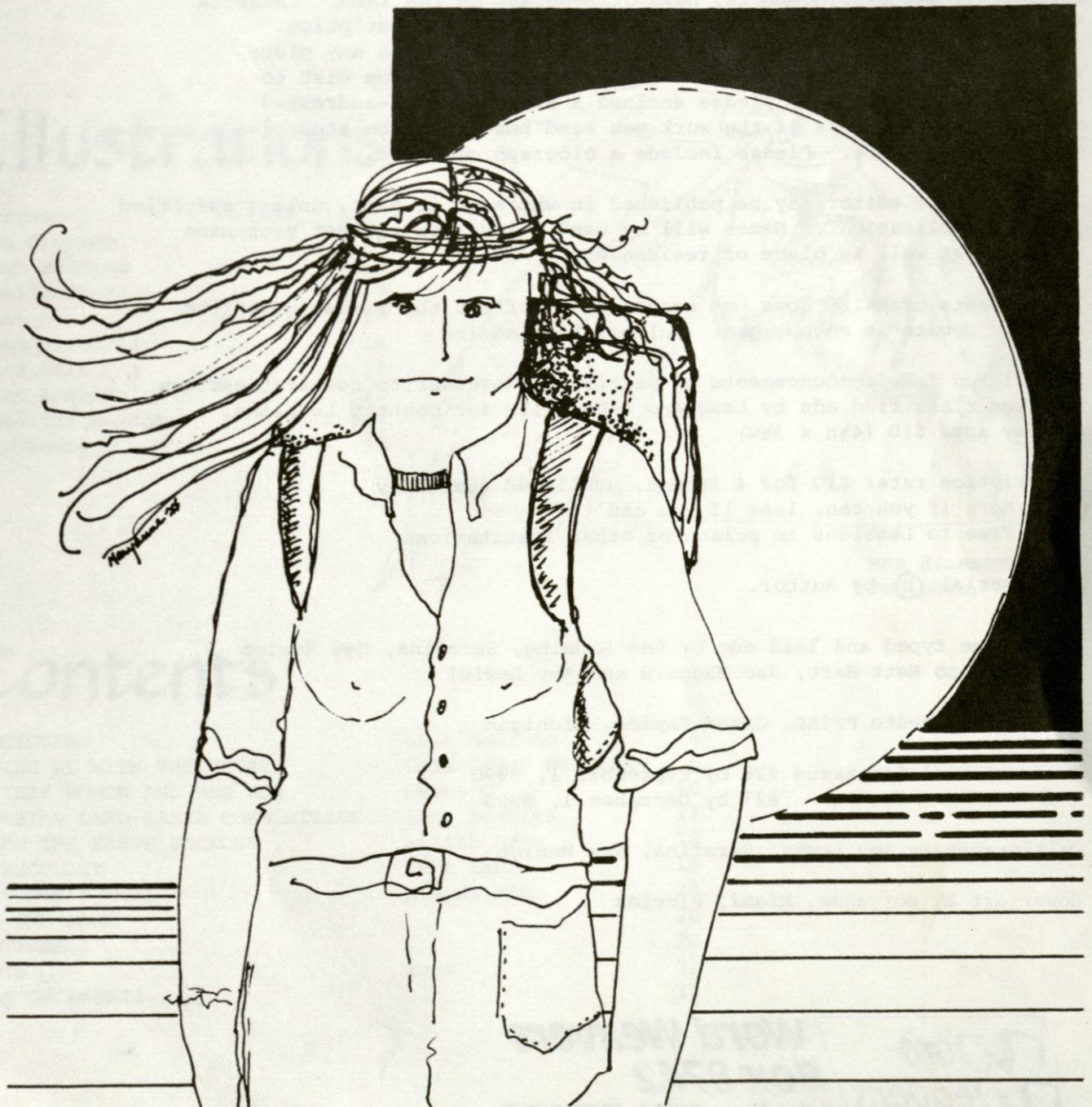


# MAIZE

A LESBIAN COUNTRY MAGAZINE

SUMMER 1990



maryanne



MAIZE IS BY AND FOR LESBIANS

MAIZE invites Lesbians to contribute articles, graphics, photos, interviews, letters, comments, news of Lesbians on the land. Cassette taped interviews and discussions are accepted for transcription. Transcriptions will be returned for editing. Editing on any piece will be done only in cooperation with the author. If you wish to have your work returned, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please note if the work you send has been submitted or published elsewhere. *Please include a biographical note.*

