a culture of life born in close proximity with death.

In that first run, IKON crossed several bridges; the women and men published in its pages explored magic, language, the latest psychoanalytic theories, and places like Cuba where a new society encouraged and supported its cultural workers. This concept of the artist as cultural worker, like that of the New Man, came from the experience of Cuban sisters and brothers. Participating in a totally different social system, we nevertheless longed to be able to apply such ideas to our lives and art. In Mexico to a certain extent, and then in a much more comprehensive way in Cuba and Nicaragua where I lived from 1969 to 1984, I was able to know and work with artists whose relationship with the State was necessarily more urgent, more practical, and allowed for more far-ranging possibilities in this regard.

But it was never easy to sustain an independent bridge between writers and readers. I remember an incident in the mid-Sixties around the publication of El Corno Emplumado. The Pan American Union, cultural arm of the Organization of American States in Washington, had bought 500 subscriptions to our magazine. For a struggling literary journal this meant economic security for at least another issue. When we published an exchange of letters with a well-known Cuban poet, an emissary from the Union traveled to Mexico to let us know that unless we stopped giving space to Cuban poets, those subscriptions wouldn't be renewed. We were already preparing our issue featuring an anthology of the new Cuban work. Of course we told our "benefactor" what he could do with his subscriptions.

Throughout the Sixties, those published were overwhelmingly men. In looking at IKON's first series, with an eye to selecting the pieces for this anthology, Susan and I remember how heavily weighted on the male side its contents were. The same is true of El Corno Emplumado, and the vast majority of other "little" magazines of those years. Even so, the fact that we were women undoubtedly, though still unconsciously, opened us more than most other editors to our sisters' work.

We weren't yet feminists, but like the pre-chill people's artists of the Thirties, the Sixties intellectuals and artists saw ourselves as social beings. We were concerned with assuming social responsibility. This was something we talked about a great deal: the ivory tower isolationism encouraged by the manipulative Fifties was giving way once more to a sense of community, and to the activism community engenders. As artists back then, we asked ourselves what our responsibility might be, to whom we owed it, and what kind of art it would produce.

This led to polemics, projects, and important artistic statements subscribed to by a variety of artists who might otherwise not have crossed formal or aesthetic lines. The Angry Arts was a New York based movement of protest against the Vietnam War which involved writers, painters, musicians, theater people and others. By 1969 and '70, there were numerous collective readings by poets and writers outraged by the war. These took place in cafes and parks, and also in such academic forums as the Modern Language Association's annual meeting. Later, it would be a young Chinese-American architect, Maya Ying Lin, who would design the extraordinary Vietnam Veterans War Memorial in Washington, D.C. Much more recently, in Montgomery, Alabama, she built a memorial to the Civil Rights struggle. The Vietnam experience and the struggle for desegregation in the South (which, as Lin points out "[happened] simultaneously... you never realize that overlay") profoundly affected a generation and its artists.

The Freedom Schools of the Civil Rights Movement (Mississippi 1964) inspired the concept of free school that challenged a stifling academy. Free schools and free universities sprang up everywhere. Poets and writers went out into the community; prison workshops and the Poets in the Schools programs were born. Lines from contemporary poetry and images from contemporary art began to appear on subway and bus placards, in architectural projects, and in parks.

Some visual artists looked to the great Mexican mural movement - or our own WPA (Works Project Administration, one of the U.S. government efforts to provide work during the depression years) - and the first neighborhood murals were painted, increasingly with the participation of people in the communities they served. When creative women finally came to the fore, monumental endeavors like Judy Chicago's Dinner Party pushed feminist art to a retrieval of our history. (Later, Chicago's Birth Project would link the power of a visionary artist with that long-obscured women's art which had forever been regarded as craft: quilting, weaving, embroidery, fine needlepoint. And a public discussion of process would be a part of this.)

