Connexions

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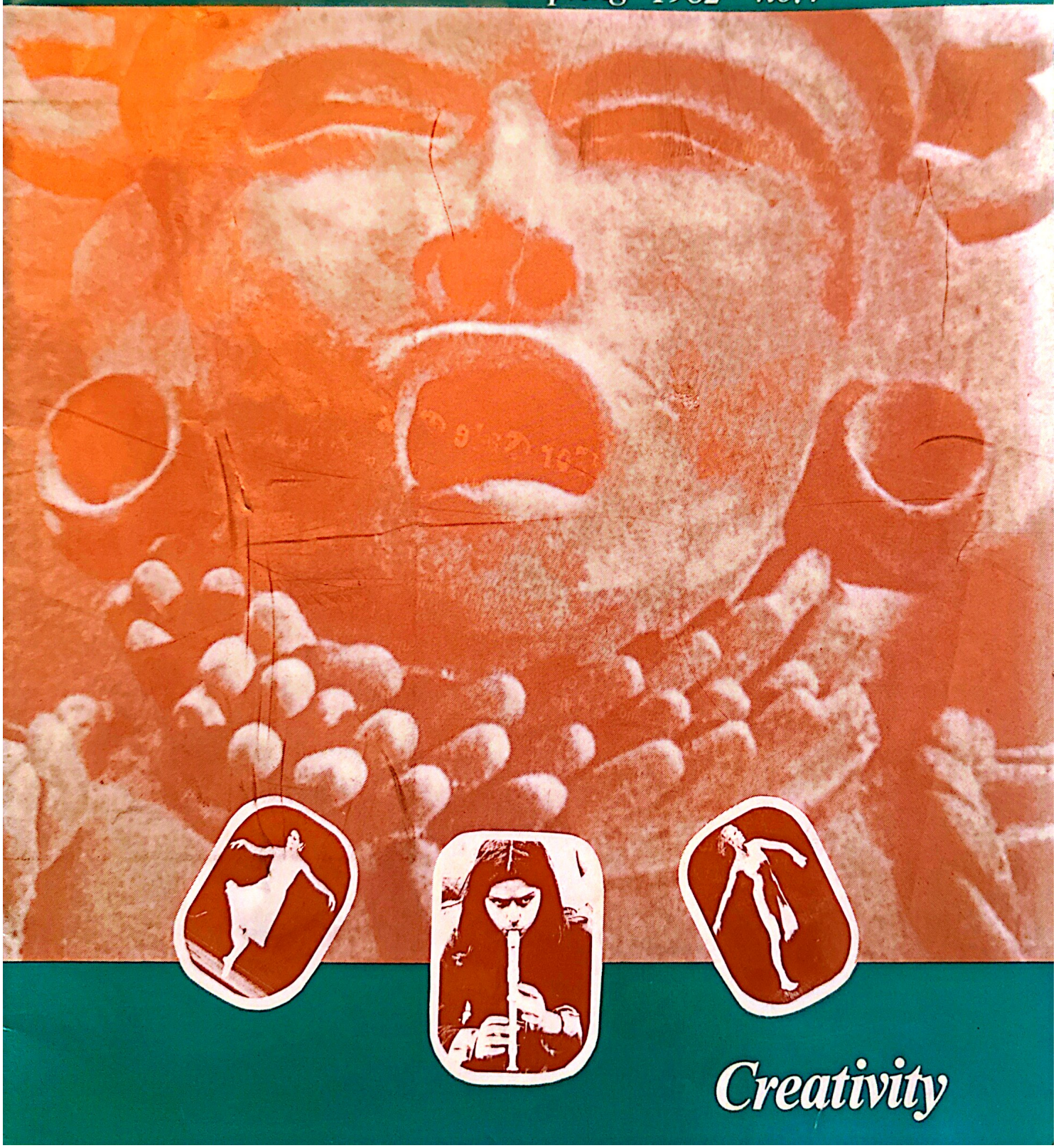

Creativity

Connexions is the collective product of feminists of diverse nationalities and political perspectives committed to contributing to an international women's movement.

We want to go beyond merely providing facts and information, and hope that by passing on—as directly as possible—women's writings generally unavailable in the U.S., we will be helping women here to understand and connect with the experiences and viewpoints of women in other parts of the world. We also want to contribute to the growth of a worldwide network connecting women working on similar projects by researching, establishing contacts and exchanging information with other women's organizations.

To a large extent, the economic and political conditions under which we live determine the issues to which we give priority. Women do not live in a vacuum, but in what is still largely a man's world. It is essential for us to understand the workings of that world if we are to understand each other. We hope that *Connexions* will be one step toward building an international women's movement.

Connexions is published every three months and each issue focuses on a specific theme.

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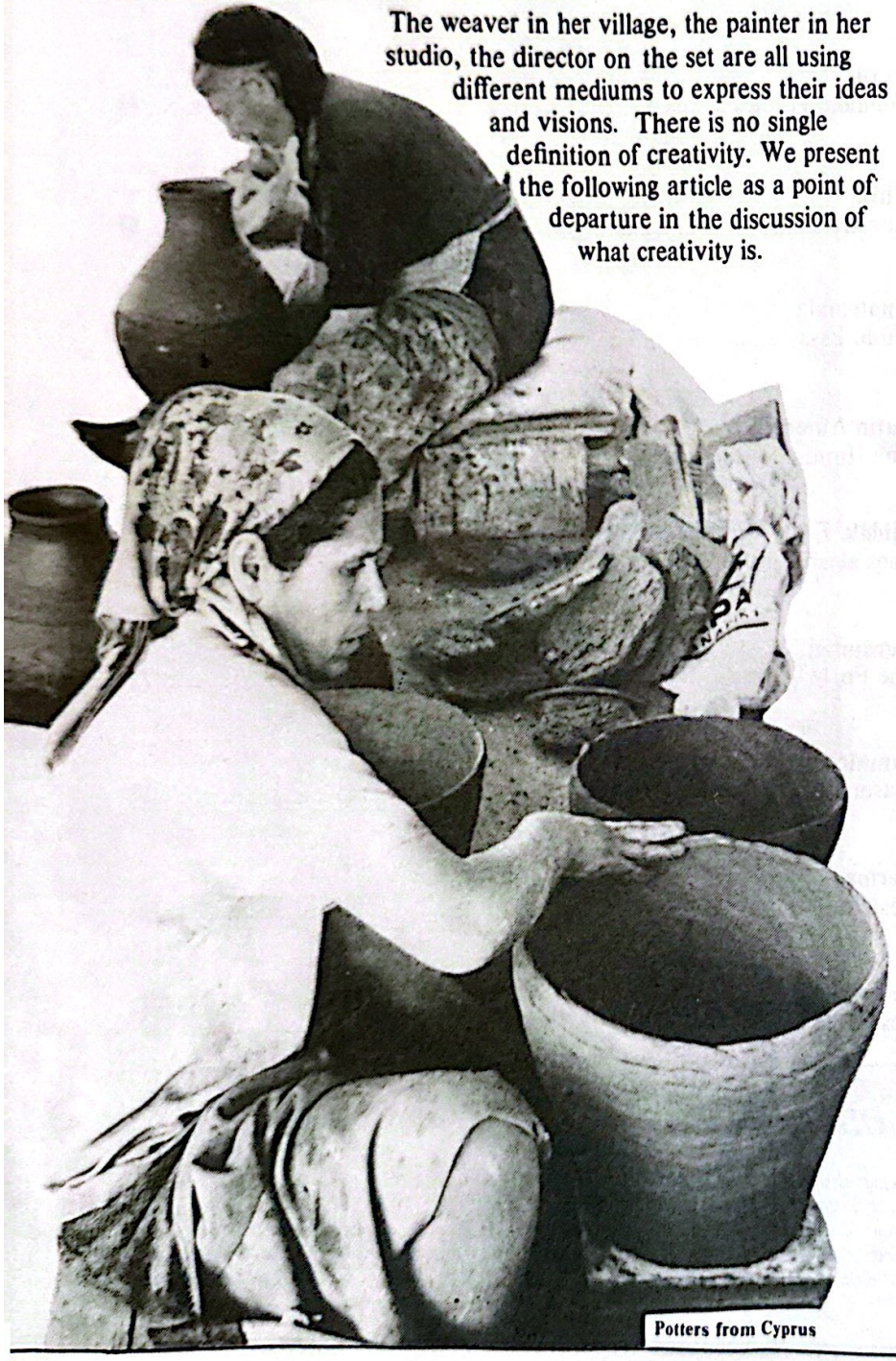
North African rooftop
Christina Yoder

What is Creativity?

In this issue of CONNEXIONS, we are looking at women and creativity. The following articles illustrate two approaches to creative expression: women working within a cultural context which is passed on from generation to generation, such as weaving or dance; and women who use individualized forms of expression, such as writing or painting, to convey their ideas.

Most of the articles selected present women who have achieved a certain degree of recognition and, therefore, have greater access to the media. We realize that there are many women who have not gained recognition for their work due to class, race, education, political and economic conditions or the form of expression which they choose.

The weaver in her village, the painter in her studio, the director on the set are all using different mediums to express their ideas and visions. There is no single definition of creativity. We present the following article as a point of departure in the discussion of what creativity is.



Potters from Cyprus

Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian doctor and writer. She worked as director of Egypt's Public Health Service, but lost her job in 1972 due to her feminist and leftist activities. Denied permission to publish in Egypt, she went to Beirut, Lebanon. Her works are written in Arabic and have only recently been translated into several European languages. From 1978-80 she worked for the U.N. in Beirut, dealing with women's programs for West Asia. In early 1981 she returned to Egypt to continue her writing, but was imprisoned in September. A few months before his assassination, President Anwar Sadat embarked on a fierce campaign against government opponents. Several thousand people were arrested. Due to international pressure, El Saadawi was released from prison on November 25 together with 30 other political prisoners.

The following is an excerpt of a speech given at a writers' conference in Oslo, Norway in July 1980, shortly before the U.N. Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen, Denmark.

WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

Creativity, to my mind, is an innovative process which embraces all the arts and sciences. It includes the love, friendship and cooperation which people develop between one another in the common effort aimed at achieving a better life, and molding better individuals. It is not confined to the intellectual activity or the mental production of the individual, but in its essence encompasses the collective action of groups, classes and nations and the mobilization of the potential of all peoples to improve life, develop societies materially, culturally and morally, and ensure that peace reigns among all peoples.

The human body, whether that of man or woman, the mind and the emotions enfold a range of dazzling capabilities that reveal themselves through creative action and also through the manifold activities carried on every day by people who are considered "ordinary" because these activities, which to us often appear mundane and repetitive, are the result, historically at least, of a long creative effort. The tendency has been for dominant schools of thought to limit the creative and innovative process, and to see it only in some specific restricted forms of action carried out by an oligarchy of men. This limited class group, elevated by the patriarchal class system to the level of gods, are bestowed privileges and titles and referred to as geniuses, artists, exceptional talents, creators, extraordinary people.

The human being is artistic and creative by nature. He or she is capable of finding solutions to new problems, and does it all the time. This is the essence of creativity, which is a universal human gift,

and not a distinction confined to any specific group. He or she is engaged in a constant struggle to improve life and make it more beautiful. The folk songs, legends, dances, arts and crafts handed down through the ages indicate that the most beautiful artistic expression can be the work of thousands or even millions of "ordinary" men and women.

Since it is not possible to divide a human being into separate parts, the mind cannot be isolated from the body. Thus physical activity is an integral part of creative action. Dancing which might appear to be pure physical movement can at the same time be an elevated form of intellectual activity. The peasant man or woman using a hoe or carrying a jar of water on the head is involved in some form of creative action, since optimum use is being made of bodily force to achieve a given objective. The dividing line between craftsmanship, skill and creative action is not as sharply defined as many might think, although it exists within certain limits.

CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION AND REALITY

Reflection, meditation and contemplation of the past enhance the sensitivity of the individual, like a tool refined and sharpened by practice. Thus, it is that he or she is brought step by step to a discovery of the new in the old, the particular in the general, the astounding in the ordinary, the contradictory in the harmonious and the harmonious in the contradictory. The creative process can only unfold itself in conjunction with this process of contemplation and reflection, which permits the individual to live through reality once more, yet in a way which is different, to experience a reality which, although real, is not the exact replica of the reality known before. For ideas, thoughts and concepts are not born outside reality but within it, inspired by it, born of its matter, its energy, its dynamic forces. What grows out of the creative process is in fact reality, but it never is, and never should be, a mirror image. It is more difficult than mere copying, more complex than an exercise in imagination. It is the capacity to restructure reality, to endow it with a different content and form, so that it appears as a new reality.

Whenever I sit writing in my closed room, despite the four walls which hem me in and isolate me from other people, and despite the nature of the writing process which is a purely individual form of action, I always feel that I derive my thoughts, or draw what we call inspiration, from the creative imagination of the men, women and children among whom I have lived or am still living. Even if I rebel against many of the traditions and customs which govern their lives, they remain the rich and lasting source of inspiration for my thoughts and feelings.

I have come to realize that my literary or scientific creativity can only flourish if fed through the multiple network of relations and links which I have established over the years with people of my city Cairo and my village Kafr Tahla. These links are also the support and the protection which have spared me the sorrow of loneliness and the alienation of excessive individualism. My desire to nurture my art, and to preserve my individual identity, my pressing need to be alone, away from people, so that I can meditate and contemplate, are accompanied by an equally pressing need to be in contact with people, not because I want to write about them, but because I must live with them and touch with my hands the fiber of their support.

THE POWER OF CREATIVE ACTION

The basic power of creative action is the ability to penetrate and influence the minds and hearts of people. This can only be realized when the person involved really lives the life of the people and shares their sorrows and aspirations. Keeping close contact with people and reality, creating action makes the creative woman capable of recording the minutest details related to time, location and the incidents and personalities constituting the essence of reality. This record may permit her to immortalize the fleeting moments involved in the raping of a girl, the beating of a prisoner or the death of a child from hunger, because thousands and even millions of minds and hearts are gripped by such moments. They relive them through the narrative, a play or a film. The incident that was a part of the past, and might have died and been buried with it, is revived by creative action and resurrected to become a living part of the present, of the minds and hearts of people in different ages and places. It disturbs the placid waters of resignation, evokes new thoughts and feelings. The minds and hearts of individuals are transformed, their determination to rebel against oppression is strengthened.

Consequently, the power of creative action lies in its ability to implant seeds of revolution in the hearts of oppressed men, women and children. This revolution might not materialize in the form of a popular movement capable of changing the system within their lifetime, but at least the seeds will have been sown in the ground, and as surely as the sun rises from the East, they will ultimately flourish. Revolution is the natural result of creative action and freedom is the daughter of the revolution. Revolution and freedom, together, constitute the form and content of any creative action.

CONFLICT WITH AUTHORITY

One of the most difficult problems that confronts a creative woman is the inevitable conflict which breaks out sooner or later between her and authority, between her and the system dominant in society, because this system is built on patriarchal class relations. The intensity of this conflict is proportionate to the effectiveness of the action undertaken by the creative woman. The methods and weapons used against her differ according to the type of society in which she lives.

The dominant system possesses a whole range of oppressive instruments such as censorship, police forces, prisons, newspapers and mass media, as well as religious and cultural institutions. It is, therefore, always capable of breaking any individuals who try to rebel against it, unless these individuals succeed in building up a people's political organization capable of standing up to the powerful forces that will be unleashed against it. This task is an extremely difficult one in societies where liberty and freedom are words devoid of content, where a single individual commands the destiny of a nation and where any criticism or difference of opinion is outlawed. Where this is the case creative people, and especially creative women, feel themselves surrounded, cornered, threatened by obvious and obscure dangers every moment of their lives.

It is undoubtedly a difficult task for the creative woman to safeguard and develop her capacities under the prevailing system of society. She is often called upon to pay a heavy price in her private and public life. She may divorce (I was divorced twice) or be expelled from her job (my experience more than once). She might have to face harsh circumstances which pose a threat to her reputation, or to her economic, psychological or even physical stability (sometimes I have been threatened with violence, even death, by bigoted, fanatical individuals, groups or institutions).

The creative woman must realize that she is struggling against established forces which are equipped with powerful means and deeply rooted values. She must mobilize all her powers in this struggle and depend on the real forces which can support and protect her—those men, women, young people and children whose hearts and minds she touches through her creative production. I believe that, were it not for the hundreds and thousands of readers who sincerely and enthusiastically support my writings, buy my books and attend the lectures I give, I would not have been able to maintain my activity and keep on writing. Moreover, the forces of authority in my country and in other Arab countries would have been able to crush me completely. □

If interested in having the full text of the above speech, please send $1.00 to CONNEXIONS.

"It's Me Who's Changed"

Nigerian-born Buchi Emecheta left home 19 years ago to live in London and stayed. An established novelist, Emecheta writes about Nigerian women, living at home or abroad, shaping her novels with her own experiences.

(Translated from *Opzij*, Dutch feminist monthly, September 1981.)

Buchi Emecheta was born during World War II in "the year there was no salt" in Yaba, a small village in the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria's capital. As she writes in her largely autobiographical novel, *Second Class Citizen:* "She was a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy." Disappointed by her birth, her family did not even bother to record the date.

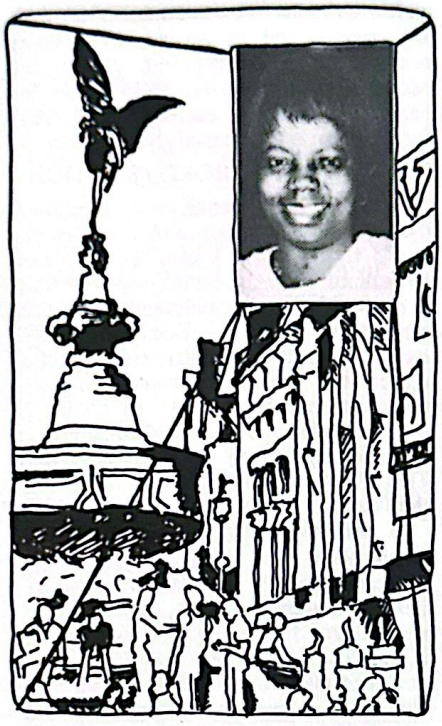
At the age of eight, in spite of her family's assumption that she would stay at home and work, Buchi Emecheta stubbornly insisted on going to school. Although among the Ibos, education is considered a way of liberating oneself from poverty and sickness, it is primarily reserved for boys. Determined to finish school, Emecheta refused to be the eleven-year-old bride of her hand-picked husband. She finally married him at the age of 16.