Letters to the editor may be published in whole or in part, unless specified "not for publication". Names will be used unless you request your name withheld, as well as place of residence.

The contents of MAIZE does not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the editor. Debate is encouraged. Editor: Lee Lanning

We will run free announcements of particular interest to country Lesbians and free classified ads by Lesbians especially for country Lesbians. Display ads: \$10 (4½h x 3½w)

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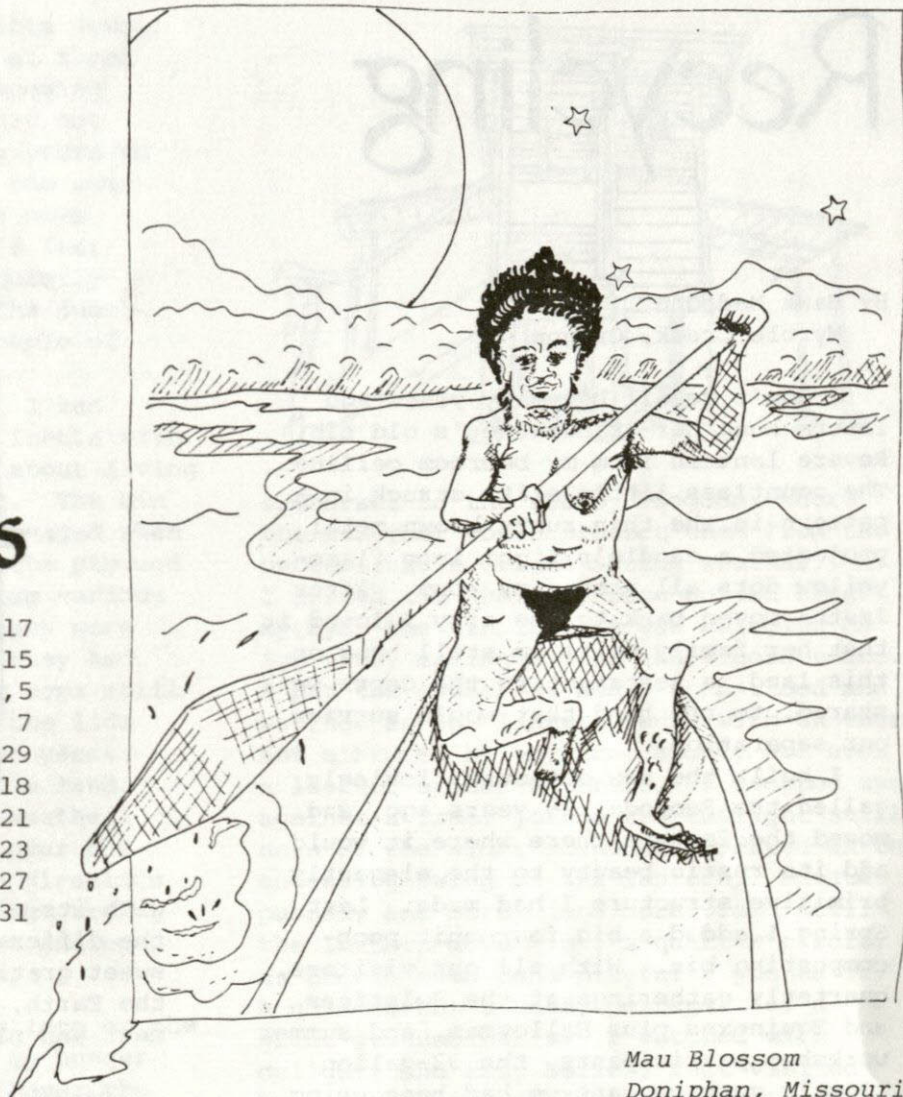
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Mau Blossom  
Doniphan, Missouri