Sixties' art literally wrote itself onto our bodies and our walls. The anonymous artist claimed her or his space. A more active class struggle, the powerful fight against racism, and the new feminist consciousness brought into clearer focus our rejection of the self-image and falsely-created needs projected by the establishment media. The results of this focus could be seen in such seemingly disparate manifestations of popular art as New York City's graffiti-covered subway cars or the emphatically altered billboards that began to spring up everywhere: key words paired with blatant female seduction images ever so slightly changed, the addition of one more word to stop signs, producing "STOP WAR" and "STOP RAPE" on street corners across the country.

One of the exciting things about peoples' art in the Sixties was that it revived attention to process. The Beat and Black Mountain poets moved out from Williams, not Eliot. Some went further, their new voices echoing as well Brecht, Reich, Artaud, Vallejo, Kollontai. Poets hitting the road to share their work in lofts and cafes, the Happenings, the first performance pieces: increasingly the artist's process itself became her/his product.

Later, with feminism and the explosion of women's art, this exaltation of process became much more political. As women, process had always been at the center of our unacknowledged experience. But our process had been shunned as meaningless, and we were also denied its product in the bargain. Strong feminist voices like Toni Morrison, Adrienne Rich, Judy Grahn, Alice Walker, Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko, Sonia Sanchez, Sandra Cisneros and scores of others; women's music such as that made by Sweet Honey in the Rock; powerful women's theater like At the Foot of the Mountain; extraordinary women in the visual arts; all are pushing outward the confines of the traditional canon.

Along with Black and Hispanic Studies, Women's Studies (and much more recently Lesbian and Gay Studies) fought their way onto the country's campuses. Feminist magazines, presses, gallery spaces, dance companies and theater began producing work that could not be ignored (although many of the good ole boys continue to try). Essayists like June Jordan, Mab Segrest, and Paula Gunn Allen bring female experience and the larger political picture together in ways men have not. Women's and lesbian archives begin the serious work of retracing and refocusing obscured history. The Lesbian Archives in New York is particularly noteworthy. Women's and Lesbian oral history projects like Elizabeth Kennedy's and Madelaine Davies' in Buffalo, unearth exciting stories-herstories in the new

vernacular. Scientists like Ruth Hubbard question not only women's role in science, but – consequently - the nature of scientific work itself, and thus what knowledge is.

For movement women and artists who, in the early Seventies, began taking over the independent publishing ventures and art spaces our hard work had helped to create, process was not something to be discarded, or so easily ignored. Our cultural identity and history of struggle, stress attention to process as intrinsic to the product we wish to nurture and preserve. IKON's second series includes a number of special issues: Women and the Computer, Creativity and Change, the Asian American women's issue - in which this is particularly apparent.

IKON #9, "Without Ceremony" an Asian American women's anthology is worth noting, among much else, because of its several community collages: conversations among different generations of working class Asian women discussing their struggle to balance tradition and rebellion in their lives, and talking about it. This is just one more example of the emphasis on process. IKON's first book, We Stand Our Ground devotes its first twenty pages to a conversation among these poets. here a Japanese/German/American heterosexual woman, an African American lesbian, and a Jewish lesbian tell each other and their readers how family and society have influenced them, what it has meant to them to be women, engage politically, create, resist, write.

Today, as the Nineties begin, we gather and unleash our creative powers in the wake of another repressive period. Eight years of Reaganism in this country achieved epidemic homelessness, increased economic crisis even for the middle and upper middle classes, cutbacks in social services and creative programs, the reversal of many hard-won people's rights, a backlash of conservatism, a rigidity, false patriotism, and mediocrity in the arts with real parallels to the Fifties. The media, technologically advanced as never before, succeeds, in helping the elite to trivialize what is meaningful, to magnify trivialities, to rewrite history. Fundamentalism, political as well as religious, has become the new ruling class ideology.

But even as officialdom announces the death of unions and the consolidation of the electronic revolution, the victory of Capitalism, the end of history itself, the extraordinary power of peoples' culture resurfaces through inevitable fissures. Feminism continues to irreversibly change society as a whole, as well as women's lives. Labor struggles are revitalized. A woman, Geraldine Ferraro, runs for Vice President. Before she loses, and despite her class and skin privilege, she manages to address some real issues with intelligence. An African American Jesse Jackson runs for President and is visibly forced from center stage, but his new type of campaign suggests a renewal of participatory possibilities for electoral politics in the United States.