Sometime after, her husband went to England, "the promised land with golden mountains," hoping to return in a few years with a diploma and the social status of "having been there." In 1962, two years after Nigerian independence, Emecheta and her two children followed her husband to England. The culture shock was great. Later she would say, "London was a tremendous disillusionment. So cold, so dark."

Nevertheless, she chose to stay in England. Leaving her husband to become a writer, she supported herself and her five children with teaching and librarian jobs. After work, she pursued a degree in sociology. Buchi Emecheta's first book, *In the Ditch,* a collection of impressions from her first years in London, appeared in 1972. *Second Class Citizen* was published in 1975, followed by *The Bride Price* in 1976, *The Slave Girl* in 1977, and the *Joys of Motherhood* in 1979.

The following interview took place the evening before Emecheta's return to Nigeria to be a writer-in-residence at Clabar University. Her departure in late 1980 marked her first trip back in 18 years. She begins:

The bond between Africa and Europe makes me think of the fable of the cock and the fox. The fox was afraid of the cock's flaming red comb. One day the cock invited the fox to touch his comb and the fox discovered that the flames on the head of the cock were flesh! Whereupon, the fox polished off the cock. So it is with Africa. We were nice to people and in return we were exploited by the West, driven into slavery, colonized and later made economically dependent.



Christina Yoder/Opzij

Still many people, certainly from my generation, view Europe as the foundation of civilization. It was even the case that many Nigerians, who came in contact with missionaries or English officials, thought on the basis of that experience that all whites were pure of heart and pleasant in character. Once going to Britain, the dream often went up in smoke.

People seem to regard *Second Class Citizen* as a feminist book, a book with a theoretical background. But it is a purely autobiographical book except for a few non-essential details. After I finished studying sociology, I wanted to describe the cultural conflict between Africa and Europe reflected in the personal conflicts of a young Nigerian couple living in England—how that collision can dent the personalities of people. Because I decided not to get away from my own experiences, the book is largely a personal document.

There are many who think I exaggerated in *Second Class Citizen,* that I distorted reality. But the cruelty with which I was treated both by my husband and by English society is truthfully rendered in the book. Reality appears unbelievable the moment other people see it on paper. My husband wasn't really a bad guy, but he wasn't able to accept an independent woman. My writing began to develop only after I had left him. As I wrote in my book, he actually destroyed my first efforts to put my experiences on paper, my first attempt to stake out my terrain.

Q: To what extent was your relationship with your husband influenced by the new environment of English society?

A: If we had remained in Nigeria, his family would not have allowed him to be financially dependent on me. For an Ibo man, that would have been unacceptable humiliation. In England, that social value changes. I bore a double burden in England. I wanted to develop myself and was painfully rebuffed by my husband, relegated to a submissive place in the family. He was unashamed to be without work, allowing his wife to be the breadwinner while maintaining his traditional control over my life and the household.

Q: Speaking of the position of women, what do you think of the theory that African women and men in the pre-colonial, traditional society shared an equal social, political and economic status?

A: No, I don't think it was better before the colonial period. I believe that through western influence the position of women gets better and better, less suppressed. Male privilege was really not introduced by the English. The pre-colonial ways of life are still easily recognizable today, so that to a certain extent a contemporary comparison is possible. Traditionally, women enjoyed some rights within the family, especially if you were the first wife. But that still didn't go much farther than a certain social honor that was extended to you because you happened to be the first wife of the *man.*

As for the women in the market-

place, their position, as independently operating women, is isolated to the world of tomatoes, peppers and goods. You should be very cautious about seeing these external trappings as proof of real independence and freedom. In relation to men, women stand in second place. A man can marry just as many women as he wants. But a woman always has just one husband.

Q: Doesn't women's traditional agrarian responsibility also point to a respected and independent position?

A: Oh, sure. Those are all anthropological theories which often have been advanced by white researchers. Maybe there is some truth to it. But who wants to sweat in the fields the whole day? Also, responsibility doesn't necessarily define a good life. In a certain sense it is status. Before my parents moved to the city, my mother functioned well in her work in the fields and in caring for the family. In the city, where she was only dealing with house and family, she missed her work in the fields enormously. My mother was not mentally prepared to spend her time otherwise.

Nowadays, in the post-colonial situation, more and more women are educated, so that they are better prepared to spend their time meaningfully. But then the privilege of the man leers over our shoulder—remember that education is an expense. When a family must choose between the son's or the daughter's education, the son is usually preferred. The man carries the name and the honor of the family; women are regarded as members of a family, but nevertheless, they must be eventually sold.

Q: Sold?

A: Yes. The position of the Nigerian woman is ambiguous by nature. Despite the fact that sons are regarded as the basis of the family. Daughters also have a certain value in the literal sense. When a girl marries, the man must pay a bride price to her family. Originally, that meant an exchange in kind. Later, with the introduction of money, a bride cost about 20 British pounds. Today, especially if the girl has been educated, the price can be enormous, often placing the man in life-long debt.

My third book, *The Bride Price*, deals with a girl whose bride price is not paid and its psychological effect. The social and mental pressure is so great that I let her die. She has to die because she broke with tradition. Actually, I let her die during childbirth, but still it happened basically because the social shame was no longer bearable and her will to live was broken. Sometimes I, too, am ashamed that my bride price was not paid. Maybe my marriage failed because of that. You can see how deep certain traditions fasten themselves to your spirit. You have the feeling of being an outcast, cut off from your own background. My parents died when I was still young and I didn't want the bride price to be paid to my new family.

Q: From your book, *Second Class Citizen*, it seems customary for Nigerians in England to send their children to a foster parent. Can you tell us something more about that?

A: To begin with, in Nigeria the tradition existed, a good custom, in which women sent their children out as much as possible. You don't need to be the child's mother in order to bring up a child. Also, the responsibility for the child is shared by many. This tradition was brought to England but was transformed.

The newly arrived mothers felt inferior to the English mothers because the entire ethic of child-rearing in England was so strange to them. In England, they see blushing babies continually coddled and having their diapers changed. In Nigeria, you don't need diapers and when the child is sick, you tie it to your back and go on with your work as usual. Everything is so different that the Nigerian woman feels the lesser with regard to English housewives. So they send the child all too gladly to a foster mother who can raise the child in "proper English fashion." Once back in Nigeria, the mothers brag proudly about how much they spent on their children's white upbringing.

A practical reason for the foster mother phenomenon is also that most Nigerian men in England are students who allow their wives to come over to work and support them. So the mothers must farm their children out. Often the only work a woman can find is unskilled factory work, a situation which often gives rise to great tensions. Because of the income from her work, the husband furthers his education and develops. As he rises up the social ladder, he is likely to look down on his wife.

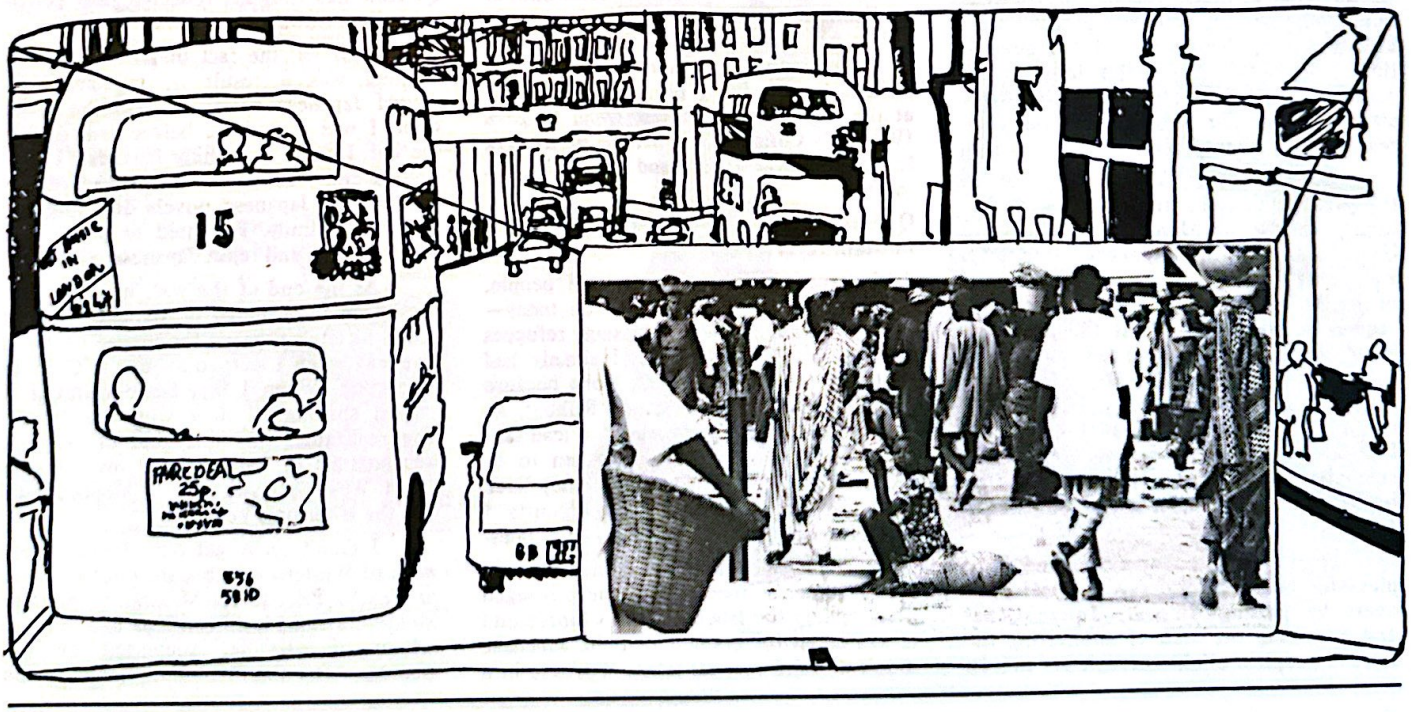
Q: You're now going back to Nigeria...

A: Yes, I'm going home. The effort it costs to focus on a spot where you haven't been for 18 years became too great for me. Not that my memory fails, but as strong as your imagination is, still your picture fades. I don't even stand in direct contact with the turbulent changes taking place about which I want to write. Above all, the homesickness for my own country got too powerful for me.

Since this interview took place, Buchi Emecheta has returned to London after an unsuccessful year in Nigeria. Acknowledging that she likes London better now, she sees it as "an ideal place to work. Here it's so dull, so predictable. If you've suffered a lot you like that. No, London hasn't changed. It's me who's changed." □

Further reading:

- *Buchi Emecheta's above mentioned books are published by Allison & Busby, England.*
- *"Women Writers in Black Africa" by Lloyd Brown, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1981.*



"Why have I been Struggling all these Years?"

Tomiyama Taeko

(From *Asian Women's Liberation,* twice-yearly translation of the Japanese periodical of the same name, no. 4, August 1981.)

Throughout her life, Tomiyama Taeko has rejected stereotypes and followed her own instincts. Dressed in white slacks and a black "Amnesty International" T-shirt in contrast to the usual kimonos worn by women of her generation, the 60-year-old artist immediately made herself comfortable on the floor, stretching out her legs and leaning back ready to talk about herself.

Born in 1921, Tomiyama lived in the port city of Kobe until 1932, when her family moved to Manchuria [located in China, a former Japanese territory]. Returning to Japan in 1938, she enrolled in the Women's College of Fine Arts. Subsequently, concerned about the Japanese labor movement, she spent ten years doing paintings of coal mines. Rejecting marriage ("a form of colonialism"), she had two children in the mid-1940's. In the 1950's and 1960's, she traveled extensively—through Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and India.

In 1970, Tomiyama responded to pleas for help from Korean political prisoners by joining Amnesty International and assuming the task of publicizing the Korean people's plight through her art. In the mid-1970's, a Korean women's group fighting Japanese sex tourism in their country issued a request for the cooperation and assistance of Japanese women. As a result, Tomiyama and seven colleagues established the Asian Women's Association (AWA) and its semi-annual publication, *Asian Women's Liberation,* in 1977.

Tomiyama's current activities include lecturing on "Liberation and Art" at the AWA lecture series, *Onna Daigaku* (Women's College), and setting up a plaza in Tokyo where artists and the public can meet.

Q: How were you influenced by growing up in Manchuria?

A: It exposed me to all kinds of people, many of whom I remember even today—Chinese, Koreans and Russian refugees from the [1917] revolution. I already had contact with white people in Kobe because my father worked for Dunlop Rubber, an English company. They seemed to lead fantastic lives. Their salaries were ten to 30 times those of the Japanese and they lived in homes with lawns and tennis courts. I thought they were straight out of fairy tales.

Then we moved to Manchuria and found ourselves members of the privileged class. There the laborers were Chinese and it was taken for granted that the Japanese didn't do hard manual labor. We were in a strange position, having gone there to work for the British imperialist system.

Q: What were your parents' hopes for you?

A: My father had been deeply influenced by the Taisho era [the reign of Emperor Yoshihito, 1912-1926] democratic movement and both my parents rejected the feudal social structure in Japan. They had many friends who were unhappy in traditional marriages, and wanted their own daughter to become an artist so she would always be financially self-sufficient. My mother thought a woman should find her own path in life. So for me the problem was not whether to become a painter but rather finding a subject for my work.

Q: In what ways did you experience sexual discrimination during your early career?

A: To begin with, there was only one art school open to women when I graduated from high school. That was the Women's College of Fine Arts in Tokyo. This was a place where the daughters of good families went either to wait for marriage or, if their marriage prospects were poor, to become art teachers. I was always clashing with teachers over the strict regulations and my desire to do abstract and surreal art, both of which were considered unsuitable for young ladies.

Q: How has your art reflected your political beliefs through the years?

A: First of all, the fact that I took up oil painting was a result of my antipathy toward Japanese nationalism in the years when I was a student, before and during the war. I hated everything Japanese. I read French and Russian novels instead of the sickly sweet Japanese novels depicting the traditional family. I wanted to paint in a Western style and reject Japanese culture.

At the end of the war, however, the pessimism I'd acquired in Manchuria about Asian society's capacity for change began to give way when I learned about the Chinese revolution. When I first heard about it, I started shaking all over with excitement. The realization that this kind of progress was possible in Asia changed my thinking about Western civilization; I stopped putting the latter on a pedestal.

I didn't really get out of the framework of Western art, though, until I'd been to Mexico. Prior to the Mexican revolution, Mexican art had been confined to a Spanish school of painting, supported by the wealthy. After the revolution, native Indian

work began to appear. I was impressed by the gigantic murals dedicated to the revolution. It was then that I realized I wanted to find a way of expressing myself as a Japanese, and began formulating my own style of painting.

Q: You spent ten years painting Japanese coal mines. Why did you decide to do this?

A: I originally became interested in the mines by wondering where the Japanese equivalent of Yenan [site of Mao Zedong's revolutionary headquarters] might be located. At the time, the coal miners were in the forefront of the Japanese labor movement, so I thought Japan's "Yenan" must be in the mines. I continued to think so for the first two or three years I spent traveling through Japan, doing oil paintings of the mines. I was still staying within the framework of Western art. Gradually, I realized there was a large gap between the medium of oil painting and the actual world of the coal mines. By then, I'd been doing this for ten years.

Q: You chose to call your magazine *Asian Women's Liberation*. What do the words "women's liberation" mean to you?

A: In my own life, this has meant not being formally married. Marriage is a form of colonialism. For me, a love relationship always begins as a friendship. However, as soon as we move in together, the man holds out his pants in the morning to be washed and expects me to cook meals for him. Not being married hasn't always been easy, though. It was hard on my children, for example, when someone accused me of leading an immoral life.

Women's liberation also means that you aim to change the entire social structure which fosters discrimination, not just at the single issue of sexual discrimination. For me, it's more important to change our value system, based, as it is, on discrimination, than to achieve something such as equal pay.

Q: Have you been influenced by the feminist movement in the U.S.?

A: During the 1970's, as the winds of liberation blew through the United States, I felt a great sense of relief through my whole body.

Q: Were you then inspired to "fight" on behalf of the Japanese feminist movement?

A: Not at all. By the early '70s, I was tired and beginning to wonder why I had been struggling all my life. I had always approached problems with a "fighting" spirit, with the belief that I could achieve anything, as long as I worked hard enough. My parents had told me if I worked hard I could have a life like those of white people. Later, I told myself that if I worked hard, I'd become able to paint like a French artist. So when it came to sexual discrimination, I naturally thought if I just worked hard, I could win the same advantages that men had.

But by the beginning of the '70s I was tired of painting, tired of competing with men. I also realized that the problem was the social structure itself, rather than a particular kind of discrimination. The structure of discrimination—whether it's based on race, ethnic group or sex—is always the same. "Why have I been struggling all these years?" I asked myself.

Q: How did you become involved in helping Korean prisoners of conscience?

A: I had never been to Korea, so I decided to go there in 1970. During my trip, I met six former high school classmates, five of whom had lost husbands in the Korean War. For them, this war had been worse than World War II. As I listened to them I started thinking about what I'd been doing during the Korean War. I knew that I hadn't done anything to try to stop it. I began to suffer from my regrets.

When I returned to Japan, I heard that the Soh brothers had been arrested. [Japanese-born Koreans studying in Korea were accused of subversive, communist activities and jailed in 1971. One brother, sentenced for life, was tortured, resulting in permanent disfigurement. The other, still jailed, was originally sentenced to a seven-year term which has been extended twice.] The political situation was coming to resemble that in China before the revolution. I made another trip to Korea and met Soh Sung in prison. There were burn marks on his body. Back in Japan, I painted a portrait of him, the sick prisoner, and joined Amnesty International to get help for him and his brother.

Q: What's the most difficult aspect of being a Japanese involved in Korean political problems?

A: The most trying aspect is the fact that the Japanese are highly sensitive to these issues, which makes it difficult to deal with them. Throughout Japanese history, Korea has always been like a mirror for Japan and it often reveals an unflattering view, such as showing the Japanese in the role of oppressors. Whenever you start looking into the problem of the Korean people's oppression, you're bound to find that in the Japanese media, most news about Korea is taboo.