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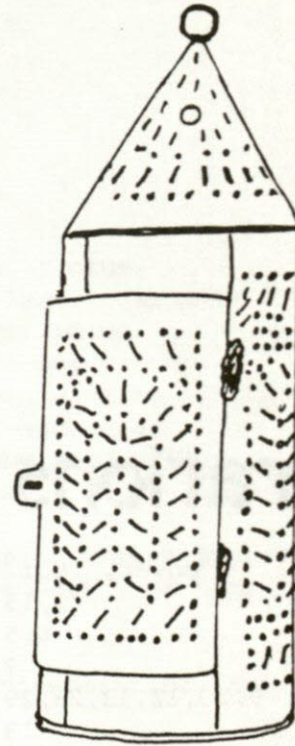
# Recycling

By Hawk Madrone  
Myrtle Creek, Oregon

I don't recall how many years ago Izetta hung her grandmother's old tin Revere lantern from my bedroom ceiling. The countless little slits struck in a pattern in the thin rusty brown metal projected a candle's light into flame-yellow dots all around my room. After Izetta moved back to the city I loved it that her family heirloom still hung on this land, a testament to the depth we shared, to the bond that would survive our separation.

I built the new outhouse, lovingly called the Poogoda, 2½ years ago, and moved the lantern there where it would add its rustic beauty to the elegantly primitive structure I had made. Last Spring I added a big four-unit poop-composting bin. With all our visitors, quarterly gatherings at the Solstices and Equinoxes plus Hallowmas, and summer workshop participants, the 33-gallon plastic garbage cans we had been using for collection, composting, and storage turned out to be inadequate. Too, the anaerobic process that the cans created produced sludge and slurry which I was not eager to work with. I did laboriously mix some of the oldest can's contents with peat moss and used it in new plantings in the flower garden. The odor was reminiscent of rich barnyard, like the floor of Jennie and Gaelyn's goat barn, well over a foot thick with hay and manure. It was very satisfying, a work of magic, to dig into the soil my own, and countless other Lesbian's droppings, returning to the Earth, transformed, what she has given us from the vegetable garden, to fertilize the hosta, cyclamen, clematis...

I am recycling our urine too. Mixed with five parts water, sprinkled on the area around the house, the golden liquid is working a miracle on the once-bald earth, raising a green grass carpet



with its plentiful nitrogen. I can see the difference almost daily, and feel such sweet gratitude for this sharing I do with the Earth, my body and hers giving nourishment and pleasure back and forth.