Some of the young artists of the Sixties have earned a degree of power in the Eighties. This, along with the general public's incipient resentment of endless media hype, may account for the fact that today, even among such costly genre as commercial film and TV, we can find outstanding examples of revolutionary art. Some titles that comes to mind are Torch Song Trilogy, The Milagro Beanfield War, Born On The Fourth of July, Do The Right Thing, and Roger and Me.

And here is where our creative use of image responds to and intersects with the system's media manipulation of those scenes which have literally become our lives.

The U.S. government has created a "drug war" in which anything goes. The plague of coke and crack in our neighborhoods, which were infested years ago when the CIA first

operated its Air America opium and heroin runs out of Southeast Asia, makes all apparent efforts to curtail this death seem welcome. Panama's deposed President Manuel Noriega, who got on the U.S. blacklist when he refused to continue cooperating with our CIA, was a made-to-order target. Here, image distortion has been particularly grotesque, even going so far as to confuse cocaine with corn tamales, Noriega has been successfully vilified to the extent that most will agree: in the invasion of Panama the end justified the means. Even the more critical reportage, which details the U.S. role in creating Noriega in the first place, makes no difference. We can see it all, yet accept it all. Such is the power of today's media.

Some of us are shocked; how can such things happen, we ask. Sadly, we need not only understand how they happen, but that our own establishment media, our "free" press, is the master teacher of such manipulation. The idea that an end can justify the means is, indeed, a basic tenet of our product-oriented society. The facile image, the idea sold subliminally with subterfuge and glitz, the product-always the newer, better product takes precedence over process, which is ignored, if not totally destroyed.

"News" gives information and disinformation. Art also, and essentially, informs and disinforms. Discussions antagonistically positioning social realism and so-called pure art are no longer on our agenda. But artists and writers who are affected and moved by the central issues of our age, create from a consciousness of how imagery is manipulated as well as out of an energy aimed at change. We need our collective memory in order to know and give of ourselves. Art makes new leaps from and into life.

IKON, on the cutting edge in the Sixties, reappeared in the eighties with a second series just as essential to the creative avant garde. As feminism and lesbian culture showed themselves to be at the core, the magazine reemerged as a feminist literary journal, a forum for women's work. Written in large letter across the first cover of the magazine's second year: "We can and must create a new world with new forms, techniques and ideas."

And, just as in its first incarnation, IKON often baffled the "purely literary" and the "narrowly radical" by refusing limiting definitions, this time it again moved beyond confining paradigms. Not just gender, but race, ethnicity, class. Not only women, but sometimes men as well - for example, in its powerful "Art Against Apartheid: Works for Freedom" issue.

In going back and retrieving some of the most exciting work from its Sixties pages, this issue of IKON does more than honor a period of tremendous artistic power. It recognizes certain socio-political parallels. It reminds us, as creative beings, to think about the importance of reviving our authentic and multiple cultures against the death-dealing chill of a Jesse Helms or a George Bush. It urges us to step up the fight against the murderous corruption of our words, our images, and our lives.

Hartford, CT, Winter 1990. (reprinted from IKON Second Series, #11)

Waiting Our Turn

Lawrence, he of Lady Chatterley,
said the way to eat a fig
was open it until it becomes
a glittering, rosy, moist, honied,
four-petalled flower,

then after raping the blossom
hold it in your mouth
lick the crack
and devour the flesh
in a single bite.

Every fruit has its secret
said the poet women loved,
who turned us into luscious fruits
to be peeled by hungry lips
then spit out.

Neruda, he of communist
solidarity, wrote
of women's bodies as white hills
and white thighs, promised
to forge us as weapons—

arrow to bow, stone in its sling—
so he could outlive himself.
This poem is my reply.
Neither seductive fruit
to be savored and discarded

nor white in a world of brown
and never ever weaponized,
we sharpen our tongues,
imagine our revenge
and wait our turn.