Q: You've called the current political situation in Korea the most urgent political issue facing the Japanese. Why?

A: When you become involved with Korean problems, you eventually find that the real problems, the problems which require solving first, are in Japan. Even though Korea is no longer a Japanese colony, as it was before World War II, the relationship between the two countries is still the same. Since the war, Japanese big business has gradually moved into Korea. At present, the Korean and Japanese governments are in a position of mutual support.

I believe that it is up to us Japanese to tell the rest of the world about Korea. Although there is a lot of written material available, there is little visual material. I'm presently trying to fill this gap by making a series of slides depicting the Kwangju incident. [May 1980 uprisings, involving one quarter of Kwangju's population, and resulting in a massacre by the military which left over 2,000 people dead.] □

Further reading:

- *"Political Women in Japan" by Susan Pharr, University of California Press, 1981.*
- *"Ampo," progressive quarterly journal available in English containing general information on Japan and Asia, Box 5250, Tokyo International, Japan.*

Contact:

- *International Feminists of Japan, C.P.O. Box 1780, Tokyo 100, Japan.*

Tomiyama Taeko

To Write What Others Would Not Dare

Agnes Smedley

Chinese writer Ding Ling is well-known for her outspokenness on women's issues. Refusing to comply her writing to the official line, she was expelled from the Communist Party in 1957 and sentenced to hard labor. Recently restored to her former status, Ding Ling, at the age of 77, continues to be involved in today's cultural debate.

(Based on *Straw Sandals (Chinese Short Stories, 1918-1933)* ed. by Harold R. Isaacs, The MIT Press, 1974; and *Literary Dissent in Communist China* by Merle Goldman, Atheneum, New York 1971.)

Ding Ling (Ting Ling) was born in Changsha, Hunan in 1905. She was sent to a girls' school in Shanghai and there adopted her mother's surname in an early characteristic gesture of independence. Her earliest writings were directed against the conventional status of women in Chinese society and focused on heroines rebelling against a patriarchal society. By 1930, she had joined the ranks of the leading leftist writers in Shanghai. In May 1933, she was kidnapped by Kuomindang (Kuomintang) agents and imprisoned in Nanking. Freed in 1936, as a result of changes implemented with the re-establishment of a united front (Communist/Nationalist) against the Japanese, she found her way to Yenan, the Communist capital in the Northwest, where she quickly became a figure of power and controversy and joined ranks with the Red Army.

On November 9, 1937, encamped at the roving headquarters of the Chinese Red Army, the American feminist Agnes Smedley, working as a correspondent for *Frankfurter Zeitung* (in the pre-World War II days when this was one of the famous liberal newspapers of Europe), filed the following news report: "General Headquarters of the 8th Route Army—The Front Service Group, led by the well-known woman writer, Ding Ling, has arrived at General Headquarters. The group conducts all kinds of propaganda among the people and troops. They present plays, the acting group is the best and largest. They teach the people patriotic songs, and they lecture. Some of them write stories of their experiences.

"Ding Ling tells us many stories of the experiences the group had on their way from North Shensi province, up the railway to Taiyuan and then down into eastern Shansi. They have seven donkeys to carry their bedding rolls. All the rest of their baggage they carry themselves. They have no riding animals at all. They go from village to village, giving plays. They have been bombed by Japanese planes, and they have spoken to thousands of people calling on them to organize and arm themselves."

Ding Ling, then 32 was already considered one of China's foremost novelists. She was a militant feminist and was regarded as mentor to intellectuals within the Communist Party. Those who met her at this time were struck by her organizational ability. Under her leadership, the Front Service Group combined old Chinese storyteller methods with modern theatrical ideas. Accompanied by string instruments, drums or clappers, the players performed in the streets of the war-torn villages. "Minstrels" brought news of the Red Army and partisan groups. In ballad form, the ten principles of the Communist Party were humorously interpreted and developed. Thus, as intellectuals and artists fled Nationalist-controlled areas for the Communist North, their abilities were organized and used for propaganda at the Front through Ding Ling's efforts.

Yet Ding Ling was critical of a tough party stance taken on control of literary content and style. As editor of the party's official newspaper, *Chieh-Fang-Jih-Pao* (Liberation Daily) she published "San Pa Chieh Yu Kan" (Thoughts on March 8) on Women's Day in 1942. She criticized the top party leadership for its empty promises to women. Women in Yenan were disillusioned, she claimed, at being told that they were emancipated in the new society, when they were in fact subjected to inequality.

Because of this article, Ding Ling became the primary target of Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung) in his "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art", which called for the strict cooperation of intellectuals and writers with the party's obligatory optimism in literature. Following Mao's talks, Ding Ling was subjected to two years of "thought reform" in party training schools.

With the establishment of a Communist government in 1949, Ding Ling returned to hold high Party posts. In the subsequent history of conflict between Communist Party bureaucrats and Communist writers concerning the party control of culture, Ding Ling played a pivotal role both as a high-ranking bureaucrat and as an intellectual writer.

Ding Ling's novel, *Sun Over the Sangkan River,* was the first in-depth work to explore the complex agrarian reform going on in the Chinese countryside. She examined the class relationships in a village by depicting representative cadres, landlords, and rich and poor peasants. This record of the peasant struggle against landlords and the resulting redistribution of land was widely read throughout the Communist world. The novel was awarded a Stalin prize in 1951, and was the first Chinese novel to receive such an honor.

By 1953, Ding Ling controlled two of the most powerful Communist Party journals *Jen-Min Wen-Hsüeh* and *Wen-I Pao.* Yet Ding Ling sought to withdraw from her administrative duties in order to have more time for creative writing and for guiding young writers in their work.

Then, in 1956, she was suddenly charged with the "crimes" of refusal to accept party supervision and the expansion of the cult of personality. In actuality, Ding Ling had refused to accept the party's edict that all literature must conform to the style and content of socialist realism. Cautiously, Ding Ling had begun to speak out at small gatherings, calling for a writers' union guided by writers, not bureaucrats.

On June 6, 1957, the Writers' Union called a meeting to denounce Ding Ling. She was denied citizenship, expelled from the party, and sentenced to hard labor in the far northern province of Manchuria. Her works were prohibited in the schools and universities. Ding Ling refused to admit to the "crimes" the party charged against her and refused to"confess". Yet,

her rebuttal was never published. Her earlier tsa-wen editorials (literary daggers), including her "Thoughts on March 8", were circulated among writers as examples of counterrevolutionary literature. She, of all the writers accused during this period, received the harshest treatment. Although her name surfaced once in an official record in the early 1960s, her whereabouts were unknown until 1978. She was presumed dead.

Two years after Mao's death (in 1976) Ding Ling's name suddenly reappeared, and she was accepted back into the party and literary circles. Ding Ling is 77 and continues to write. She now lives in Beijing and is an associate of the Beijing Writers Association. Her works have again been made available to the Chinese public since 1980.

She was selected as a guest artist by the International Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1981. Under the direction of Professor Nieh Hualing, also a Chinese woman writer and the founder of the writing program at the University of Iowa, many of Ding Ling's works are being translated for the first time into English.

After leaving the International Writers Workshop, Ding Ling came to California in December 1981 at the invitation of San Francisco's Eastwind Bookstore. Patty Estrada conducted the following interview for *Connexions* with Cecilia Tsui of the Eastwind staff.

Q: What do you know about Ding Ling's background?

A: I first heard of her in Taiwan. At that time, the Taiwan government did not allow anybody to read the so-called leftist writers. I first got to read her books when I came to Berkeley as a graduate student. She has quite an extensive list of books, probably 20 or 30 titles. I was really amazed that she had written so much. But there has been very little written about Ding Ling.

From what I could gather, she was born into a family in which her mother was not the first wife. Her mother was not a concubine, however, but rather quite a revolutionary person. She sent Ding Ling to a girls' school, which was not a popular thing to do at the time.

After Ding Ling graduated from high school, she left home and became a writer. She met the poet Hu Yeh-pin, who became her husband. At age 19, she was already a recognized writer. Not her first story, but her second or third one, "The Diary of Miss Sophia," really shook the literary world.

In that story she portrayed a woman with tuberculosis who had several boyfriends. Ding Ling showed the desire of this woman—her lust and love. She wrote frankly and boldly about this woman's sexuality. It was quite a short story, and people began to ask, "Who is this Ding Ling?" People associated Ding Ling's own life with the characters in her stories.

Her own life was rather similar. She lived with her husband before they were married. Her husband was a revolutionary. Both of them were quite active in the left in Shanghai at that time, and of course, the Kuomindang was trying to capture them. Finally Hu Yeh-pin was captured, imprisoned and executed. Ding Ling had just had a baby and her living conditions were very poor. She had to give the baby up to her mother, and at the same time kept her husband's execution a secret. At that point, Ding Ling went to Yenan, a Communist stronghold.

Q: You have met many of the Chinese writers who have visited the San Francisco Bay Area. What stands out about Ding Ling as a Chinese writer?

A: It's really hard to sum up. Considering what she has gone through all these years—being in jail and in labor camps—she still has hope for the Chinese people. A lot of other writers don't talk about that. Mostly all of them have tried to avoid talking about their experiences, especially during the Cultural Revolution. They are afraid to say anything about it or maybe it is bad memory. Few express the idea that even with torture and these kind of things that they are still full of hope— that the future is still bright to them. Ding Ling has projects; she still wants to write a lot more books. When she was in labor camps and people learned who she was, they secretly helped her out. Everywhere she was sent, the Chinese people helped her.

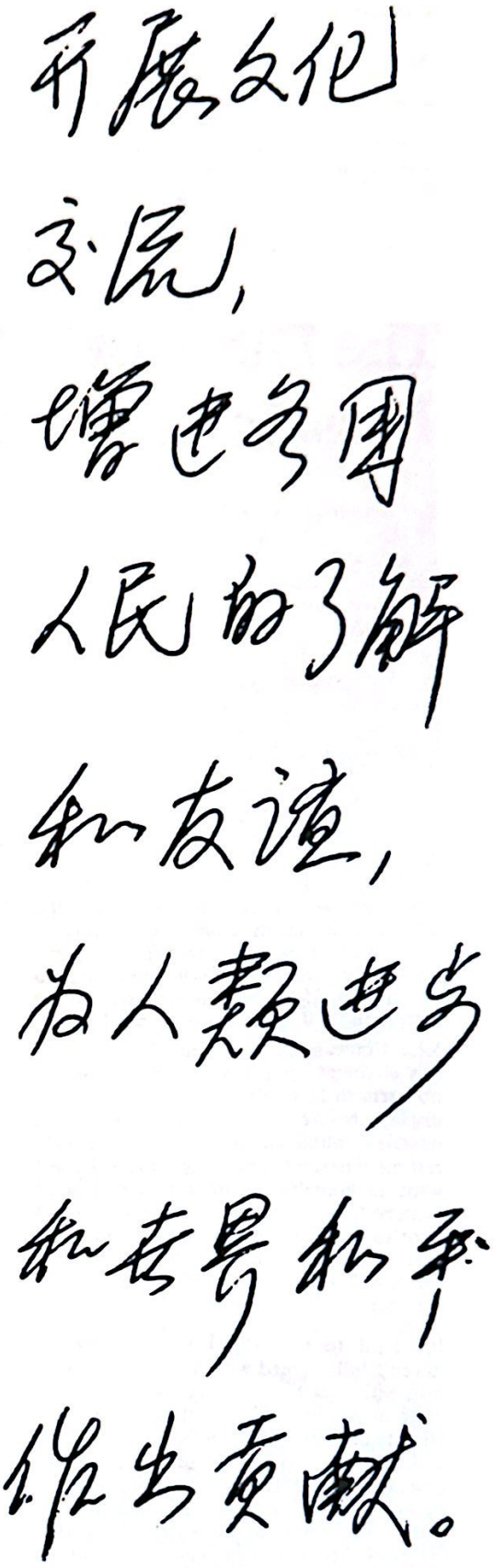
Q: What did Ding Ling say about writers in China today?

A: She said that nowadays, all the writers are supported by the government. They actually receive a regular salary. If they want to investigate something, they can write a proposal requesting money to do research and then be sent to wherever they want to go. They don't have to worry about earning a living.

Ding Ling's status has been restored and she is now part of the Literary Writers Association in Beijing. According to her, each province has its own writers association. Once writers are recognized by the association, they are automatically supported and can draw a salary. Ding Ling has been given a five room apartment, which is considered the highest honor in China. I think her present situation is far beyond her expectations.

Q: Ding Ling has been labeled by many as a militant feminist and has written predominantly about women. Has she written anything about lesbians?

A: I remember one story about Chinese school teachers. At that time women in China had very few opportunities for employment in Chinese society. If they could find a job it would be as a school teacher—mostly as elementary school teachers. Chinese society was very much a society of men, and most men did not seek liberal, educated women as wives. Yet these young women students were looking for love. They were very isolated. I read this short story long ago. When I read it I felt Ding Ling was describing the development of lesbian love.



"To develop a cultural exchange, to improve understanding and friendship among people of all countries, and to make a contribution to the improvement of mankind and peace throughout the world."

Q: Why do you consider Ding Ling to be a revolutionary writer?

A: Because she dared to write what other Chinese women writers did not dare to write. When Ding Ling was here I asked her about the short story, "The Diary of Miss Sophia". I said, "You must be pretty brave to write such a short story in 1927." She responded, "That is my revolutionary point of view. At that time no one was writing about the daring sexual manners of Chinese women."

We compared Ding Ling's writings with those of another Chinese woman writer, Chang Chieh. She became very famous after the Cultural Revolution. She wrote about platonic love in her story, *Love is Something You Cannot Forget*. Many people thought the deep platonic love between a man and a woman in this story to be impossible. We asked Ding Ling to compare these writings about platonic love with her own early writings about free love. Ding Ling said Chang Chieh's writings are different, and quite revolutionary too. Today in China, no one else is talking about platonic love. So for Ding Ling those writers, who say what no one has dared to say before, are quite revolutionary. □

The Diary of Miss Sophia

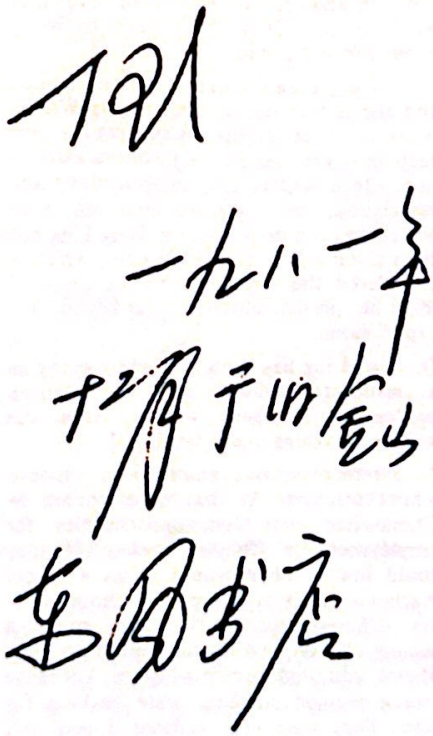
The following is an excerpt from *The Diary of Miss Sophia* which appears in *Straw Sandals—Chinese Short Stories, 1918-1933*, edited by Harold R. Isaacs, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mar. 13—I haven't written anything for several days. Whether it's due to my bad mood or the lack of so-called emotion, I don't know. Since yesterday I've wanted to cry. People imagine I am dreaming of my home and lamenting my continued illness. If they find me gay, they think me happy and congratulate me on these signs of returning health. They're all the same. To whom can I open my foolish heart, which disdains tears yet cannot summon up laughter? Since I understand perfectly my own lingering desires in this world and the distress that results from every effort to attain them, I can no longer feel sorry for myself for the pain which comes on so inexplicably. How can I then express all my regrets and self-hatred with my pen?

Yes, I'm complaining again. But since all this is revolving in my own mind, there's no harm in it. I've never had the ability to display before others my worries and miseries, although many indiscriminately call me lonesome, proud, and queer. I don't want to complain. I want to cry. I want somebody to hold me close, to weep on. I want to say "I'm wasting myself again." But who will understand me and caress away my tears? I can only swallow my tears in laughter.

It's hard to say why I feel this way. I haven't fully agreed with myself that I'm in love with that tall man. Yet what a special place he occupies in my scheme of things! His stature, his good looks and soft eyes and sensitive mouth can of course attract girls who like this sort of thing, and his proud manners will win the affection of some. Yet am I to be attracted by this Nanyang Apollo just because of his senseless beauty? I'm fully aware from what he's told me of his outlook and pathetic desires. What does he want? Money. A young wife who'll receive his business friends in the drawing room. A few fat sons dressed in fine linens. What is love to him? Something he can buy with his money in brothels where he can enjoy the pleasures of the flesh on a soft sofa with a slender, perfumed body on his lap and smoke cigarettes like a young gallant and, crossing his knees, talk boastfully about it to his friends. And if he happens not to enjoy it, he can return to his wife. He would be an enthusiastic speechmaker, a tennis player. He would go to Harvard and become a diplomat, an ambassador. Or perhaps he would go into his father's business, be a rubber merchant in Singapore, a capitalist! These are his dreams and the boundaries of his existence. Except for concern over the unsatisfactorily small dimensions of amounts of money he has been getting from his father, he has nothing to lose sleep over. Or perhaps the scarcity of beautiful women in Peking, a defect which makes the parks and theaters less attractive. What can I say now? When I realize that in that noble figure of a man resides so cheap and mean a soul, and that I've accepted from him intimacies that measure up to less than half of what he squanders away at the brothels! When I think of the time he brushed my hair with his lips, I could cry for shame. Don't I offer myself to him for his amusement like the girls who sell their smiles? But the blame can only be on me, and this adds to my suffering. If I were harder, I'd check his boldness and then I'd think his timidity was because he has never experienced passion. Ai! How I should damn myself! □

Eastwind Books



"Ding Ling, December 21, 1981, San Francisco, Eastwind Bookstore"

Further reading:

- *"The Changing Relationship Between Literature and Life: Aspects of the Writer's Role in Ding Ling" by Yi-Tsi M. Feuerwerker in "Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era," Harvard University Press, 1977.*
- *"Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution" by Agnes Smedley, Feminist Press, Old Westbury, NY, 1976. Please check your libraries for other books by Agnes Smedley which may presently be out of print.*
- *"Born of the Same Roots," stories of modern Chinese women, edited by Vivian Ling Hsu, Indiana University Press, 1981.*
- *"The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution 1895-1980" by Jonathan Spence, The Village Press, New York, 1981.*

Contact:

- *For more information on Ding Ling's writings available in English, contact the International Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, Iowa City.*

Celluloid Politics

From May 25 to 31, 1981, the first International Feminist Film and Video Conference was held in Amsterdam. The conference was organized by a Dutch feminist film group called *Cinemien* and financially sponsored by the Dutch government. Two hundred women from 32 countries, all involved in filmmaking and video, came to Amsterdam to exchange ideas and information.