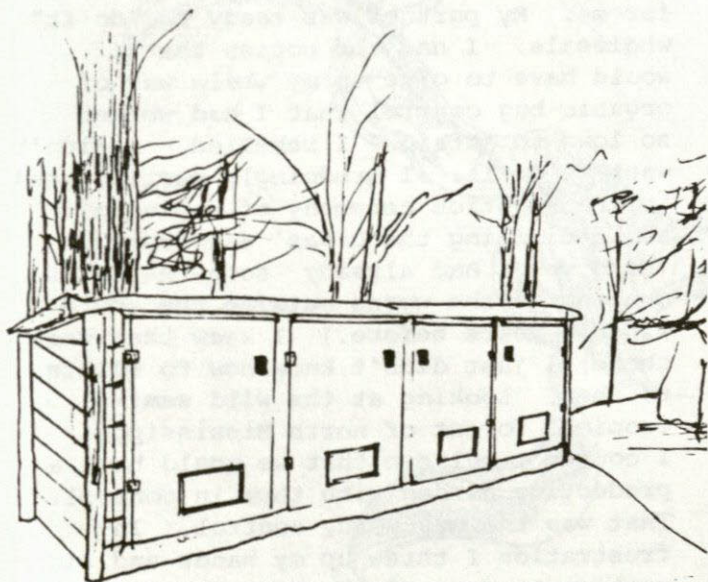
Grass grows and flowers bloom, fed by our own decay, flowers I had only dreamed of when Izetta's mother, June, came here to visit once for her birthday. She stayed in my bedroom where her mother's lantern yet hung. She told us it had once hung in a barn and I wondered if a great-grandmother had ever lit a candle in it and watched the light sparkle from the tiny slits. Last Spring, as I worked on the bin, June, just 73, was dying of breast cancer. I talked with Izetta on the telephone many times as she stayed close to her mother at home in a eastern city. A stately home, I gather, buoyed by New England modesty and wealth. The old pit privy here was a bit much for June, though she adjusted good-naturedly to using a bucket which Izetta emptied into the privy's dark hole. I remember that visit well, remember massaging June's feet as we sat by the warm woodstove on a winter's day. I listened to Izetta and her mother



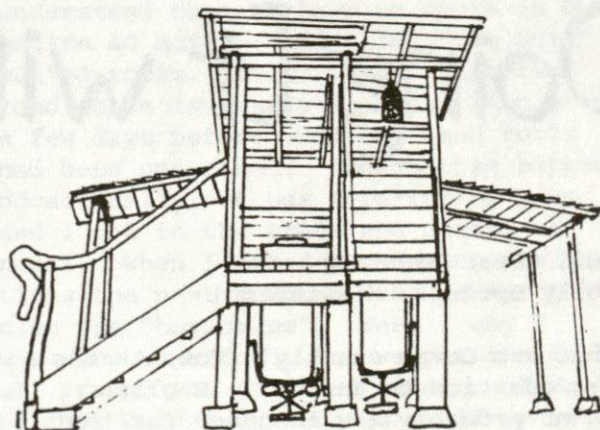
talk about the past, about Izetta Jewel, the grandmother for whom both of these women were named, Izetta II becoming June, short for "junior". I had not seen my own mother for fifteen years so studied June closely, her age the same as my mother's, born just four days apart. I massaged the mother's feet while the two of them talked quietly and shared their grief about the death of "grandmere", Izetta I, a couple of years before.

Working on the compost bin, I had plenty of time to think about Izetta with her rapidly weakening mother, about living and dying, decay and recycling. The bin itself was made from boards salvaged when the old privy was dismantled, the plywood partitions scraps left over from various other projects. The corner posts were taken up from the vineyard as they had rotted at the soil line, their tops still useful; the roofing paper for the lids dates from excess left thirteen years ago by the former owners of this land. And all of it painted against weather with used crankcase oil saved over the years. A project built on the gleanings from elsewhere, to waste nothing, trying to know the value, the gift, of endings, of what is finished, of change.

One day I worked especially late on the bin. It was nearly 7:00 when my hunger bade me to put my tools away, cover the lumber with a tarp, and carry the



Illustrations by Hawk Madrone



sawhorses to the nearby Poogoda, where the sideroof would protect them from the unpredictable Oregon Spring weather. As I neared the shelter, some motion caught my eye: the tin lantern was swinging on its wire, making a wide and vigorous arc. I put the sawhorses away, then stood and watched as the lantern swung with an energy not mirrored by any tree about, not even a leaf or spider's thread. I propped myself against a tree, joined the twilight stillness of the wider scene and focused on the unceasing swing of the lantern. Minutes passed, and more...and more...and still the lantern moved in its quarter circle, as though some hand playfully pushed it. A grandmother's hand, perhaps? or a great-grandmother's? I watched with delight, and easy belief, felt visited by a motherline of Izettas as yet another of them prepared to let her body die imminently.