Made Rich by Art and Revolution

When I am gone and August comes
to my desert,
rain will soak sand,
its rich scent rising
to enter the lungs of another mother or walker,
someone whose intention and desire
I cannot know.

When I am gone this painting of little islands
miniature trees and birds
floating in a magical sea of blue
will hang in someone else's house.
Will that person tell the story
of poor Nicaraguan peasants
made rich by art and revolution?

A granddaughter may inherit
my turquoise earrings.
The clay pans I've used for years,
their pungency filling the house,
will offer up a new generation
of bread.
Someone not yet born may read this poem.

But who will ask the questions
born of the answers
I juggle today.
Who will know the heat
of this great love,
or catch fragments of my memory
reassembling just before dawn.

MARGARET RANDALL was still living in Latin America when she began writing for IKON in 1967. She returned to the US in 1984. The government judged some of her writing subversive, but after a 5-year battle and the help of many good people she won the right to remain. Recent poetry titles include *Against Atrocity,* and *Out of Violence into Poetry* (both from Wings Press), *Stormclouds Like Unkept Promises* and *Vertigo of Risk* (both from Casa Urraca Press). Other recent titles are essays, *Thinking About Thinking*,(Casa Urraca), and *Artists In My Life* (New Village Press). In 2019 she was awarded an honorary doctorate of letters from the University of New Mexico, and in 2022 she received the City of Albuquerque's Creative Bravo Award. Margaret lives with her partner (now wife) of 36 years, the painter Barbara Byers, and travels extensively to read and lecture.

ANDREA SERRANO

Disco Lady

She had the prettiest ankles.
Not too skinny,
almost sexy
if ankles could be such a thing.
Her feet looked great in heels
and her legs were slender and smooth,
but those ankles
were her defining attribute.

Bobby socks and poodle skirts were her favorite outfit
when she was just a girl.
Once a month she went to the big city
and danced with boys at Civic Auditorium
while her mama watched from the balcony.

The 1970's came along and maybe if she didn't have all those kids,
she would have been protesting down Central Avenue
or carrying on an affair with a beat poet.
Perhaps she would have moved far away and become a writer.
Freedom was a luxurious fantasy that she didn't allow herself to have very often
except for when she yearned
to dance disco.

She skipped the British Invasion of the 60's
said the Beatles ruined rock and roll.
She had no patience for the Rolling Stones or the Mamas and the Papas.
Funk was sort of entertaining
but disco was daring.
Women and men danced too close and
thrust their hips a little too hard.
She liked the way disco made her cheeks warm
and her heart danced a little faster.
The discotech in her mind was where she went
when she didn't want to be in her life anymore

She wanted to learn to dance disco and asked him
to take her out so they could learn together.

She loved dancing with him.
They were a good looking couple -
dressed to the nines anytime they left the house.
She wore mini dresses
he wore a shirt and tie
She liked the attention they received.
He knew everyone and she liked being introduced to all of his friends.
She enjoyed being by his side

Oftentimes
he left the house without her
no explanation of when he would be home
or where he was going
it didn't really matter
either way she was left behind
and he was dressed to the nines just the same.

She wondered if he glided other women around the dance floor
the way he did her.
Did he buy them drinks? Introduce them to his friends?
who sat by his side?
did he drive these women home?
She never allowed herself to wonder beyond that.
She ignored her sense of smell when he got home;
didn't notice lipstick on his collar when she washed his clothes;
silenced her sixth sense when it got too loud inside her head.

She wasn't stupid,
but she had all those kids…

She hummed Dancing Queen while she admired her pretty ankles.
Imagined herself on a lit up dance floor
all eyes on her
as she turned round and round.

There Once Was Song

A response to New Mexico's Centennial Celebrations

My heart skips beats,
and in the empty spaces
there is silence
where once, was song.
My grandma,
Eva Maestas Serrano,
was a Genizara;
a de-tribalized Indian
from Abiquiu Pueblo.
Orphaned at age 5,
she was placed in St. Catharine's Indian School.
As an adult, my grandma was the only person
in her town
who spoke, read and wrote in English.
There are parts of the story she never told:
I imagine English was beaten into her
by the Nuns
who saw themselves as salvation
among heathens.