The following interview with Atiat El Abnoudi, an Egyptian filmmaker, was conducted in Cairo on August 6, 1981. The women who worked on this issue had several discussions about some of the opinions expressed in this interview. We include this conversation with Atiat El Abnoudi as a contribution to the dialogue among feminists internationally. Special thanks to Diane Belle James for conducting the interview.

Q: What happened at the conference in Amsterdam?

A: We talked about a lot of things, what we do, what our problems are. It was very interesting. Before the conference I received, from my point of view, a one-sided paper on feminist problems and women filmmakers making films for and about women. So I was very happy to attend the conference just to mention a different point of view. We third world women have other problems. We don't think we can separate ourselves from men's struggles, because both men and women are oppressed. How can we talk about women's liberation apart from national liberation?

Q: Do you think the women there were closed to that point of view?

A: Yes. Western European women, and Americans, Australians and Canadians, have a certain standard of living, a certain kind of infrastructure that helps them to get employment. They have the right to work. Their struggle is over how much they should get paid; here we are at the stage of getting the right to work. In my country, if a woman works she gets the same wage as a man. So it's different.

Western women talk about sexual liberation. Here we have sexual oppression. We can't walk in the street with a man without society talking about us. We have to be married; men in our country have the right to marry four women.

Q: It's not very prevalent though, is it?

A: But he has the right. His economic situation might prevent him, because he has to support all of them, but by law he has the right.

Q: Did you discuss such things at the conference?

A: This conference was for women filmmakers, so it dealt with a very specific subject. We did not discuss the whole women's issue. We talked about filmmaking and doing things with film and video. We realized that we are privileged, because in our countries not many women have the same kind of education. So what are we going to do with this privilege? I am a filmmaker. What kind of films am I going to make? If I am privileged and the whole society paid for me to go and be educated in England and in the film school here at the University of Cairo, and I have a law degree and so forth, I can't say that I'm just going to work for women because I am a woman. You see what I mean?

Q: Did you find that women from other third world countries shared the same problems?

A: I think so. At the end of the conference we made a statement. We were obliged to because of all the things that went on around us. We found a lot of people didn't understand how we can talk about society or national liberation movements and not talk about feminist problems. We said we are not against talking about feminism or feminist films, but we want to express the other point of view. We want to inform you of what is going on in our countries.

At the conference some journalists asked a very racist question: "Did you get something out of this conference?" So I said "Why do you ask me the question in that way? Why don't you ask how much the conference benefited from me?" You know they always think about third world people as underdeveloped and coming to Europe to get something. Why don't they think I can contribute to the conference? It's good for the other women at the conference to see us, to talk with us, and at least to think that there are other women in the world that have different problems and are militant and fighting.

So we made a declaration, supported by the whole conference, and I think we put in it everything we wanted to say. (See box.) For me it was like the manifesto I've been working on all my life. I've been working on films now for ten years and this is my statement too.

Q: Did you show any of your films at the conference?

Diane Belle James

A: They showed two of my films, the first one I made, *Mud Horse,* and my most recent film, *Seas of Thirst,* which is about a small fishing village in the delta, in the far north, surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea and the Borolos Lake. Although the village is surrounded by water, the people there don't have fresh water. They have to travel 12 kilometers to get it. The whole village works. They fish, then give their catch to the merchants who sit there and do nothing but take the fish and give them money, loans and things like that. The very old play of capital and workers. In the village, everyone on shore is also exploited. The children work; the old women knit the nets; the whole village works all the time. Yet they don't have the essential necessities, such as fresh water, that any animal must have to live. They are constantly looking for water.

Looking for water, the women walk along the shore of the sea until they come to a low point between the hills where the rain water has been caught and is less salty. Because they are poor women they can't afford to send a car to the nearest town for water. As a woman in the film said to me, "Every day I need six containers of water. A container [20 liters] is 15 piasters. So how much will I pay daily? If I want to wash and cook and drink and have a bath or anything, how much will I have per day, and how much can I afford to pay from my very limited salary, because I am the wife of a teacher [a teacher's monthly base pay is about U.S.$40] and I have four children."

Q: You also went to Munich recently?

A: My visit to Munich was for work. I'm working with Pierre Hoffman, a West German producer. He's a man, but has a very good idea of making eight 30-minute films under the title *As Women See It*, by women filmmakers in eight different countries. I'm making the film for Egypt. There's another one being made in Senegal, one in Nicaragua, Peru, India, France, West Germany, Italy and possibly Poland. They've already started some of the films. They've finished shooting in Senegal, and they've finished editing in Peru. As the artistic supervisor of this project, I'm going to Nicaragua next month to supervise the shooting. Later I'm going to India to supervise the shooting there. Every filmmaker will choose her own subject and use her own people. The director, the crew, everyone will be local. That's what I like about this project.

The project is being financed by money from a variety of sources, such as the Dutch government, the West German Ministry of Education, the World Council of Churches. Some countries will finance their own film and will receive the entire program of eight in exchange. We may make a two-hour version of the eight films for theatrical distribution.

Q: They would have to be cut a lot for that.

A: Yes, but the eight-film program serves some purposes and the two-hour version serves others. I think it will be very interesting. I am excited about the project. But you know when Pierre Hoffman showed up at the conference, he was refused by the European women. I can't understand why these women don't like to work with men.

I can work with men and women. I don't really like this dishwasher machine level of struggle. Who is going to wash the dishes or who is going to take care of the children? That has nothing to do with liberation. If I have a well-off husband, he will buy me a dishwasher. So what else will I ask of him? Okay, so he tells me, don't wash, don't take care of the children; I will get you a baby sitter and a dishwasher. Liberation is something else. It's the *conception of being a slave for a man,* not who will bring up the children or wash the dishes.

Q: But the example of the woman with the rich husband doesn't work for all women.

A: I mean we are not sisters. We have conflict among each other. It's a class question. Maybe it's a naive point of view but I'll tell you anyway. When Marx wrote his book, there was another Marx on the other side who also wrote his book to fight the Marxist book. If you have a theory, someone else is going to make an anti-theory. So the capitalist made his book to fight the Marx book, which said the working class will make their revolution if they have solidarity. So the capitalist said okay, no solidarity. We will give them what they want. We will make them bourgeois. So the capitalists gave them a car, a house. In many countries, the working class has been split apart and now they are fighting for better cars and better houses, better education, and things like that.

Diane Belle James

Because a woman—in every society, in every class—is the most important and most oppressed person in the family, she has the most potential to be revolutionary. So I think this movement, coming from the old European society giving them these bits: you want a liberation movement, okay; solidarity with women, okay. Have your cafes and clubs and parties and be separated from your society. They encourage them to do that. Again they are splitting society, the way they split the working class. It means isolation. And it's not *par hasard* (by chance).

Q: How do you support your film work?

A: I came back from studying film in England in 1976. I didn't get any work until 1978. Then the Egyptian Catholic Association [Coptic] asked me to make a documentary about their work in upper Egypt. The result was *Move Into Depth.* In this film I tried to accentuate the social conditions of the people and to show why the ECA concentrates their work in upper Egypt. The title comes from the Bible when Peter met Christ and he said to him, "I spent all night at the sea and didn't catch any fish." So Christ said, "Move into depth." It was a symbol of their work in the depth of Egypt to try and fish the real Egyptian person, and to help people to be themselves.

I finished that film in 1980. Meanwhile, the Catholic Relief Service, an American organization that has been working in Egypt some 25 years, wanted me to make a film about their projects. I spent two years going around the country looking at what they are doing and I was really trying to figure out what I could do because I don't make propaganda films. They were really good people and they understood my problem. Finally, I had the courage to say that I was going to make a film that could help the Catholic Relief Service. So I made a film of this village with no fresh water called *Seas of Thirst.*

Q: Has the film been shown yet in Cairo?

A: Yes, but I must explain. When you are making films in a third world country, there are many things to avoid to be able to show your work. I wanted to show the film before declaring to the censor that the film had been made, because I didn't know what the

censor would do. The Catholic Relief Service organized the opening at the American University and they invited the American ambassador and his wife, and so on. I had three showings at the American University without going through the censor. After that, I went to the censor and told them the film was an American production, so they passed it.

But if you want to participate in an international film festival, you have to go through the festival committee. They refused me. So, I said, okay, you refused this film as a representative of the *official* Egyptian cinema, but I am a private producer. So what are you going to do with me? It's a very delicate situation.

Q: But aren't they asking for a shortened version of the film for television?

A: Not here, abroad. Egyptian television had never shown any of my films until last year when *Mud Horse* was aired. Maybe in another ten years they will show *Seas of Thirst.* □

Further reading:

- *"The Hidden Face of Eve" by Nawal El Saadawi, Zed Press, London, 1980.*
- *"We Won't Get Our Rights By Begging," interview with Nawal El Saadawi in "Connexions," Issue # 0, May 1981.*
- *"Images of Arab Women" by Mona Mikhail, Three Continents Press, Washington, DC, 1979.*
- *"Women of the Fertile Crescent," modern poetry by Arab women, edited by Kamal Boullata, Three Continents Press, Washington, DC, 1981.*
- *"Merip," monthly magazine on the Middle East, Box 43445, Washington, DC 20010.*
- *"Khamsin," quarterly journal on the Middle East, contact "Merip" at above address.*

DECLARATION OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST FILM AND VIDEO CONFERENCE MAY 25-31,1981, AMSTERDAM

We women filmmakers of the third world, joined by immigrant filmmakers and western women filmmakers, declare that women's issues are related to the socioeconomic and political problems of our countries in the global context. In the larger oppression that exists, women's problems have their specificity. Women are doubly oppressed. We women in the third world countries experience imperialism, racism, suppression of basic human rights and male domination.

The present mass media in our countries is influenced by capitalist and patriarchal concepts which depict women as sex objects for male consumption. It is dominated by men who are often educated in the West and who impose an imperialist culture. Women who work in the media do not necessarily have a critical political perspective, and so they reinforce the same oppressive ideology.

As feminist filmmakers, we work for political and socioeconomic change through film for our people. We choose to work in film and audio-visual media as they are powerful tools in our countries to arouse social consciousness and effect political change, particularly because of:

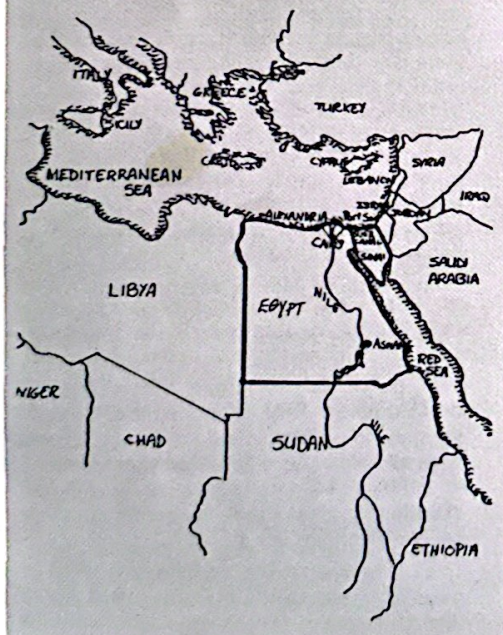
1. Widespread illiteracy and political unconsciousness,
2. The isolation of communities where the majority of our people live,
3. The mass appeal of the medium.

Our position on filmmaking is defined by a specific political commitment to both the struggle of women and the national liberation of our countries. We take a definite political stand and class position with the people we are filming. We do not accept the myth of objectivity.

In the practice of our commitment we are forced to create new forms and models of production, filmmaking, distribution and exhibition. We welcome the foreign women filmmakers who have political solidarity with our aims and objectives. This solidarity would imply a dialogue and exchange of resources including materials and technical skills. We would also like to bring about a serious cooperation and dialogue with the millions of immigrant women and exiled women living around the world.

Lastly, we support the armed struggle of women in the many countries fighting imperialism, racism, expansionism, fascism and all forms of dictatorships in the many countries, particularly El Salvador, Palestine, South Africa, the Philippines and Ireland.

Egypt



Arab Republic of Egypt, colonized in the 19th century by the French and the British. Independent since 1922. 1952 the Officers' Revolution against King Farouk led by Gamal Nasser. 1970 after Nasser's death, Anwar Sadat came to power. 1981 Sadat killed. Hosni Mubarak new president.

POPULATION

1962...estimated 27 million. 1977...estimated 38 million. 1982...estimated 43 million. 38% live in urban settings; 62% in rural areas. 99% live in the Nile Valley, the Delta and along the Suez Canal (3.5% of the total land). With 6,000 people per square mile, Egypt is one of the most densely populated areas in the world.

WOMEN'S LIVES

The vast majority of Egyptian women are poor and illiterate. 46.7% of employed women are married compared to 78.2% of women working at home. Only 11% of women over 16 have never been married. In the urban centers, the divorce rate is 2.9% compared to 1.2% in the rural areas.

1923 the Women's Federation was founded by Hoda Shaarawi. 1956 women gained the right to vote. 1962 first women cabinet minister.

RELIGION

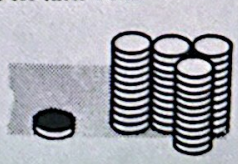
Principal Religion: Islam, 92% of the people are Sunni Muslims. There are also about 7 million Coptic Christians.

LANGUAGES

Arabic is the principle language. The influence of the Egyptian Arabic (in film, radio, etc.) goes beyond the national borders.

ECONOMY AND WORK SITUATION

GNP per capita $280. Main agricultural products: cotton, wheat, rice, sugar cane and corn. Main industries: Textiles and processing of food products. Egypt has become heavily dependent on financial assistance from abroad. In 1977, of the total employable work force, 50.6% of the men and 7.4% of the women were employed. Female participation in non-agricultural job categories: Professional...22.6%, White Collar...4.5%, Sales...5.5%, Manual Labor...3%, Service (including domestic)...16%; Industries: Extractive...0.3%, Manufacturing...3.3%, Construction...0.3%, Electricity and Gas...0.7%, Commerce...15.9%, Transport...0.9%, Public and Administrative...9.2%. Most women living in the countryside work in the fields, but do not receive any income for their work.



Chile: Nuestro Canto

Lupe Bornand is a Chilean folksinger who toured the United States in 1981 with musician and storyteller Osvaldo Torres. Their show combines music and theatre, with Osvaldo recreating the folk tales of the Andean peasants and Indians, and Lupe presenting traditional or newly-composed ballads. The following interview was conducted for *Connexions* by Kathleen Tandy.

Q: What do you do in Chile?

A: I sing, but mostly I am a producer. *Nuestro Canto,* [Our Song] is the name of the production company where I work. In my office there are three departments. One is the Department of Extension, which deals mostly with *monotorias,* do you know what they are? For example, if you want to teach a class on "theory of folklore," you need people who will go to the shantytowns and teach folklore theory. We start with a group of 20 people who have been taught by a professor. Each of the 20 take what they have learned off to a some village or area and teach another 20 people, who then, too, move on. And so it continues. That is the Department of Extension.

Then we have the Department of Solidarity. Osvaldo is in charge of that department. They coordinate aid projects, such as for the families of the disappeared political prisoners, and music and art workshops.

Lastly, we have the Department of Production—that's me. My work has two aspects. I produce shows in theaters and movie houses in the downtown area. I hire the artists, take care of publicity, run here, there and the other place to produce the show. That's my official job. But I also produce shows in the shantytowns and for the unions. I do this under the table, which my job permits. I work in an office where the majority of the people are in a political party, so I have a lot more mobility, a lot more freedom. So, I do that work, and then I sing.

Q: How does the government view your work?

A: The perspective of the government? Well, the government doesn't view it well. For example, in order to do a show, we have to get permission from the police. We have to write down the lyrics of the songs. We have to ask for sponsorship from the Ministry of Education so that they can give tax exempt status, which they never give to us because they say that since we charge admission, we're not doing a cultural show. It's very expensive to produce a legitimate show, so we operate with a lot of problems.

On the other hand, if we do a show in a shantytown, it's much cheaper. For example, if we go to a town, we work in the church hall or the union lends us their auditorium. There are people we work with who charge us one rate for this type of show and another rate for the theater shows. That lowers the cost of the production making it practically free for the local people and union members. We pay the popular singers, but we pay them almost nothing.

Q: You and Osvaldo enjoy a great popularity in Chile which allows you to do your work and protects you a little...

A: But we are not immune!

Q: Exactly! So how did you become so popular and what are the risks you run?

A: Well, just think, I am *the* producer of the only production company that exists in Chile. This means that I have a certain renown, at least among a small circle of people. The fact that I am a producer, that they call me from all over, that I have contact with a lot of people, makes me feel that I am a public person. This implies that I am a little more untouchable that just any other person. Apart from this, I am a popular singer.

Also one learns to get around by developing a new language. I don't talk in Chile the way I am speaking to you now. We use associations, political associations. If you're in a public meeting, you never say, "What we have to do in this time of the junta is to change things completely!" No, you say, "Well, I'd like to sing a beautiful song about some problems that we all face. In this song, it talks about the night, and the day which will arrive, the dawn..." Things like that are being developed. One hears fantastic things done with language!

Q: But does everyone understand?

A: Everyone understands; it's like a universal language; no one doubts what you are saying.

Q: But if everyone understands, how is it that the government is not aware of it?

A: They're aware.

Q: But they say nothing?