Darkness, and my hunger, pulled me from the lantern and the day's work. In the following weeks I finished the construction, and the hundred or so gallons of stored sludge was layered with grass mowed from the new lawn, buckets of kitchen scraps, and leaves raked from beneath the madrones, filling two of the bins. By late Spring the new system for recycling our womanure was well underway, and June had died. When I apply the rich fluffy compost to the new flower beds next year, I'll add some to the boxes at the Poogoda as well, where gay primroses bloom beneath the old lantern.

Resource: *Goodbye to the Flush Toilet*, edited by Carol H. Stoner. Rodale Press 1977



# Doing It with the Devas

By Gail Clear Nightsky  
Holly Springs, Mississippi

What are Devas exactly? Now, that's a hard question to answer in English words or probably any language for that matter because it's one of those areas of wimmin's mysteries that was suppressed to almost extinction by the overly zealous religious during the burning times. As I thought about Lee's request that I write more about my experiences with the Devas, I recognized that often-asked question should be addressed. Well, here goes a try, but I warn the reader to look for the intuitive essence of the meaning and not to analyze the literal too intensely. They are the intelligence, the life spirit being in plants. They are at once unique for each plant and at the same time a cooperative force in nature. When I think of them words like dance, singing, majical, magnificent come to mind.

At first when I was introduced to the notion four years ago, my list of words would have been much more doubting and negative, fearful even. I had known about Findhorn and heard stories about basketball-size cabbages, but that all seemed so far away. On a trip to Florida four years ago, my partner and I ran smack into the concept in a way that we could no longer ignore. We had won the Pagoda raffle for five free nights and days at their place in St. Augustine; so after womonwrites we toodled on down thinking we were going to see and communicate with the dolphins, which we did but that's another story. At womonwrites Susan G. had suggested the book, *Behaving As If The God In All Things Mattered* by Machaelle Small Wright. We purchased it and read it on the way to the Pagoda. The wimmin there suggested we might want to visit a crystal shop in St. Augustine that was run by a sister. There we found the *Perelandra Garden Workbook* which described what Machaelle

had been doing at her farm called Peralandra just outside D.C. She calls the book "A complete guide to gardening with nature intelligences." It certainly challenged my old ways of thinking about gardening. Now understand that gardening is one of the most important things in life to me and is intricately involved in my spiritual activities, but this was new and different.