There once was song

I was 19 years old -
idealistic -
full of pride and the Chicano movement.
I was going to Mexico that summer, and
never mind I am at least 10th generation Nuevo Mexicana,
I bragged that I was going home to the Motherland.
I wandered the streets of Guadalajara,
climbed the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan,
cried at Tlatelolco.
No one looked like me;
no one spoke the way I spoke;
the Motherland, yes, but not my mother.
Like my grandma
I felt like an orphan.
Too Gringa for Mexico,
too Brown for the U.S.
I felt lost.

There once was song

I once read a poem

about my Immigrant brothers and sisters.
A man approached me,
said he was Pueblo Indian.
He said my people oppressed his people,
so we deserve any bad treatment we receive today.
I grew angry,
speechless.
I told him that he didn't know my story,
told him to leave me alone.
I should have said
I come from an enchanted land
of red clay
and blue sky.
I come from farmers who wielded tools,
not steel helmets and swords

Don't call me Spanish.
Don't remind me of what my people did
as if I didn't know.

The violence that courses in my veins
is not that of a conquistador,
but rather the conflict
of two people who create one woman.
I should have said
I am your people too.
We share blood and history;
we are products of rape.

I am a reluctant mestiza.
I don't have a Bureau of Indian Affairs number
or a Spanish Land Grant.
I don't celebrate Columbus,
or Oñate,
or Coronado.

Burque is my tribe,
Nuevo Mexico is my Pueblo.
Fuck the Centennial -
100 years of U.S. imperialism.

There once was song

My grandmas were born before statehood.
My grandpa worked his land;

the sky didn’t change,
the clay didn’t run,
when the U.S. imposed taxes,
and fences,
and water rights.

I am of the Grandmother land -

Aztlan

a Genizara

Who is remembering

her song.

Albuquerque native **Andrea J. Serrano** has been writing and performing poetry since 1994 and is published in *Malpais Review*; the *Mas Tequila Review*; *¡Ban This! BSP Anthology of Xican@ Literature*, as well as *La Bloga: Online Floricanto* and *The Duke City Fix.* She is also featured in the forthcoming *Lowriting: Shots, Rides and Stories from the Chicano Soul.* She has performed at numerous venues including the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in NYC, Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco and was part of the Librotraficante Caravan Reading in Albuquerque in 2012. Andrea was also a panelist at the Tucson Festival of Books in 2013. Andrea is the youngest of six daughters and credits her family, her ties to land, language and culture and the experience of growing up Chicana in Albuquerque with influencing her writing. Andrea is Executive Director of OLÉ in Albuquerque and is one of three co-chairs of the Working Families Party National Committee.

SUSAN SHERMAN

Border Guards

There are lines drawn in the sand
that must never be crossed   So say the pundits
the arbiters of boundaries   definitions   of what should
or should not be said   or done   There are lines
drawn on maps   around cities boroughs neighborhoods
blocks houses   The people who live in them

There are lines drawn around nations
Lines teeming with people waiting to get in
or out There are lines drawn around individuals
ethnic racial tribal lines   Around genders   he she
you me they them   A demarcation of
countries cultures continents

There are lines drawn around hemispheres
North South East West   Around the Earth itself
There are longitude lines   latitude lines
The Tropic of Capricorn is a line The Tropic of Cancer
The earth as it circles space As we delineate the seasons

A child takes a crayon   weighs it carefully   in her palm
It is yellow the color of the sun   or of her dreams
places she sees in the pictures she thumbs through at night
her fingers scrolling color across paper   purple
then blue   an ocean   then fire blazing orange
and subtle green   trees flowers   objects without set form
Only she knows what they mean

Lines of memory are like that   vivid weightless
ghost images without boundary Cezanne
seeing a forest of trees come into being
in the dawning sun   painted them obsessively
branches leaves undulating out of birthing light
as they came alive in front of his discerning eyes