A: Sometimes they say something! [laughter] For example, shortly before coming here we participated in a piece that was a memorial, an homage to Violeta Parra. [Violeta Parra was a catalyst for what is now the "new song" movement in Latin America. She collected and popularized traditional songs and instruments, as well as singing and writing songs about social conditions in Chile in the 1960s.] This was a presentation in a shantytown. When we got there, the people were starting to get scared. The songs were all very direct. We left at once and we found out the next day that ten minutes after we had left, the police had come and suspended the presentation. A comrade who had helped organize the thing had to flee because they were looking for him. Fortunately, we can smell them, and we know how to be aware [sniffing] of what may happen.

Q: How long have you been doing this kind of work?

A: About five years, or more. After the coup, in 1975, I started working with people doing aid projects and culture workshops. I was also singing at the time but mostly at the level of solidarity work, at the student level. It was not a professional thing. It's rare for a woman to be involved in the production of shows, but I learned through practice. Someone would say "Hey! We have to make posters. Who can get the posters for me?" "I will do it." So, I made the posters. And so on. I worked for two years without pay, but all of this helped me. I began to be known; I was acquiring a name, being present everywhere.

In Chile, if you are not present every day, involved in all the struggles that there are, then you are nothing, because you are always lagging behind. It's giddying, all this; there are incredible changes. For example, more than a year ago, there was increased fearfulness in Chile. Everything moved backwards, all the cultural work and solidarity work moved underground. In our office, the Department of Solidarity usually receives letters from all over requesting artists for shows in the shantytowns. Or someone wants a show organized for an event, such as May 1, International Workers Day. But for a while we were not receiving any letters. Two months went by without a single letter! What was happening? So we had to rethink everything. We decided to close the Department of Solidarity since it no longer had any meaning, and created something else. And then—a flood of letters and letters and letters! But we had already closed the department. No matter—we'll reopen it!

There are some very important things that have happened in Chile that I would like to mention. For example, there are the

poetry workshops, in which women poets have had an important role. These people, women too, go out to the shantytowns to read their poems. They put on a very nice presentation at the Central Station, the largest train station in Santiago. There they put up a platform and began to recite their poetry. Women have a very important part in this, they have a great capacity to bring people together.

Then there is TIT, an experimental theatre group made up of four women. They are more professional. Recently, they worked with the women relatives of disappeared persons on a play called "Three Marías and one Rose." These women, the relatives of the disappeared, embroider together little bits of colored cloth called *arpilleras* [patchwork tapestries with slogans like "No to the lay-offs," "The claw of the junta must be smashed"]. The play was about the work these women do and their struggle.

Q: Are these *arpilleras* sold in Chile?

A: They are passed underground from one person to the next.

Q: Is it a new thing for women to be involved in popular song?

A: Well, it was born after 1973. Everything that we have been talking about is from 1973 on because that's when a new life started for us. There are a lot of women who I am representing. I'm not here in an official capacity representing the "delegation of popular singers." No. But I feel as if I am representing the popular singers of Chile, and the value of what I do, is not isolated from the value of other women's work.

So, you see women in theatre, in poetry, in popular song. There are a lot of women who are from the shantytowns and are popular singers. A woman takes on a very combative role; she becomes rather daring. She is in the shantytowns, she is in the unions, she is everywhere. There is a woman called *la Batucana* who is very proletarian and makes *décimas*. [A traditional form of oral poetry, each verse having ten lines of eight syllables each, often improvised to music.] She does something very different, more folkloric. Perhaps what I do is a little more political.

I have the good fortune of being able to travel. I am very interested in going back with what I learned from traveling. When one is outside, the world opens up for you. A lot of times in Chile you just look straight ahead, and then you leave and everything opens up, huy! It's spectacular. And then you realize, "If I could do this and if I could do that, how can I take with me these materials from here that will allow me to develop that project there?" For example, I am very interested in going back to Chile and filming a group of women, women in culture.

Q: What objectives did you have in making this trip?

A: Fundamentally, to make known the reality of Chilean women, and to learn about the situation of North American women which for me is absolutely and completely unknown. We don't receive feminist literature in Chile. The first thing that people said to me when I arrived in the U.S. is that there is such and such an organization of Latin women. I don't want that. I know the situation of Latin women. What interests me is the situation of North American women. There is so little information available in Chile. For example, I got hold of a book called *De Ellas Para Ellas* [From Women to Women]. This is the only book I've ever seen on women and I couldn't finish it because it was lent to me for only one day. We are very far from your struggles; the struggles of women here are very different from our own.

Also, the trip has served me well in terms of artistic experience. I had the opportunity to go on television and on radio, which are closed forms of media in Chile. The trip has also helped me to gain a lot of personal freedom; I don't know if that is going to cause me problems of maladjustment when I return, because things are different there. □

Further reading:

- *"Who Counted on the Junta Lasting?" and "Seven Fat Years," interviews with Chilean exiles in "Connexions," Issues #0 and #2, May 1981 and Fall 1981.*
- *Gladys Diaz on the situation of Chilean exiles available in English and Spanish from "WIRES," 2700 Broadway, Rm. 7, New York, NY 10025. $1.00.*

Contact:

- *"Ormiga," Chilean women's publication, Casilla 160, Las Condes, Santiago 10, Chile.*
- *Casa Chile, 3410 19th St., San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415) 861-2702.*

TRES MARIAS Y UNA ROSA

(Based on *Spare Rib*, British feminist monthly, July 1981.)

Vibrant and defiantly complex, *Tres Marias y Una Rosa* recreates the struggle for survival of four working-class Chilean women living in a poor shantytown in Santiago. Maruja, Maria Luisa, Maria Ester and Rosa work together making patchwork tapestries to sell abroad. Brought together as much by expediency as friendship, the four women support and fight each other as they struggle to keep themselves and their families alive—emotionally as well as physically. Within their relationship is a play about pride, integrity, generosity, humor and sheer courage. And a play, too, about the other side of the coin: the brutalization, violence, betrayal, pain and distrust that oppression can generate.

Subtly the background to their lives is painted in—anything else would be impossible in Pinochet's Chile. The dictatorship clinging onto the coattails of the U.S.; the suffering of their men who, nonetheless, have the privilege of being men in a male-dominated society. There's a beautiful scene when a very pregnant Rosa explains why she wants to join the workshop: her husband, she says, works in a factory making Mickey Mouse toys. His boss doesn't pay him in money, but Mickey Mouses. So her husband comes home and tells her to go and sell the toys in the market, but nobody's got the money to buy Mickey Mouses. So here she is—the family must be kept.

The vitality and the pain of the women is brilliantly conveyed by the actresses. Perhaps because they work so closely with the people they write about—often at considerable political risk for everybody. As in the words of one of the actors, "*Tres Marias y Una Rosa* deals with the work, the respect and the dignity of women. The process of conceiving, acting and staging this piece has also been an exercise in work and respect."

La Peña Cultural Center

GUATEMALA

(From *The Situation of the Indian Peoples in Guatemala* by Antonio Pop Caal, translated from a letter which appeared in the Guatemalan magazine *La Semana* in March 1973.)

Some persons claim that an Indian culture does not exist in Guatemala. They argue that there is only a mestizo culture, historically formed by conditions of domination, and through four centuries of colonialism the role of the Mayan element was destroyed in present-day Indian life. These misconceptions merely reflect the ignorance and prejudice of those who make such statements. □

M. Hernandez-Martin

The most visible signs of the native culture are the costumes, especially of the women. More and more men have converted to European dress for reasons of economy and conformity, but for the *indígena,* it is her *traje* which distinguishes her from the *ladina,* a woman of Spanish descent or cultural values. If she gives up her *corte* (wrap-around skirt) and *huipil* (woven blouse), she is no longer considered an Indian. The *huipil* is her pride, her statement that she has not assimilated, that she is indigenous to the land.

Women have been weaving in Guatemala since pre-columbian times. Today, as before, they weave on backstrap looms in order to clothe themselves and their families and as part of their daily routine of chores, although tourism is beginning to create a new market for their craft.

The backstrap loom is essentially a set of smooth sticks of varying widths and one shaped wooden beater. The warp of the weaving forms the vertical element of the loom, one end of which is tied by a rope to a tree or ceiling beam. The other end is attached with the backstrap around the weaver's body which she then moves forward or backward to adjust the tension of the warp threads. It is one of the most basic and universal looms, and was used in Southeast Asia, Scandinavia, as well as in ancient and modern Central and South America.

Compared to the floor or "Spanish" loom introduced to Guatemala by the colonialists, the backstrap loom is portable and inexpensive—free to anyone with a machete and a seasoned hardwood branch. It is considered easier to learn to use, although the work is much more time consuming. The resulting product is more tightly woven and durable. Floor looms are exclusively used by men to weave skirt lengths and fabric for export; backstrap weaving, which requires much patience, is the realm of the women. □

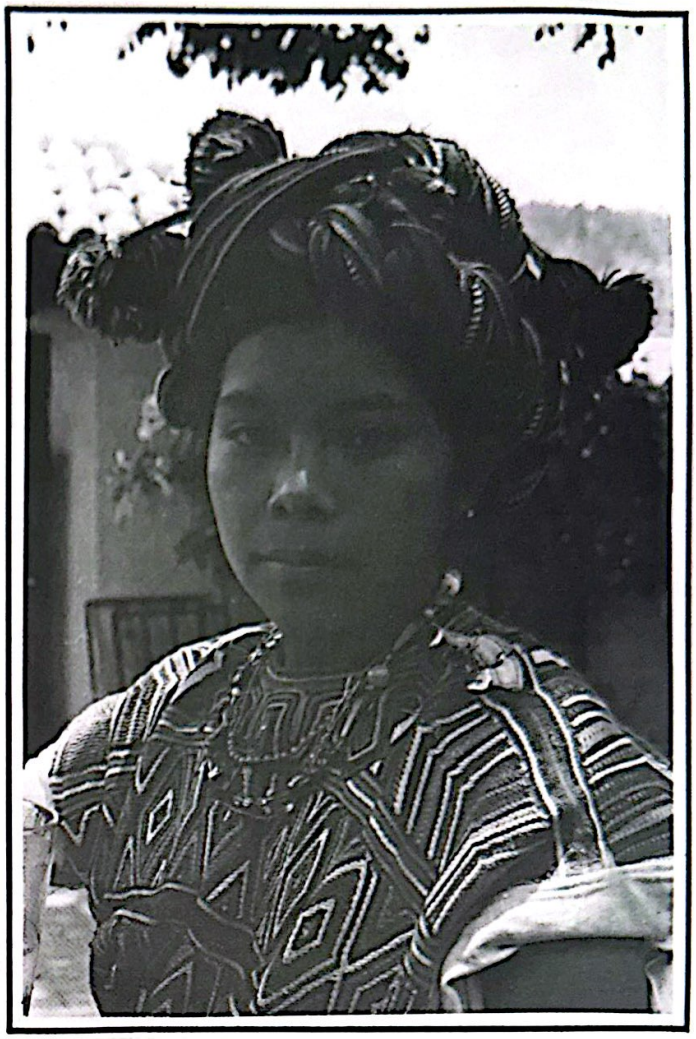
(From *IXIMCHE: The Indigenous People Declare Unity*, February 14, 1980, distributed by the Guatemala Information Center, Box 15052, Long Beach, CA 90815.)

The Indian peoples of Guatemala declare and denounce to the world the more than four centuries of discrimination, negation, repression, exploitation and massacres by the foreign invaders, which continues even today through their even more savage and criminal descendants.

In 1975, squads of the National Army arrived at Nebaj, a department of Quiché, and afterwards came soldiers of Somoza's National Guard, with the pretext of going there to maintain order. But the truth is that this region is the entrance to that area known as the "Transversal del Norte," an area rich in minerals such as nickel, petroleum, and where land is fertile for cattle and rich for the exploitation of lumber. A large part of this zone is populated by Indian people.

Because of the criminal acts of the National Army, at the end of 1978 about 50 women from Cotzal [a neighboring town] denounced them and demanded the return of their husbands. The authorities did not listen to the women, and the army continued killing our brothers and sisters in this zone. In the midst of so much despair, again more than 100 of our Indian brothers and sisters from Uspantan, Chajul, Cotzal and Nebaj decided to go to the capital to denounce and to demand the end of the extensive repression which the army was carrying out.

But this same government accused our people, Ixiles and Quiches, of being terrorists, subversives and guerrillas, and said they were not Indians because they talked Spanish and did not use *guarachas* (sandals)—all because it is not convenient for the rich and their government that the poor people of Guatemala and the world learn the truth about what the Army is doing in the north of the Quiché. For this reason the assassin government of Lucas ordered its repressive forces to gun down and burn alive our Indian brothers. [As well as four women from that group. In all, 39 people were killed, despite having taken refuge in the Spanish Embassy.]



These rich and their government massacre us in various ways and still try to deceive us, setting up *fiestas folklóricos*, and the photos which the INGUAT exploits for the tourist trade. The INGUAT is the organization in charge of the touristic propaganda outside Guatemala. It paints Guatemala in a very romantic and picturesque way with its Mayan ruins, weaving, dances and traditions. The Indian becomes an object of Tourism, a commercial object. All the benefits of this business are for the hotel chains, transportation business, the middle men for the Indian crafts, and the government itself. But we, the Indians, are those who gain the least benefits from tourism, which in the last few years has been the second place in the economy of the nation. □

Further reading:

- *"Guatemala: Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win," October 1981, available from Concerned Guatemala Scholars, Box 270, Wyckoff Heights Station, Brooklyn, NY 11237. $3.00.*

Contact:

- *Guatemala News and Information Bureau, Box 4126, Berkeley, CA 94704.*
- *APIA Nicaragua, Contiguo, Casa del Periodista, Reparto Belmonte Managua. Tel: 5-16-15.*

One Hundred Years of Silence

(Translated from *Mujeres*, Argentine women's journal, No.1, November 1981.)

In June of 1981, some 500 women from Latin America, the United States, Canada, France and Palestine gathered in Mexico City for the 4th Interamerican Congress of Women Writers. Following are excerpts from a paper presented at the conference by Ruth Fernandez of Argentina, a writer of poetry, stories, essays and children's theater.

In Latin America, social and cultural traditions still appear to dominate literature to such an extent that even women writers do not know of one another. Each remains geographically isolated, not knowing of other women writing. Why are Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ernesto Sabato, Jorge Cortazar, Octavio Paz well known, but not Clarice Lispector, Olga Orozco, Luisa Valenzuela, to mention only a few?

Which of us has written a book that has become well-known through its extraordinary power of persuasion? Which of us has produced a work distributed in thousands of copies around the world, except for Victoria Ocampo in Argentina and Gabriela Mistral in Chile? And both are, sad to say, honorable exceptions—women who lived in extraordinary circumstances, in very special social and political situations.

In Latin America, movements against slavery have been made up of about 40% women. Social struggles are of the people, precisely those people who do not have access to written language for expressing these struggles. Working class women have thought, have acted, but they generally have not written books. Literature has always been the inherited province of the bourgeoisie. Factors such as totalitarianism and instability have conspired to make working people's primary expression that of their own survival: food, housing, family, work. And women find themselves on the bottom.

This experience has been transformed by their own cultures, the ancestral Latin American cultures that speak to us through the epic poetry of the indigenous populations, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the French. Conquest and rebellion. Or rebellion and conquest. And always, we are Latin Americans, or better, Latin Americans full of strength, full of passion. We are surrounded by an exuberant landscape, by a magic, esoteric tradition, by mysterious rhythms that come to us from long before the *conquistadores* set foot in these lands. Hence all these strange combinations—strange because we accumulate as well the European immigrations, especially in Argentina and Uruguay—providing us with prolific material, bringing us easily to transformation and transgression.

Our voices have changed, or they are changing. The magical is in our pores. And so is the sexual, the mystical, the political, the historical... Now more than ever we feel free to insult, to challenge, to shout unequivocally all the scars, internal and external, the centuries of oppression and silence; to rebel against those in charge of trampling on us and humiliating us.

Goethe once said that "the world of woman is the home, and the home of man is the world." We reply that the home of humankind is the world, that we are all here in it, woman and man, man and woman. And we add: it will be necessary, essential, to create new family, social and community structures within which women and men are equals.

So we see that the search for an identity, this longing to know deeply who we are and what we do, is in all of us women who write. What woman not searching for this identity will use such forbidden words as orgasm, coitus, or will talk of verifying with her own words events of a social, historical or political character?

The truth is that the language of women writers is changing. And this is the same transgression that moved Alfonsina Storni—for me the highest example of freedom of expression—to denounce in her *Mundo de Siete Pozos* (World of Seven Wells) the omnipresence of men, her own disillusionment and abandonment, confronting through her poetry this small world of incomprehension and lack of greatness, or the humiliation that was to hound her until her death for having broken, in action and words, the rules of the game: her sin of love. And she says it, she sings it at the top of her voice...

Latin American women in general, and Argentine writers in particular, are learning the gifts of freedom, liberating themselves from their most pernicious enemy: fear. We are overcoming circumstances that might have impeded our most natural expression, denouncing a reality controlled by our male colleagues. Many of our writers have dared to present bravely our social reality, and this is clearly changing our established habits. We must and do show in our work a cultural inheritance that little by little reveals the extraordinary power of a self-identity: female and Latin American. □

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(Translated from *fem*, Mexican feminist journal, No.10, January-October 1979.)

Women write, read, speak spiritually with more or less ingeniousness, only in the most privileged environments, and especially in the most developed societies.

Sor Juana, in colonial and baroque Mexico, confirmed the rule of one's own room, which in her case was more closed than most but less her own: the nun's cell. And during the same period, there is no woman in Spain who compares to her, although Spain did have, one century earlier, Teresa of Avila. The comparison between the two women shows more differences than similarities. Nevertheless, one common element unites them: both had to struggle against the ecclesiastic bureaucracy. On the other hand, both, as nuns, became part of the chorus of single women who sing for love.