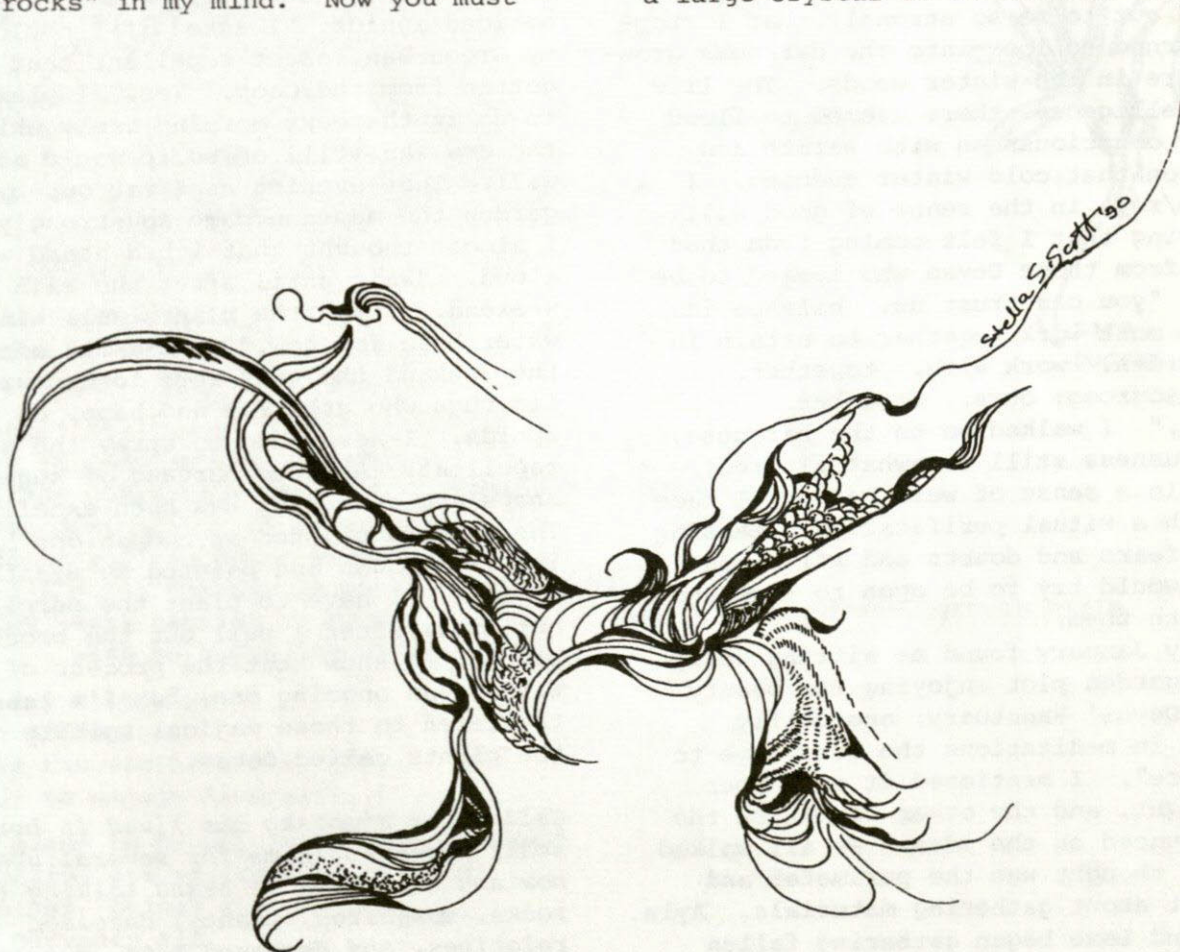
That summer we went all over visiting friends and wimmin's land. I drove most of the time and Gwen read from the workbook. My first reactions were of disbelief. I have come to learn now four years later that my experience with the devas is quite different from the one in the workbook but nonetheless valid. That is an important point for anyone to remember when reading about devas. Not until one's fear subsides enough for one to experience can one really know. The first thing that "felt" right to me was the energy clearing ritual so we did that almost everywhere we went. And after we returned home, we did it on a weekly basis for a long time. When we got home, the struggle began in earnest for me. My partner was ready to "do it" wholesale. I had the notion that I would have to give up my whole way of organic bug control that I had worked so long to attain. I rebelled. I didn't want to do it. I grudgingly participated in the solstice ceremony of roping off and dedicating the Devas' Sanctuary. (Mind you I had already seen the Devas dancing in the woods outside the south windows years before.) I knew they were there; I just didn't know how to relate to them. Looking at the wild semi-tropical forest of north Mississippi, I couldn't believe that we could have a productive garden with them in control. That was the key word, control. In frustration I threw up my hands and did nothing to control the horn worms on the tomatoes. They ate up "all the tomatoes" confirming my worst fears. Asking the



Devas to control the weeds didn't help much either. Weeds took over the garden. We ended the garden season early that year with me thoroughly discouraged and disgusted. Through the winter I meditated and tried to deal with my fears and disbelief. The next spring when it was garden time a personal tragedy in our lives made gardening an impossibility. We spent the next nine months in intensive healing work with my sister.