All this is not to say we do not need to name things
identify them ourselves   but where exactly are these
boundaries borders   guarded so carefully
with passports rules and laws? I can't see them
Can you? These lines that label us define us
separate us   These lines that must never be crossed

There Was a Woman Once

who was more to me than words
any blending of alphabet   and sound
We met at the corners of day
in the space where night crosses light
where shadows fold into darkness
The moments between our meetings
were air   Thirty years lie between her
and this poem   a length of time
impossible to render

There was a woman once who was more
to me than imagination   wonder
the chimeras that embrace the night
More than the chill kiss of wind that tortured
her secret into patterns of light and
breeze   A woman who was more to me than
forever   the bending of syllable and time

We met on a hilltop in Vermont   made love
in the sweetgrass of our desire
These are moments that defy forgetting
These are moments time cannot cure with
detail noise distraction   Mornings that bound us
sticky and tight   with dew

There was a woman once who was more to
me than flesh   We touched to open
and then once again to close
the way a negative is held over wary eyes
to keep the sun from blinding in the madness
of its fire   What lay between us was that
strong   What joined us was that fierce
Lying in each other's arms

Married   she had never meant for us to happen
had seen me as diversion   a momentary lapse
Now she called me treasure   promised
to keep me always cherished
hidden   in her private place
but forever is a length of time like any other

One afternoon   precisely at the stroke of one
she lapsed into a silence without boundary
The air lay like a tomb around us
She could not look at me   touch me   say my name
She had never meant it to go so far
It had become too much for her to bear
This woman who meant more to me
than words

Should I be grateful   thank whatever gods
or goddesses   gifted me this passion   this legacy
I cannot relinquish   cast aside
Forever is a length of time without forgiveness
After thirty years   I search for her no longer
but for that moment between opening and
distance   when I held her close
Not yet knowing enough to turn away

First and Last Poems

for Violeta Parra

there is nothing romantic
about death   about pain
tears falling like soft clouds
like copper clouds   the color of rusted blood
the texture of fire

the first enemy is fear
the second power
the third   old age

all my life   all those books   all those feelings
words   thoughts   experiences
to say such simple words   to feel
such simple things

your mountains   like my own   like home
rows of dust   of light brown soil
as if a gentle wind could level them
could blow them away

the sea   touching my nostrils
filling them   a country of smell
of sound   of wine   flowers   of salt air
of early morning   opening and
opening   through my mind
my heart   the extremities
of my hands   my feet

if I were a bird and could float
dipping and weaving tapestries of air
and light   if we could fly together
like silver crows   birds of dream
until everything stops   is silent and
gentle   like your songs   your voice

but the world allows us nothing
the world is nerves   is fiber
dust and sand   the world changes constantly
nothing remains the same

I see you singing into the air
as if your voice could fly   be free

were there creatures above you
listening   fishing your gifts
from the breeze   was there a place
that could hold you as you opened yourself
to it   as you went where no one else
could follow   where no one else
could see

each time I have loved
1 have left part of myself behind
until now 1 am mostly memory
mostly dream   what I have left
I give to you   my last love
my last song

the total of all
I have ever felt or known

we grow smaller as we grow
as things empty themselves of us
and we   of them

it is so deep   this thing between us
no name can contain it
even time trembles at its touch

SUSAN SHERMAN, a poet, playwright, essayist, and a founding editor of IKON magazine, has had eleven plays produced off-off Broadway including an adaptation from Spanish of Pepe Carril's, *Shango de Ima* (Doubleday, 1971). She has published seven collections of poetry, a memoir, *America's Child: A Woman's Journey through the Radical Sixties (Curbstone, 2007*); short fiction, *Nirvana on Ninth Street* (Wings Press, 2014 and new and selected poems, *The Light that Puts an End to Dreams*, (Wings Press, 2012) a finalist for the Audre Lorde Lesbian Poetry Award.