What happened in our Spanish America after Sor Juana? We have, of course, romantic poets: some well-known, others recognized, many anonymous. Poetry in the 19th century was for women—just as water colors and embroidered flowers were a fun pastime and a permissible outlet. The first women to make a place for themselves in our century were also poets: Delmira Agustini, Alfonsina Storni, Juana de Ibarbourou, Gabriela Mistral. These women are marked, to a more or less degree, by solitude and in one case, that of Alfonsina Storni, by suicide. Another, Delmira Agustini was the victim of a murder of passion; her husband killed himself after killing her. Romanticism was brought to its furthest consequences. □

Further reading:

- "*Introductory Essays*" and "*New Translations*," *contemporary women authors of Latin America, edited by Doris Meyer and Margarite Fernandez Olmos, Brooklyn College Press, Brooklyn, NY, to be published Spring 1982.*
- "*Recollections of Things to Come*" *by Elena Garro, translated by Ruth Simms, University of Texas Press, 1969.*
- "*Strange Things Happen Here*," *26 short stories and a novel by Luisa Valenzuela, translated by Helen Lane, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979.*

The Foreigner

She speaks with the accent of her barbarous seas
filled with strange algae and sands;
she prays to a formless god without weight,
grown so old it seems she would die.
She has made our garden strange to us,
planted cactus and clawing grass.
Nourished by the desert's breath her passionate love scorched, but she never tells, if told it would be like a map of another star.
She will live with us for eighty years,
always as if just arriving,
speaking a language that pants and moans
understood only by small beasts.
She will die among us,
on a night when she suffers most
fate her only pillow,
a death silent and foreign.
Gabriela Mistral
Chile (1889-1957)

Chronicle

I

Everything in me that was rose electric and heroic
is now a docile flower sleeping,

there are no longer deer nor hounds in the mornings
no thirsty angels pass through my sleep.
I can open my veins without my slow blood
filling my clay footsteps
and on my knees I must rock one hundred children,
one after the other, steadily, no emotion, no anxiety.

II

The song in my throat has curdled
since the earth took him from me.
The humming bees no longer pursue
the fevered hollows of my temples
I am immobile, the woman of steel,
by the river no rushes, no fish.

And now you come, smiling man,
with songs and carnations
rich, vibrant, strong shouldered
agile oars in your lean hands.

Go on by. My small dark tower
doesn't have to light the blue signal
lamp for anyone: blue from verses
and from hope, each day, new.
The metal woman broke the lamp
and in her hands carries a rose-bay.
Juana de Ibarbourou
Uruguay (1897-1979)

Ancestral Weight

You told me: my father never cried;
you told me: my grandfather never cried;
the men of my family have never cried,
they were steel.

Saying this you shed a tear
and it fell into my mouth..... more poison.
I've never drunk from a glass
so very small.

Frail woman, poor woman who understands,
I knew centuries of pain swallowing your tear:
my soul cannot bear to support
all that weight.
Alfonsina Storni
Argentina, (1892-1938)

When I Married

When I married
the church was tiny
and the priest recited the traditional psalms:

"May you be diligent like Martha
prudent like Rachel
long lived and proliferous like Sarah."

And here I am, tenuous shadow of Martha
hammering at the typewriter in the office
after the anxieties at home,
shutting up the futile protest "silent Rachel"
passing away my interminable life like a river,
to make Sarah complete.
Vidaluz Meneses
Nicaragua (1944-)

The Scrawny Women

The too thin wives of the foundry workers
continue to give birth at home or on trolleys.
Some of the boys go to public schools
and learn about rivers, the right thing to do.
The girls go to the nuns who teach them needlework
and to pray.
All traces of mortars are being slowly erased
from the city.
So many months have passed.

In my dreams there are various men
speaking around a table about exchange rates
boats airplanes cornices
that will fall with the bombs.

And I ask forgiveness from the Almighty whoever it may be
for wishing them a fine coffin
with four of the most unusual candles.
Gloria Fuertes
Spain (1918-)

The above poems were translated for *Connexions* by Shana Ritter.

Further reading:

- *"Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral" translated and edited by Doris Dana, John Hopkins Press, 1971.*
- *"Alfonsina Storni" by Sonia Jones, Twayne Publishers, 1979.*
- *"Open to the Sun," bilingual anthology of Latin American women poets, edited by Nora Jacquez Wiesel, Perivale Press, 1980.*

Christina Yoder

Raqs al Sharqi
A Woman's Dance

Arabesque

The Dancer of Shamahka, Armen Ohanian

(Sources: *Arabesque,* bi-monthly journal of Middle Eastern dance and culture, 1975-1982; *Habibi,* monthly publication on Middle Eastern dance, music, news and entertainment, 1975-1982; "Belly Dancing and Childbirth" by C.V. Dinicu in *Sexology,* April 1965; "Belly Dancing: The Ancient Gyrations Originated as a Form of Exercise for Childbirth" by Zelda Stern in *Childbirth Educator,* 1980; *An Illustrated Manual of Finger Cymbal Instruction* and *Belly Dancing: From Cave to Cult to Cabaret* both written and published by Jamila Salimpour, 1977 and 1979 respectively.)

Perhaps the heartbeat suggested the first musical instrument, the drum. And perhaps the natural movements of a body needing to stretch evolved into dance. Today in many cultures, dance is entertainment. One watches dance, or one dances at a social function or on stage. There are also cultures living close to the harmony of the earth, to the natural cycles of the moon, the sowing, the harvest, where dance is an expression of the continuity of life, of the relationship between the people with their environment. It is, in its essence, a ritualistic expression.

Middle Eastern or Oriental Dance, commonly referred to as Belly Dance exists today, often misunderstood and ridiculed. Its roots and functions in traditional society are generally unknown. Nahed Sabry, an Egyptian dancer explains in an interview in *Habibi,* "The correct name is *Raqs al Sharqi,* (Eastern Dance) not Belly Dance. This misnomer is used by foreigners who are preoccupied by the stomach muscles to the exclusion of the hips."

Raqs al Sharqi is centered in the belly. Physical life begins there; energy is drawn into the body at this spot. The dance requires a knowledge and awareness of the different muscles of the body, and a strength and agility to isolate them. Body movement is constant and concentrated, occupying a small surface counterpoised by balance and fluidity to the motion. The movements echo the many rhythms of the music which vary in tempo, ranging from slow to fast with light or heavy drumbeats.

Figure eights, circular movements, and shimmies accentuate the hips and pelvis. The arm movements are sinuous and snakelike. The torso stretches and writhes like a serpent, highlighted by the belly rolls which undulate like waves or by stomach palpitations which flutter incessantly. The hands gesture gracefully, miming offerings, greetings, never once breaking the flow of energy circulating throughout the body. The hands accompany the music with finger cymbals, finger-snapping, or claps, often playing complicated rhythms. Veils and cloths emphasize the movements and contours of the body. The rapid trance-like twirls suggest a sense of continuity as the spiraling veil arcs around the dancer.

Lehnert & Landrock/Sunrise Publications

Dancers from the Ouled Nail tribe, Algeria

Middle Eastern Dance is inherently a woman's dance. The movements help prepare the woman from a young age for the strenuous activity of childbirth. In particular, the belly rolls exercise the stomach muscles, pelvis, diaphragm, and lower spine. The hip movements and backbends develop the pelvis. The woman learns to stretch her muscles, to breathe rhythmically by fluttering her stomach, and to control and isolate her muscles so that no energy is misspent.

Raqs al Sharqi as a birth ritual still exists in parts of the Middle East. According to Farab Firdoz, a dancer from Saudi Arabia, the dance is performed around the woman in childbirth by a circle of her tribeswomen. Morocco (Carolina Varga Dinicu), a New York based dancer and writer witnessed in Morocco the ritual of "dancing the baby into the world."

A special tent is erected for the pregnant woman which the men are forbidden to come near. In the center of the dirt floor a hole is dug and lined with lamb's wool for the baby. The women stay in the tent dancing, singing and feasting; the pregnant woman participates. While in labor, she alternately squats over the hollow and stands and dances. The other women form circles around her, singing softly, circulating clockwise, undulating their abdomens, pulling their muscles in sharply imitating con-

tractions. They help the mother move with the contractions by providing a supportive and hypnotic atmosphere. After the baby is born, while the mother is nursing, the women continue the celebration with their dance and music.

Both Christian and Muslim women of the lower classes would dance publicly before marriage to earn money for their dowries. Coins thrown to them would be sewn onto their belts and shirts, and made into jewelry. The jingling and swishing of the coins would announce a dancer and also enriched the movements of the body. Under Islamic law a woman owns the money and jewelry with which she enters her marriage, so the dance insured some economic independence.

18th Dynasty Egyptian fresco

Archeological evidence suggests that *Raqs al Sharqi* originated as a sacred dance to worship the Goddess, who for thousands of years was considered the supreme deity with other gods and goddesses occupying minor roles. All art forms were the manifestations of religious expression. Song and dance, painting and sculpture were forms of magic ritual with themes of fertility: a plentiful harvest, a celebration of births, a grieving of deaths, and a promise for reincarnation.

Statues and Egyptian tomb paintings capture the images of the dance. In many of the paintings, the dancers are finger-snapping or holding cymbals, ritualistic instruments that honor the Goddess. The word cymbal comes from the Goddess Cybele.

European travelers describe in detail Oriental Dance, labeling the dance *Danse du Ventre* (Belly Dance). Cabarets and cafes were opened to entertain the invading imperialists. As economic exploitation increased, more people flocked to the urban areas seeking employment. For many women, prostitution and/or dancing were the only options. Armen Ohanian, a famous Armenian dancer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in her book *The Dancer of Shamahka,* describes her horror upon observing the dance in a cabaret.

"Thus in Cairo one evening I saw with sick, incredulous eyes, one of our most sacred dances degraded into bestiality horrible and revolting. It is our poem to motherhood, which all true Asiatic men watch with reverence and humility in the faraway corners of Asia where the destructive Occident has not yet penetrated. In this olden Asia which has kept the dance in its primitive purity, it represents maternity, the mysterious conception of life, the suffering and the joy with which a new soul is brought into the world."

Raqs al Sharqi is still practiced throughout the Middle East. The folk dancing of the peasants of North Africa, Egypt, and Turkey, in particular, contain many of the elements of the dance. Folk troupes are present in many of the countries. The dance is integral to life in the villages and entertainment in the cities.

United States dancer Donna Whitely in *Habibi* describes her impressions of the dance in Egypt: "The village dance is a celebration of life, a time to acknowledge your place in the community. Each dancer was different, based on her own interpretation. The foundation of her dance was what her mother taught her and what her mother's mother taught her, and so on. In one village there might be lots of abdominal movements, in another there might be lots of shimmies, swinging and undulations. The dance is done with dignity as an expression of sensuality, not as a tasteless sexual invitation." In many villages, the women only dance for each other.

In the cities, most of the professional dancing is still performed in cabarets where a good dancer is highly respected for performing her art. It is difficult to transcend the conservative attitudes of one's family towards dancing in public. Maya Medwar, a well-known Egyptian dancer and actress talks about her experience in an interview in *Habibi.* "There was a fellow that sings. He wanted me to go with him to Lebanon to dance while he is singing. I wrote to my brother to tell him and my brother said, 'Before you come I'll destroy the theater. Do you want to put us in disgrace? How would I feel when some guy says I saw your sister shaking her hips?'" Nahed Sabry comments: "My family objected to the extent that when I would come home late they wouldn't speak to me." Maya and Nahed acknowledge that much of the negative attitude is due to the independence a woman exercises in choosing an alternative to wife and mother.

Ultimately *Raqs al Sharqi* is a dance of the power of women, and the dancer celebrates herself. □

Further reading:

- *"Middle Eastern Entertainers at the Chicago World's Fair 1893" written and published by Jamila Salimpour, 1980.*
- *"When God Was a Woman" by Merlin Stone, The Dial Press, New York, 1976.*

The Forty Steps

The following story is from an unpublished collection of Kurdish and Persian folk tales. Margaret Kahn, author of *Children of the Jinn* (Seaview, 1980), collected stories during her stay in Iranian Kurdistan and wrote this introduction to *The Forty Steps*.

Storytelling serves many purposes. Mothers tell stories to calm their children and make them feel safe, to frighten them into obeying, to teach them the ways of the world. Mothers, in the village cultures where I traveled in Iran, were quick to invent or re-tell all sorts of stories for the edification of both children and adults. Female storytellers have long been the source of many men's imaginations. Some of the stories that I heard from the mouths of illiterate Kurdish-speaking women were the same stories that had been written down by the ancient court authors, inscribed on beautiful parchment and illustrated with miniatures and gold leaf.

When I was collecting stories in Iran, my prime source was a fifteen-year-old boy. Day after day we met so that he could recount these fables into my tape recorder. But one day he said he had to return to his village. He had run out of stories and needed to get more from his mother!

A great number of the stories I heard show women to be wiser than the men around them. While traveling to villages, the most fantastic, bawdiest, longest tales I heard were recounted by women. The following story, probably a translation from Persian (many Persian and Kurdish folk tales are similar), was told over the local radio station.

Once there was a pasha whose greatest delight in life was hunting. He was especially proud of his ability to use a bow and arrow, and he spent long hours practicing. One day he came home with a partridge egg which he put on the head of his daughter, Zeenay. "Stand very still, and I will show you what a good archer I am," he told her. He stepped back 40 paces, and taking an arrow from his quiver, strung it into his bow. He took careful aim, and sent the arrow flying through the air toward Zeenay. It went right through the center of the small egg on top of her head.

"What do you think of that?" the pasha asked Zeenay. "Don't you think I'm the best archer in the land?"

"To tell you the truth, Father," replied Zeenay, "what you did is not remarkable. Almost any man could learn to do the same if he were to practice long enough."

The pasha grew very angry at hearing this. "I can't believe that my own daughter would say such a thing," he cried. "Go from my sight."

When Zeenay had gone, the pasha called in his vizier and ordered him to put Zeenay to death. The vizier happened to be a wise and compassionate man. Instead of killing Zeenay, he took her into a forest where he said to her, "I will leave you here. Whatever you do, don't go back to your father's palace. He had ordered me to put you to death. I will tell him that I have done what he demanded. He will never know that you are still alive."

Zeenay found herself all alone among the tall trees, far from any human beings. She walked and walked until she came to a small stream. She followed the stream hoping it would lead her to some people. At last she came to an open meadow, off in the distance, she could see a flock of sheep against the green grass. As she came toward the flock a big sheep dog barked at her fiercely. Zeenay stayed in the spot where she was standing, and soon she heard a voice calling out, "Eh, sug, what are you barking at? Is a wolf trying to steal one of the sheep?"

"It is I, Zeenay. I am lost and need a place to stay," she called back.

A shepherd appeared and looked at her. Zeenay was wearing a pale turquoise dress underneath a long coat of dark blue and silver brocade. Lilac and gold bloomers showed at the hem of the dresses. On her fingers were many gold rings. Gold hoops hung from her ear lobes, pearls were set in her curls, and around her neck was a bib of gold coins.

"Greetings to you, good shepherd," she said. "I am all alone in the world. Would you give me shelter?"

"Of course you are welcome to stay in my humble house," answered the shepherd, dazzled by the girl's jewels and beauty.

So Zeenay stayed with the shepherd for several weeks. He was unfailingly kind to her and treated her like a daughter. Although he wondered who she was and where she had come from, he never asked, and one day she said to him, "Go to the pasha and ask him to give you the land around the spring that is halfway up the mountain. Give him this to show your good faith."She took a single pearl from the curl that peaked out from her head scarf and handed it to the shepherd.

The shepherd went to the pasha saying, "Your excellency, if it pleases you, I would like the title to the piece of land surrounding the spring on the mountain so that my sheep will always have water."

"Have you any money to pay for such a piece of land?" asked the pasha.

"I can give you this pearl now and pay for the rest later, when my flock gets larger," replied the shepherd.

"That is fair enough. The land is yours," said the pasha.

The shepherd went back to tell Zeenay the good news. Upon hearing that they owned the land, she took off the necklace of golden coins and handed it to him, saying, "Here, take this necklace to the village and bring back enough materials and workmen to build a large house."

Once again the shepherd went to do what Zeenay asked of him. Two days later he came back with 20 donkeys loaded with cut trees, mortar, and tools. He also brought with him five stone masons.

Zeenay was very pleased when she saw all that the shepherd had brought. She immediately instructed the workers to begin work on a large house overlooking the spring. They gathered stones from the countryside and were soon at work. There was one thing that Zeenay was particular about. She asked that the house have a wide staircase with exactly 40 steps, no more and no less.

When the house was finished and the workmen sent away, Zeenay made one more request, "Go to the village and bring me a cow that is soon to give birth. This will pay for her," she said, slipping an emerald ring from her finger.

The shepherd was soon back with a cow who had a fine calf within the week. When the calf was only a day old, Zeenay brought her into the house and there did a thing which mystified the shepherd. She picked up the calf, balancing her on her shoulders, and began climbing the staircase. She didn't pause until she reached the top, and then she started back down the stairs.

Every day for a year Zeenay carried the calf up the 40 steps and back down again. The calf grew heavier and heavier, but Zeenay grew stronger day by day. At last she knew that she was ready to carry out her plan.

"What are you doing Zeenay?" asked the shepherd. "That calf is too heavy for you to carry. Stop before you hurt yourself."

"I know what I am doing," replied Zeenay, exhausted from her exertion. "I have a plan."

"Please go and ask the pasha to come visit us a week from today for a feast," she said to the shepherd.

He came back saying that the pasha had agreed to come with his vizier and the rest of his retinue. Zeenay busied herself preparing for the great feast. When the day came for the pasha's visit, Zeenay put on her finest clothes. When she saw the pasha and his men coming up the mountain, she quickly veiled herself and went out to get the calf, which was now a heifer.

The shepherd met the pasha and his party at the door and invited them into the house. Zeenay and the heifer were at the foot of the stairs. With a graceful sweep she picked up the heifer and put her on her slender shoulders. Then she proceeded to climb the 40 stairs and came down again, all without apparent effort.

"On my eyes, that is the most amazing thing I have ever seen," cried the pasha.

Putting the cow down, Zeenay came over to stand beside him. "Truthfully, what I did is not remarkable," she told her father. "Almost any woman could learn to do the same thing if she were to practice long enough."

These were almost the same words that Zeenay had said to him well over a year ago. The pasha remembered, and a look of infinite sadness came over his face.

"What is wrong, Your Excellency?" asked Zeenay. "Have I said something to cause you grief?"

"You did nothing wrong," he slowly answered. "It is only that your words reminded me of what my dear daughter Zeenay said to me one day."

"But why should that make you sad?" Zeenay asked.