The year of the healing began abruptly with my sister's wreck and her coming home from the hospital to live with us completely helpless, leg and arm in casts and pelvis broken in four places. We planted tomatoes and peppers but didn't have time to give them any attention. I "felt" like we were supposed to plant them tho so we did. My sister was on a walker by womonwrites and insisted that we all go. I was packing the van for the trip when this strange feeling came over me, and I seemed to hear the word "rocks" in my mind. Now you must

understand that we have no rocks in our entire 40 acres. And I felt the Devas wanted rocks. Well, I knew that the road which is mostly sand had been graded a few days before and some sand rocks had been unearthed. Though this happened occasionally, it was a rarity so Gwen and I got in the truck and picked up rocks. When I asked why during meditations the next morning, the answer that came was "hornworms". Need I say I was very doubtful! But we put the rocks all around the yard and garden. I don't believe Gwen ever doubted. Off we went to womonwrites, but the word rocks would pop into my mind from time to time so I would pick some up whenever we stopped. At womonwrites Marcia Z. was making necklaces out of different kinds of stones. Gwen turned to me and said, "Do you think we should get one of these for the Devas?" I knew immediately that the answer was yes. We took it home, draped it over a huge sand rock and put a large crystal in the middle. We saw



Stella Scott  
Shutesbury, Massachusetts



ON WATCHING THE PETUNIAS BLOOM

By Gail Clear Nightsky

Whenever I see petunias  
In their frolicking blossoming glee  
I know it's just a gift  
From the petunia deva to me.

very few hornworms or cutworms that year. That was the year of the rains almost every day or two so the tomatoes didn't produce much, but nobody's gardens did anything that year. And there was a tiny crack in my solid defense of disbelief.

The winter sun flung slanted crimson and gold rays into the Devas' Sanctuary as I walked past on my way to the bathhouse. It was a beautiful place, wild and majestic, untampered with by humans for over three years now. I was ignoring it as I usually did, but something seemed to call out to me so strongly that I stopped, turned to look into the darkness growing there in the winter woods. The life and intelligences there seemed to flood into my consciousness with warmth and levity on that cold winter evening. I stood w/rapt in the sense of good will and caring that I felt coming from that place, from those Devas who seemed to be saying, "you can trust us. balance is what we must work together to attain in your garden. work with. together. your resources; ours. together. balance." I walked on to the bathhouse, consciousness still somewhat altered, bathed in a sense of well being. I made the bath a ritual purification cleansing all my fears and doubts and affirming that I would try to be open to them and work with them.