DAISY ZAMORA

Cuando Las Veo Pasar

Cuando las veo pasar alguna vez me digo: qué sentirán
ellas, las que decidieron ser perfectas conservar a toda costa
sus matrimonios no importa cómo les haya resultado el marido
(parrandero mujeriego jugador pendenciero
gritón violento penqueador lunático raro algo anormal
neurótico temático de plano insoportable
dundeco mortalmente aburrido bruto insensible desaseado
ególatra ambicioso desleal politiquero ladrón traidor mentiroso
violador de las hijas verdugo de los hijos emperador de la casa
tirano en todas partes) pero ellas se aguantaron
y sólo Dios que está allá arriba sabe lo que sufrieron.

Cuando las veo pasar tan dignas y envejecidas
los hijos las hijas ya se han ido en la casa sólo ellas han quedado
con ese hombre que alguna vez quisieron (tal vez ya se calmó
no bebe apenas habla se mantiene sentado frente al televisor
anda en chancletas bosteza se duerme ronca se levanta temprano
está achacoso cegato inofensivo casi niño) me pregunto:

¿Se atreverán a imaginarse viudas a soñar alguna noche que son libres
y que vuelven por fin sin culpas a la vida?

When I See Them Passing By

When I see them passing by I sometimes ask myself: What must
they feel, the ones who decided to be perfect and keep their marriages
afloat against all odds no matter how their husbands turned out
(party animal womanizer gambler troublemaker
loud-mouthed violent headbanger lunatic weirdo slightly abnormal
neurotic obsessive clearly unbearable
dumbbell deadly boring brute insensitive grubby
egomaniacal ambitious disloyal politicker crook traitor liar
rapist of daughters torturer of sons emperor of the house
tyrant everywhere) but they put up with it
and God only knows what they suffered.

When I see them passing by so dignified and aged
their sons and daughters gone from the house leaving them alone
with a man they once loved (perhaps he's calmed down
doesn't drink hardly talks spends his time with TV
walks in slippers yawns falls asleep snores wakes up early
is ailing half-blind harmless almost childish) I ask myself:

Do they dare imagine themselves widows dreaming some night they are free
and coming at last without guilt back to life?

[Trans. George Evans]

Streetcar, San Francisco

El negro agita un tarro vacío de *potato chips*
suplicando monedas,
otro, busca conversación desde su silla de ruedas:
—*Patrick, me llamo Patrick.*
—*Y yo Mary*, dice la pobre muchacha gorda y colochona.
La china carga resignada su bolsa de cebollas,
el viejo filósofo ensimismado en Kant,
un gay rapado con aretes y gafas azules,
la secretaria feliz, amapola marchita,
premiada por sus treinta años de servicio al banco
con un anillo barato y unas flores.
La joven ejecutiva que la observa con sorna,
el burócrata cansado que dormita . . .

Cada quién con su alma a la deriva
en este viaje sin rumbo
                    que de pronto termina.

Streetcar, San Francisco

A black guy shakes an empty potato chip can
begging for coins,
another guy seeks conversation from his wheelchair:
—*Patrick, my name is Patrick*.
—*And I'm Mary*, says a poor fat girl with curly hair.
A Chinese woman clutching her bag of onions with resignation,
an old philosopher engrossed in Kant,
a skinhead gay with earrings and blue sunglasses,
a happy secretary, withered poppy,
with her reward for thirty years service to a bank:
a cheap ring and some flowers.
A young woman executive observes her with scorn,
a tired bureaucrat naps . . .

Each one a soul adrift
in this aimless voyage
                    that suddenly ends.

[Trans. George Evans]

Daisy Zamora is one of the most prominent figures in contemporary Latin American poetry. Her work is known for its uncompromising voice and wide-ranging subject matter that dwells on the details of daily life while encompassing human rights, politics, revolution, feminist issues, art, history and culture. She has received several literary awards, including the Mariano Fiallos Gil National Poetry Prize in Nicaragua. Her poetry, essays and articles have been published throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada, the U.S., Europe, Asia and Australia. During Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution, she was a combatant for the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front), and the voice and program director for clandestine Radio Sandino. She served as Vice Minister of Culture for the Revolutionary Government.