"You don't understand. I couldn't bear hearing that truth from her lips, and I had her put to death. I have been in constant sorrow since that terrible day. How I wish I could see her just one more time."

"Would you recognize your daughter if you were to see her again?"

"I would know her anywhere," answered the pasha.

On hearing this, Zeenay removed the veil from her face. "It is I, Father. The vizier let me live and I have been here ever since!"

The overjoyed pasha embraced his daughter. Then he kissed the eyes of the vizier, saying, "I'll always be grateful to you. Thank God you had more wisdom than I, and spared my daughter's life." Then he said to the shepherd, "I'll see that you are richly rewarded for befriending my daughter."

Turning to Zeenay he said, "I have many who will tell me what I want to hear, but only you to tell me the truth. Will you come home with me, Zeenay?"

Zeenay went back with her father, the pasha, and there was much feasting and many festivities. Before the year was out, she married the son of the vizier, and they were happy forever after. □

Further reading:

- "*Just Enough to Make a Story: A Sourcebook for Storytellers*" by Nancy Schimmel, *Sister's Choice Press, 1978.*
- "*Women and Folklore*" by Claire Farrer, *University of Texas Press.*

Contact:

- *National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (NAPPS), Box 112, Jonesborough, TN 37659.*

Sistren: Street Theater in Jamaica

Isobel Harry/Fuse

(From *Fuse, Canadian bi-monthly cultural news magazine, November/December 1981.* 615 Clinton St., Toronto, Ont. M6G 2Z8, Canada.)

First employed as street cleaners under the Jamaican government's Impact Programme and then trained as teachers' aides, Sistren collected together around a common interest in drama and its use for social change. Sistren's theater is energetic, fast-paced and humorous, but it never loses its analytic purpose. For every effect there is a cause. Whether presented in workshop, where each scene is followed by a group discussion with the audience, or in the full spectacle of theatrical production, Sistren's work gives voice to the experience of poverty without ever projecting a feeling of powerlessness.

The group of 13 women first performed publicly in April 1977 in Kingston, Jamaica. The women of Sistren are Beverly Elliott, Cerene Stephenson, Beverly Hanson, Jasmin Smith, Rebecca Knowles, Jerline Todd, Vivette Lewis, Lillian Foster, Lorna Burrell, May Thompson and Lana Finikin.

The following is excerpted from an article by Honor Ford-Smith, who has guided Sistren from a part-time drama group in 1977 to a full-time theater collective in 1981. The original article appeared in *Fuse,* a Canadian-based cultural news magazine.

In writing about Sistren, Ford-Smith stresses: "Here are my words. I write 'my words' because I want to make clear that my way of working with Sistren is conditioned by my own position on certain issues, by my own class background and by my skills in theater. All women are oppressed, but we experience that oppression differently in both extent and form. To ignore the difference between the actresses who make up Sistren and myself is to pass over the important question of class as it affects relations between women. Second, my position on certain questions has changed in three years or so of work with the collective as outside influences on our work have altered or become stronger, and as the women in Sistren have studied and taught me more about their situation. Together we evolved certain techniques about which I am writing now, here without them—in words they would not use. These techniques are not necessarily the same that Sistren would use if they were working on their own or with another director. What I describe has grown out of the conflicts, mistakes and solutions to problems of the last years' work."

KEEPING CULTURAL TRADITIONS ALIVE

Currently in Jamaica, 15.7% of the men are unemployed as against 37.7% of the women. Seventy per cent of women between 17 and 24 are out of work and these are usually women with children. Sixty-eight per cent of employed women are doing very low status forms of wage work and are earning under the minimum wage. This situation is bad enough, but add this to the fact that one-third of the women are heads of households (I think this is a very conservative estimate) and the gravity of the picture emerges.

Women dominate the service sector and many work as domestics without access to unions or even labor associations. There tends to be a lower level of union activity in small factories which depend on women's work such as garment and textile factories.

In addition, there is little organizing around questions or problems of direct concern to women. Most of the women's organizations are based on social welfare concerns aimed at further domesticating women. Handicraft and domestic schemes exist, offering little chance for the analysis of whose interests these schemes serve. Much of the problem is complicated by the fact that the subordination of women has not been seen as an issue serious enough to warrant raising embarrassing questions about domestic servants or sexual harassment, for example. Often, the participation of women in farming and seasonal wage work is cited as evidence of the "emancipated" Jamaican woman. This blind spot has meant that much of the basic information about the condition of working class women simply does not exist.

Historically, unlike women in Europe and North America, Caribbean women have not participated in a struggle for emancipation as a class. The social gains which the women of the region have made, accompanied the national movements for increased sovereignty and greater social justice. Although women made important gains in the area of legislation between 1972 and 1980, these do not deal with the material bases or the root questions of control of reproduction and control of production—or the difficult problem of the sexual division of labor. Maternity leave and minimum wage were important pieces of legislation—but in a situation where women do not and cannot get work which is considered to be equal—an equal pay for equal work law is a bit like putting a band-aid on a cancer.

Also, Jamaica is still defining its cultural identity. The process of building confidence in traditions is an important one. It is one in which women have played an important part. The preserving of African tradition through the last 300 years has, to a great extent, been facilitated by women. It is they who have kept alive and communicated the customs of an uprooted people—much of this legacy has until recently been denied by the wider society and has been submerged beneath the official character of the country. Its emergence into the open requires different methods of communication than those which survived in the past. It demands a reexamination of the past, with all its taboos and restrictions in the language of the *present.* It requires that women, hitherto the preservers, become the authors. Sistren (meaning sisters), a theater collective for working class women, is using drama as a means of breaking silence, of stimulating discussion, of posing problems and experimenting with their solutions.

WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S THEATER

Sistren's program consists of workshops taken and performances given. Its members educate themselves through workshops which include research work, special skill workshops in movement and silk screening. Performances, where the collective shares its experiences with others, include both workshops in Drama for Problem-solving which are presented to community organizations and women's groups around the country, and major productions which are presented commercially. Since 1977, four plays have been presented: *Bellywoman Bangarang, Bandooloo Version, Nanah Yah* and *QPH* (Queenie, Pearlie and Hopie).

Sistren began spontaneously in 1977, the result of a climate of reform and increased worker participation in all areas of the life in the country at that time. All 13 members of Sistren were urban street cleaners in the Emergency Employment Programme of the Jamaican government. Later they were selected for training as teachers' aides in a program for women organized by the Women's Bureau and the Council for Voluntary Social Services, a program much criticized by middle class interests in Jamaica. There were approximately 10,000 women employed by this special employment program and although their jobs were unquestionably low status, the program offered women a chance to organize around their own concerns.

I first met Sistren in 1977 in an old broken down schoolhouse in Swallowfield. The group had expressed an interest in drama and sought a director from the Jamaica School of Drama. We met to discuss the performance they were to do for a Workers' Week concert. I asked them "What do you want to do a play about?" and they said "We want to do plays about how we suffer as women. We want to do plays about how the men treat us bad."

Sistren's consciousness has always been of themselves as *representatives* of working class women. So when we met for the first time, I asked them to tell me how they suffered as women and this began an exchange of experience, which resulted in our first piece, *Downpression Get a Blow.*

LANGUAGE AND POWER

A research workshop in reading skills was set up in 1979 as a solution to the problem of the lack of formal education not only within the group, but also within the society. The workshop had as its objective the creating of dramatic exercises which would teach comprehension and reading skills and develop the critical consciousness of the student.

The workshop grew out of the group's first major production, *Bellywoman Bangarang.* The women had been asked to script scenes they had created from their own experiences. At this point, I learned that some of the women had more developed reading skills than others. These actresses were able to help others script their scenes and by the end of the production, interest in reading about their personal experiences motivated many to practice their new skills. By the time we got to our second major production, everyone could read her own script.

In the workshop, physical exercises based on the shape of the letters were done. Rhythmic sounds and games accompanied the exercises so that the letters and sounds could be more easily identified. In one case, a dance was created from spelling out the letters of words.

The results of these workshops were recorded by the members of Sistren. All writing was done in Creole, the women's main medium of communication. The Creole was then translated into English. Writing in dialect, with its improvised spelling and immediate flavor, the women learned to write a form of English which had previously been considered "bad, coarse and vulgar." In fact, Jamaican Creole has its own strict rules of grammar and retains much of the Twi construction of its creators. [Twi is a dialect that is spoken and written in Ghana.]

By translating their work into English, the women create an equal relationship between their idiom and the language of the powerful. It is a language which they understand most of, but do not speak. English is the official language of the country and they must learn it if they are to understand the world view of its speakers, if they are not to remain isolated. They must learn it if they are to communicate their needs and demands to the powerful. But for Sistren, as for many other women, it remains a second language.

The use of Creole in workshop and performances is only one method of using the cultural tradition of the Caribbean. Sistren's first two major productions were created from forms suggested by the oral and ritual traditions of the country. This tradition, African in origin, is by its nature far more participatory than that of a literary tradition. It evokes a communal response from both audience and actor. The images and symbols contained within the ritual tradition evoke immediate responses from the audience because they come loaded with overtones from past and present.

Oral literature and music, a particularly important part of the cultural experience of the women of Sistren, are used as a means to stimulate the audience to think about such taboo areas as menstruation and teenage pregnancies. Sistren uses drama to

bring to the public the voices of women from the laboring poor and in so doing helps to pressure for change. By confronting what has been considered indecent, irrelevant or [merely] accepted, we have begun to make a recorded refusal of ways in which our lives have been thwarted and restricted. We have begun to refuse the forces behind those ways. □

QPH—A Review

by Lisa Steele

When the poor die, they exit in numbers not in name: 54 on a ferry in Calcutta; 76 on a bus in Mexico City; 112 in a monsoon in Southeast Asia. Reading about these human disasters, it would seem that poverty itself places people—often in large groups—directly in the path of inevitable doom. This kind of group death frequently makes the news reports but seldom warrants individual obituaries. I assume (I hope not unfairly) that one of the Sistren collective's intentions in producing *QPH* (Queenie, Pearlie and Hopie) was to reverse these priorities—to provide obituaries for women whose deaths had been previously uncommemorated.

The event that *QPH* is based upon occurred May 20, 1980, when 167 women died in a fire that swept through the women's ward of the Kingston Alms House. Shortly after, Sistren began work on *QPH*, their fourth major production.

Of itself, *QPH* is an important work which defines and gives voice to the struggles of poor women while existing within a popular format—theater. But in view of the "official" response to the fire at the Alms House, the play's existence becomes even more vital: a year-long inquest finally determined that there was no criminal responsibility in the deaths, despite evidence of overcrowding, a sub-standard building and possible negligence on the part of staff. So for the 167 women who died, *QPH* is their only memorial.

But the play is no ordinary memorial. It is not a structure cast in stone meant to receive wreaths and tears on anniversary days and then promptly be forgotten for the rest of the year, because *QPH* is a memorial not to the deaths but to the lives of the Alms House women. For in Sistren's view, it is not just the fire which is the tragedy of the women's lives, but the fact that they were in the Alms House in the first place. This is the primary focus of *QPH*, as one by one we are introduced to the three main characters and unravel the threads of their lives which brought them all together in the Alms House on the night of the fire.

First there's the beleaguered Hopie, loyal domestic servant to Cousin Sissy and her family for the last 30 years, who's been dismissed. The family is moving and her services won't be necessary anymore. And while Sissy frets over her personal toilette, screeching and coaxing Hopie on to ever more menial tasks of service, Hopie is left to contemplate her future. This, according to Sissy, is really a very simple matter: since marriage is out (who would want Hopie at her age anyway? Sissy muses with her characteristic sensitivity), it's a good thing Hopie does domestic work because there's always a demand for that kind of thing. Hopie, needless to say, ends up begging on the street, a cast-off after a lifetime of service, who can't even write her own name.

Next there's Pearlie, the bride-to-be of the consulate's son ("a good catch"). She's suffering from what at first appears to be a bad case of pre-nuptial jitters. "Pearlie," her mother chides, "why are you lying down in your expensive dress?" Pearlie has pains. After much wheedling and cajoling, Mommy finally learns the truth. The 17-year-old Pearlie has given in to the gardener, and she's pregnant. Outraged, Mommy lets the "expensive dress" and her good name take precedence and Pearlie is banished from the family. We see Pearlie later in life plying her trade with a sailor in a waterfront bar, getting drunk and getting rolled. The scene ends with Pearlie shouting, "I've paid my dues to society. Now I want a free ride—to the Alms House."

And finally there's Queenie whose line of work is preacher-woman in a clapping church. We see her urging the congregation on to salvation, warning them of "the fire next time." But after the service ends, we find that Queenie is no more secure in her position than Hopie or Pearlie. It seems that her congregation is less than pleased with her. They send a delegation to complain. First they are not that confident being led by a woman; they wonder if she's "qualified." They want the Bishop (away on "religious" business) to return. They accuse Queenie and the Bishop of "fornicating," further evidence of her unsuitability as a spiritual leader. Of course, the Bishop's qualifications aren't blemished by this accusation, the implication being that male "fornication" is one thing, but female "fornication" is out of the question.

So Queenie is removed from her calling. We see her later, struggling to provide food for her children, being told that her house is directly in the path of a proposed building site and will soon be demolished. The scene closes with Queenie asking her friend to care of her small daughter Faith, because now she too must go to the Alms House.

What this litany of broken dreams and severed promises, split families and grave misfortunes does not convey about Sistren's *QPH* is the tough humor which informs the entire production. And it is the humor which, in the end, provides the key to Sistren's analysis of their chosen material. This humor, carried in the dialogue as it races along, often at a seemingly impossible speed, reproduces speech patterns as accurately as a recording, and along the way ruthlessly exposes the bitter oppression, degradation and humiliation which these women and all others like them endure, day by endless day.

In *QPH* humiliation is funny—bitterly funny. For their work to be successful, it must engage those currently in the circumstances which Sistren themselves have experienced and not just call up pity and hand-wringing from those outside of the poverty and oppression.

Along with the humor, *QPH* employs another active method of engagement—powerful ritual. The entire structure of the play is woven within an Etu ritual. African in origin, Etu is a celebration of the dead currently practiced only in western Jamaica. The participants are usually female. There is singing, dancing and feasting, as each dancer, in turn, is "shawled" by the Queen of the ritual, freeing her to express her family's song and dance patterns.

In *QPH*, the Etu encloses each scene until the end when, after the fire, the Etu dancers become old women, performing the final rites over their dead sisters and Queenie delivers the denouement: "Women have the key to the future because they

hold the secrets to the past." The question here is what does Sistren mean by "the past?" On reflection it would seem that they are referring not only to a collective past which is contained in matriarchal rituals such as Etu, but to individualized histories also. And this is the ferocious strength and integrity of *QPH*. Ritual is used not as another panacea which, like colonialism or capitalism, ultimately abandons the individual, but instead is used as a connecting thread, linking individual with individual and past with present. So when Queenie speaks of "the past," she is not only seeking women's cultural roots, she is urging women who now live in oppression to *remember* their own lives. And in remembering, analysis becomes possible, and with analysis, the real struggle can begin. □

Further reading:

- *"Big Mama Rag," November 1981, for an interview with Jamaican Ingrid Kirkwood.*
- *"The Theatre of the Oppressed" by Augosto Boal, Pluto Press, London, 1979.*
- *"The Image of the Chicana in Teatro" in "El Tecolote," December 1981, Box 40037, San Francisco, CA 94140.*

Yesterday and Today:

Mädchen in Uniform

Fräulein von Bernburg and the headmistress scenes from Mädchen in Uniform

Mädchen in Uniform (Germany; 1931)
Production: Deutsche Film-Gemeinschaft Gmbh
Directed by: Leontine Sagan, under the artistic supervision of Carl Froelich
Script: Christa Winsloe, F.D. Andam. Based on Christa Winsloe's play, *Yesterday and Today,*
Camera: Franz Weihmayr and Reimar Kuntze
Music: Hansom Milde-Meissner
Cast:
Dorothea Wieck (Fräulein von Bernburg)
Herta Thiele (Manuela von Meinhardis)
Emilie Unda (headmistress)
Hedwig Schlichter (Fräulein von Kesten)
Ellen Schwaneke, Dora Thalmer, Erika Mann, Annemarie von Rochhausen and others (students)

Mädchen in Uniform,* ever since its production in the early '30s, has provoked many discussions regarding its lesbian and feminist aspects. The following interview with Hertha Thiele, one of the leading actresses, provides new insights into the making of the film. Women, who have researched the film's history, have been waiting for Hertha Thiele's ideas and comments on the story behind *Mädchen in Uniform.

(Translated from *Frauen und Film,* West German feminist film journal, No.28, June 1981.)

Mädchen in Uniform was filmed in Germany in 1931. Since its revival in women's film festivals in the early seventies, it has become something of a cult film among U.S. and European lesbian communities. However, until recently little critical attention had been paid to the lesbian aspect of the film. It had been spoken of as simply a study of an adolescent girl, or as an anti-fascist film that used love between and among women only "metaphorically". Many women have been intrigued with the history of the film, and with the ideas and intentions that went into its making. The film has a particular interest today in the context of the comparison one can make between the society we live in and Weimar Germany [1913-1933].

Karola Gramann and Heide Schlüpmann have been able to unearth new information about the making of the film, some of its problems and meanings, at least in the opinion of one of the lead actresses.

When we saw *Mädchen in Uniform* for the first time, we really enjoyed it. We felt that it was well-produced and presented a striking and important theme, the pas-

sionate feeling of a student for her teacher. We also liked the performances of the female cast and, in particular, the great acting of Dorothea Wieck and Hertha Thiele.

When we saw the film for the second time (at the Goethe Institute in London) we were surprised by the audience. It included old ladies in fur coats, some of whom were obviously German emigrants, as well as young lesbian feminists from London.

In November 1980, we conducted the following interview with Hertha Thiele. We wanted to talk with her to learn how the movie was made and to get an idea of the reactions of audiences when it was first released in Germany in 1931. We felt that the film contained a strong presentation of the experience of coming out, but nonetheless did not see it as a lesbian movie.

We spoke with Hertha Thiele about what we saw as a contradiction between the ideas of the two female authors (Christa Winsloe and F.O. Andam) and the treatment of those ideas by the people who worked on the movie—particularly Carl Froelich and some of the actresses. Thiele said she thought the movie might have been a failure had Leontine Sagan and Christa Winsloe been co-directors, but we wondered whether it might not have been worth trying.

When asked about the reaction of the critics at the time, Hertha Thiele told us that very few responded to the lesbian vision in the movie. But she said that there was at least one clear indication that the movie was seen by lesbians as an expression of their culture—all the love letters people wrote to her after the film appeared.

The film is set in a Prussian all-girls boarding school, where "the daughters of soldiers", as the headmistress says, are prepared for their future role as "the mothers of soldiers". Within this oppressive atmosphere, there is one sympathetic teacher: Fräulein Bernburg, adored by the students. The film begins with the arrival of Manuela, the new girl, whose love for the favorite is more intense—certainly more visible—than that of the other girls.

The kiss scene referred to in the interview takes place in the dormitory—military style, with rows of little beds and little girls awaiting the ritual bedtime kiss on the forehead from Fräulein Bernburg. When it is Manuela's turn, the girl throws her arms around the teacher—who responds with a kiss on the lips.

There is a pervasive silence around the feelings of love between the girls and Fräulein von Bernburg. It is when, after a school play, dressed in drag, as "Don Carlos", (and tipsy on punch spiked by the servants), Manuela proclaims her love for the teacher and is overheard by the headmistress, that the crisis takes place. Manuela is locked up, but escapes and is about to leap from the school staircase. Fräulein von Bernburg, having just resigned from her position, suddenly senses that something is wrong, and rushes to the foot of the staircase. But the girls have arrived before her, gathered around Manuela and stopped her. The film ends with the headmistress stalking off, while Fräulein von Bernburg and the students remain.

Q: *Mädchen in Uniform* is today, especially in the U.S., a cult movie within the lesbian community. But at the time of its release, the press didn't mention its lesbianism. I read through English, French, U.S. and German film critics of the time, and found that the story was generally seen as concerning the problems of an adolescent girl...or a revolt against the educational system in Prussia.

Jumpcut

Christa Winsloe, Playwright

A: Yes, I know that the critics interpreted it that way. But there is one sentence in the movie, which is very important. Dorothea Wieck, as Fräulein Bernburg, says to Emilie Unda, the headmistress, "What you call sin, I call the great spirit of love, which has a thousand different forms." I think this one sentence says everything. It can refer to a fledgling lesbian love, or to a child's love, but in any case it is love. I think that this one sentence really made the movie. I don't want to exaggerate its importance, nor do I want to say that the film is exclusively about lesbianism, because it was of course also a revolt against Prussian education in general.

Q: I guess the good-night kiss which Fräulein Bernburg gives Manuela is the visual equivalent of that sentence.

A: I just remember that when the movie was first shown in Romania, the distributor wrote a letter asking for twenty more meters of kissing. That's a true story. In Romania women also bought Manuela-stockings. Remember the long, black stockings I was wearing when I played Don Carlos...there was a cult with the kiss and the stockings in Romania at that time.

Q: How long would twenty meters of film be?

A: That would be almost a minute and a half. Carl Froelich did not care all that much about the good night kiss scene when it was first shot. He also eliminated another scene, in which I was talking about my mother's linen closet, and about how nice the linen smelled. He thought that it would be too obvious: first my relationship with my mother, then the loss of mother, and finally love for another woman. Think about the scene in which I'm lying in bed with Edelgard, and Wieck comes into the room. She wants to know what we are doing and Edelgard tells her that I lost my mother. I start crying and Wieck says,"Will you promise me never to cry again?" I respond, "I never will." This is the beginning of the relationship between the two.

Q: I saw this scene and I was struck by the erotic intensity. It was clearly an indication that this was the beginning of a lesbian relationship.

A: Froelich did not want to see this element... You know, Christa Winsloe, author of the book and the play, was a lesbian and was brought up in Kaiserin-Augusta-Stift. And Manuela is a real person. In fact, she was at the opening of the movie. She actually threw herself down the stairs and had been disabled for the rest of her life. Christa Winsloe told me she had to write the book in order to deal with that experience. Shortly before Christmas 1930, I played Manuela for the first time on a stage in Leipzig. The original title was *Yesterday and Today* and it only became *Mädchen in Uniform* for the movie. The production was a big success. The director's wife, a slightly overweight 50-year old woman, played Bernburg, and there was not a hint of a lesbian relationship in the play. It was more like the relationship between mother and child. Then in Berlin, Leontine Sagan directed the first performances. She made it very clear that this was a lesbian relationship. Gina Falkland and I played Manuela, and Margaret Melzner was Fräulein von Bernburg. Later on, when Froelich decided to take the emphasis away from the lesbian relationship, he asked Wieck to play the role of Bernburg. Margaret Melzner is a very male type, and Froelich didn't want her in the movie, even though she might have been a better actress than Wieck.

I think that most of the erotic elements in the movie were created by me. Many young men and women came to me, because I had a certain openness and an ability to show love. Wieck was the one who always played it cool, and who implied that she didn't want to be touched...

Q: Sagan was the director of the Berlin performances?

A: Yes...She was a great woman, a really good actress, but she did not have the slightest idea about how to produce a movie. We managed to produce the movie in such a short time with so little money because we had all played it on stage, except for Wieck. Froelich had been an excellent cameraman since his early youth, and he really helped the movie. Wieck disagrees with me, but she always liked Sagan's opinions better.

Q: What are your problems with Sagan?

A: Sagan was too much of an intellectual for me. Froelich was able to show love. Love from a man I know, but I never felt

love from Sagan. I need love. I need a director and a team where I can feel one with everyone, where I know everyone likes one another and that we are working for a common goal. I don't function well if someone constantly tells me what to do without listening to me. Sagan was giving directions from the very beginning, and she was pretty tough. I would have started to cry, sooner or later, because at that time I didn't know how to defend myself. Despite Froelich's politics (he was responsible for my exclusion from filmmaking under the Nazis) he knew how to handle me. He never said that I was bad, but always encouraged me to try the same scene again.

Q: Was there conflict between Sagan and Froelich?

A: One could not call it conflict. Sagan was very modest, because she knew that she didn't have any experience in film. Winsloe was also there, but she didn't know anything about making movies either. It was really the men who controlled the technical production.

Q: You mentioned before that the ending in the movie is different from the ending in the stage play. Wasn't it also Froelich's idea to change the end?

A: We ran into technical problems. My jumping down looked awfully silly on film, and Froelich convinced Sagan that such an ending was fit for the stage but not for a movie.

Q: Do you have any explanation for why you were always offered roles in which you played women who were either lesbians or who were sexually attracted to other women?

A: No, I really don't know. When I was still very young and at the beginning of my career one director told me that I would either be very successful or a big failure. He attributed it to my Botticelli face, with a slight touch of evil. In the eleven movies I made, I never had a love scene with a man. And I really would have liked to.

Q: I would like to know a little bit more about Leontine Sagan.

A: I don't know too much about her myself. She started out as an actress in Frankfurt, and she was invited to direct *Yesterday and Today* in Berlin. In 1943, I missed my last chance to see her. I was playing in Bern, Switzerland, and she came through town on her way to Rhodesia. I don't know anything about her political leanings, even though people talked of her as a leftist. She was married to a man who taught at the university.

Q: But didn't she also have relationships with women?

A: I think so, even though she didn't talk about it. Christa Winsloe was an open lesbian though.

Q: Wasn't it a problem for her to show in public that she was a lesbian?

A: No, never. Once she invited me to come to Munich with my boyfriend. He couldn't come, and I went there by myself. When I arrived, she said: "Listen, I invited two girlfriends tonight, but for you I invited three men, and you can pick whomever you like." Whenever I was staying over at her place in Berlin, I usually found her gone when I woke up in the morning. And I'd always find some flowers and delicious things on the table, with a note: "A thousand kisses from Christa. Kisses which I was never allowed to give you." I guess she would have liked to make love with me, but she never tried.

Q: Homosexuality is not accepted in our society, and until recently it was even illegal. I think that things were a little more liberal in the twenties. Do you know through your friendship with Winsloe for example, what life in the "subculture" was like?

A: Christa Winsloe was not a social outcast, because she was very wealthy. During the Weimar Republic people who had money were allowed to do as they pleased. The same applied to people in high positions. Actresses Therese Giese and Erika Mann were allowed to do as they pleased. Someone poor would have been punished... I don't think anything has changed. If you have you can do as you like, if you have not you're (treated as) a pig.

Take Gustav Grundgens for example. Everybody in town knew he was gay. But since he was famous, he could do what he wanted to do. And no government would take steps against him. He got married to an actress, and since he was officially married nobody bothered him, not even the Nazis.

Q: The letters which you received after *Mädchen in Uniform*, were they written by women from all classes?

A: Yes, everybody wrote to me then.

Q: What did the subculture think about the movie?

A: I think that for many women in the subculture, *The Blue Angel*, with Marlene Dietrich, was more important. Marlene was the darling of the lesbians. It was very fashionable to dress like Dietrich and everyone called herself "Marlene". Among themselves they always tried to imitate her. Going vie was too childish, too simple, and not open enough. The decadence in *The Blue Angel* was much more appealing to them.

Q: Dietrich also had this famous song: "When two girl friends do it together..." Relationships among women are not the theme of *The Blue Angel* though. Were there any movies at that time that had relationships among women as the theme?

A: There was a movie, *Eight Girls in a Boat*, but there was one man in it, and that ruined the movie.

Q: The other movie you made with Wieck, *Anna and Elisabeth*, was about relations between women, and it was even announced as a movie with Dorothea Wieck and Hertha Thiele.

A: Margaret Melzner also wanted to make a movie with me, but she left Germany in 1933; that same year she invited me to tour the U.S. with her.

Q: Do you know why Melzner left Germany?

A: No. Maybe she had Jewish relatives, or maybe she just had an offer in the U.S.

Q: And do you know why Winsloe emigrated?

A: She was a deputy of the Social Democratic Party, and thus her politics were not acceptable. She was a clever and well-educated woman with a large circle of friends, and always well-informed. I guess she knew that she had to leave because of her politics.

Q: There's one thing I'm still thinking about, and I still don't quite understand. Why did Froelich change the play so much when he started shooting the movie?

A: He was interested in making money. It was his idea to call the movie *Mädchen in Uniform*. He thought that nobody would want to see a movie called *Yesterday and Today*. He was interested in getting his investment back and in making a profit. He left the relationship between the women vague in order to make the movie acceptable to a male audience. Froelich knew a lot about movies and audiences, and at the same time he was a very clever businessman.

Q: I have read that the film was produced by a collective. What does that mean?

A: Everyone received just a fourth of her or his salary. I was supposed to be paid a hundred marks a day, but received only 25. By 1934 the movie had brought in more than six million marks. I was told that the producer of the movie took off with all the money, but I later learned that was not true, when I personally met him in 1937 in Zurich. He was Jewish and had escaped from France. He gave me ten francs, and I knew that he did not have any more money himself. I know that he had not taken the money, but that other people had. I can imagine who, but I'd rather not talk about it.

That was the last time that Wieck and I were interested in working on a "collective" level.

After the Nazis had taken power, Goebbels suggested that I learn about National Socialism. I told him that I had no interest in adapting to the ideology in power. Later, I wrote him a letter saying that I would very much like to make a movie of *Romeo and Juliet in the Countryside* [a short story by Gottfried Keller]. The Ministry of Propaganda wrote back, explaining, "Such a movie would be against the principles of National Socialism...nobody kills him or herself for love." □

Further reading:

- "*Mädchen in Uniform: From Repressive Tolerance to Erotic Liberation*" by B. Ruby Rich in "Jump Cut," *U.S. film quarterly, # 24/25, March 1981. This is a special issue on lesbians and film.*
- "*Dyke Goes to the Movies*" by Janet Meyers in "Dyke," *Spring 1976.*
- "*Mädchen in Uniform*" by Nancy Scholar in "Women & Film," *Vol. 2 # 7, Summer 1975.*
- "*Sixty Places to Talk, Dance and Play*," *lesbians in pre-Nazi Germany*, "Connexions," *# 3, Winter 1982.*

Letters

Dear friends,

I bought a copy of *Connexions #3* at the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop in New York, and I am extremely impressed.

For many years I have been corresponding with gay people all over the world, mostly in connection with the International List of Gay Organizations and Publications that I used to edit as a project variously of the Gay Activists Alliance, the Gayellow Pages and Gay News (London). The list hasn't been published for a few years, but the correspondence continues and I frequently receive letters that could be of interest to you. Many months ago I received the article from Indonesia about Jossie and Bonnie, for instance.

I am enclosing two letters that were received over two years ago from a Lesbian couple in Pakistan. I only wish that I had known about your publication then, since I would have forwarded these letters to you immediately. Of course, there is no telling if they still live at the same address, and some care should be used in beginning correspondence with them, lest the first letter fall into the wrong hands.

With best wishes,

Robert A. Roth

New York, NY

NETWORKING

If you have any addresses or contacts abroad especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America of feminist organizations and lesbian/gay groups, please send them to us. Our upcoming issues will be:

Eastern European Women
Women Protecting the Environment
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Global Lesbianism #2

Any information pertaining to any of these issues is greatly appreciated.

Please send us your thoughts on the content of our articles. We would like to have an ongoing letter column as a forum for discussion on the issues raised, and as an arena for networking. We look forward to hearing from you.

If you have articles and translations from the foreign press or graphics which you would like to see in print, please send them to *Connexions*. Unfortunately, we cannot pay for any submitted materials, but we will credit you.

Dear *Connexions,*

Thank you for sending me the third issue of *Connexions.* I must compliment you. The issue was excellent: it has a beautiful lay out and offers a lot of information.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you about my new book, *Female Homosexuality around 1900.* It is the first part of my dissertation and came out last fall. Although it is a somewhat dry book ("scientific") and not a hot lesbian novel, it is doing rather well.

The second part of my dissertation (which has been finished for a while now) is on the situation of lesbians in the countryside, and the third part is on lesbians in Berlin. I think that part will be the most exciting although I'm finding it the most difficult to write.

Best wishes,

Ilse Kokula

West Berlin

Ilse Kokula provided Connexions *much of the material used in the article "Sixty places to talk, dance and play," which appeared in Issue #3.*

Dear Sisters at *Connexions,*

Writing to you from Sweden. A friend of mine in Berlin, Ilse Kokula sent an article of yours "Sixty places to talk, dance and play." I am writing a book about a lesbian woman in Sweden, Karin Boye, who was a poet and committed suicide in 1941. In the beginning of 1930 she lived in Berlin, and that was where she came out as a lesbian. But she had to get back into the closet when she returned to Sweden, much due to that her lover, that she took with her from Berlin, was half-Jewish. She later committed suicide too, one month after Karin Boye.

What I would like to ask you, is where did you get these fantastic photos, is it from a book or what?

By the way, I went to a party in January, in Berlin, where they celebrated the memory of the pre-Hitler gay-life for two days. A fantastic party, with almost 3000 women, dressed up in tuxedos and leather jackets, punks, skinheads! and whatever. Elderly women standing up, once again in glory, singing the old songs from the gay bars at the time, and they must have received the attention and applauses of their lifes, 3000 women loving them, screaming, laughing, singing with them. Fantastic! I held the photos of Karin Boye and her lover Margot Hanel, close to me, and they danced, once again, in my arms, in Berlin.

Kindly yours,

Pia Garde

Stockholm, Sweden

WOMEN IN THE BAY AREA

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bitches, witches, & dykes

New Zealand feminist quarterly
P.O. Box 68-570
Newton P.O., Auckland, New Zealand

cahiers du feminisme

French feminist monthly
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93108 Montreuil, France

Chana com Chana

Brazilian lesbian-feminist publication
Caixa Postal 293
São Paulo, S.P., Brazil

Clit 007

Swiss lesbian quarterly
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5, Bvd. Saint-Georges
1205-Geneva, Switzerland

Courage

West German feminist monthly
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030/883 65 29/69

Crew

monthly newsletter on women
living in Common Market countries
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Dones en Lluita

Spanish feminist bi-monthly
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Barcelona 1, Spain
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Elles voient rouge

French feminist publication
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Mexican feminist bi-monthly
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Col. Progreso Tizapan
Mexico 20, D.F., Mexico
548 83 42

Frauen und Film

West German feminist film quarterly
c/o Uta Berg-Janschow
Nassauische Str. 61
1000 Berlin 31

Girls' Own

Australian feminist bi-monthly
P.O. Box 188, Wentworth Bldg.
Sydney Univ. 2006, Australia

Hecate

Australian feminist quarterly
P.O.Box 99, St. Lucia
Queensland 4067, Australia

Homophonies

French lesbian/gay monthly
1, rue Keller
75011 Paris, France

ISIS

international feminist quarterly bulletin
P.O. Box 50 (Cornavin)
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022/33 67 46

Kvinder

Danish feminist bi-monthly
Gothersgade 37
1123 Kopenhagen, Denmark
01/14 28 04

La Vie en Rose

Canadian feminist bi-monthly
3963 St. Denis
Montréal, Qué. H2W 9Z9, Canada

Manushi

Indian feminist publication
available in English and Hindi
C1/202 Lajpat Nagar
New Delhi 110024, India

Merip Reports

U.S. monthly on the Middle East
P.O. Box 43445
Washington, D.C. 20010

Mulherio

Brazilian feminist monthly
Fundacão Carlos Chagas
Av. Prof. Francisco Morato, 1565
CEP 05513
São Paulo, S.P., Brazil

Newsfront International

U.S. monthly newsletter of translations
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Opzij

Dutch feminist monthly
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Quotidiano Donna

Italian feminist weekly
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Refractory Girl

Australian feminist publication
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Australian socialist-feminist twice-yearly
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British feminist monthly
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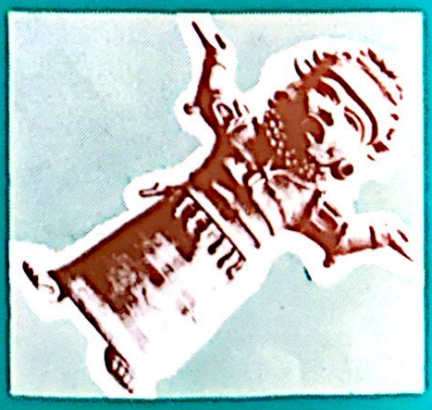

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