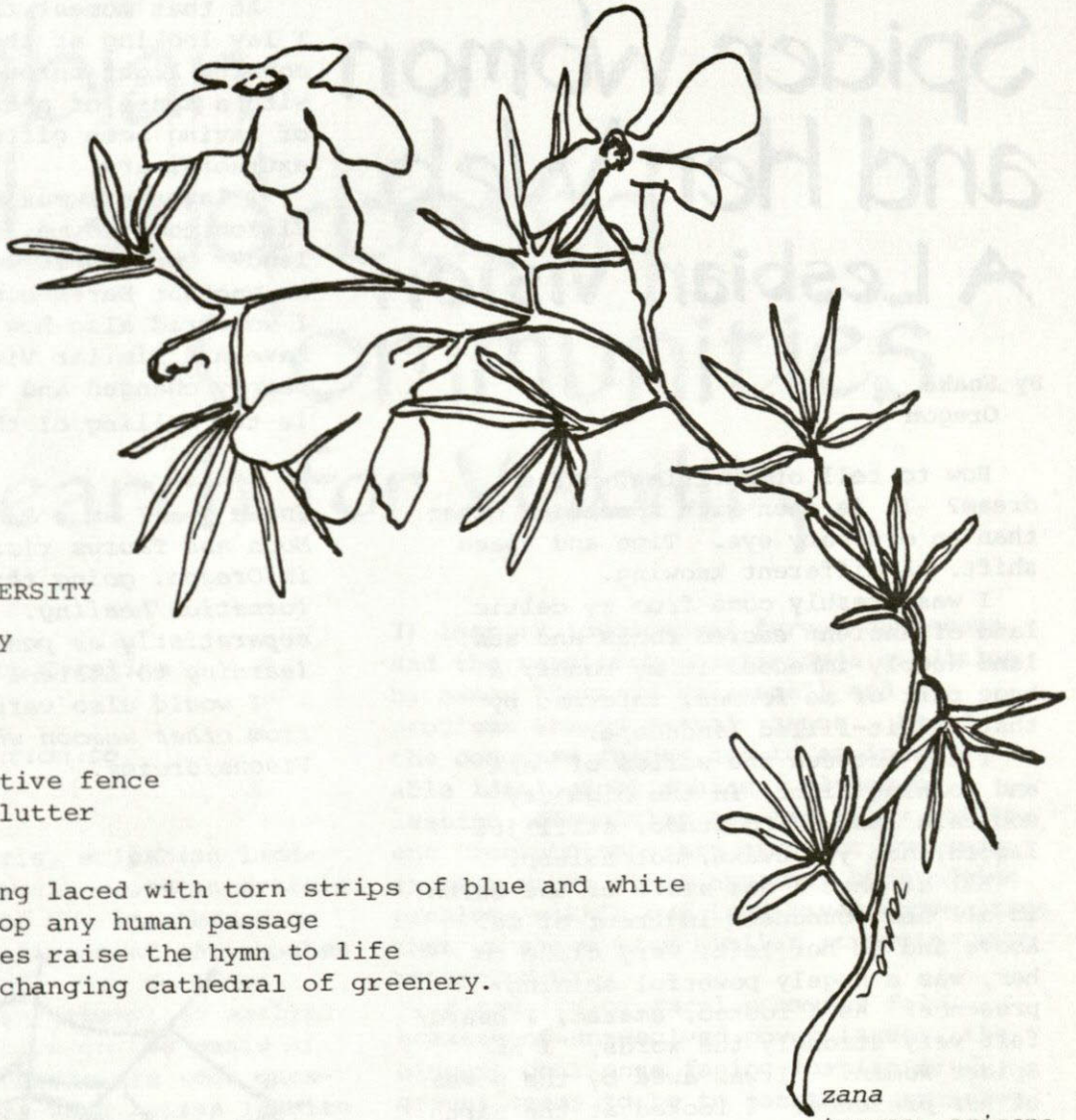
Early January found me sitting daily by the garden plot enjoying the beauty of the Devas' Sanctuary; one chilly morning in meditations the word came to me "fence". I mentioned it at supper that night, and the other wimmin on the land pounced on the idea. We all walked what we thought was the perimeter and they set about gathering materials. Ayla, Trish and Lexe began gathering fallen black locust trees from the creek and cutting posts. Gwen and I had a trip

and upon our return the fence was up complete with pink and lavender ribbons fluttering from every post!

My times of meditations were filled with joyful experiences of the presence of the Devas. They seem to be a lively happy bunch! Exactly how to describe their communications is a difficult task: I got visions of the raised beds in the garden completely planted and usually blooming with the appropriate plants. I saw the lawn mower we were to buy before it went on sale. I knew when to plant the sugar snaps and snow peas, what beds were to contain what; what flowers were to be companions, what crops were to be succession planted, and even when to harvest the onions which had always been difficult for me. I learned that some plants really need to go to seed when you can't harvest them all. One of the most startling episodes was with the insects again. The sugar snaps and snow peas were growing vigorously and blooming beautifully when I first noticed aphids. I asked if I could use my Green Ban insect repellent that I had gotten from the Coop. Yes. I planned to do it the next morning early while the dew was still on so it would adhere well. That evening as I sat out by the garden the message came so strongly that I almost thought that I had heard words aloud. "Wait until after the rain this weekend. Spray the plants well with the water hose for now." I did and after the weekend the peas were loaded with ladybugs who grew fat and happy on the aphids. I never had to spray the natural repellent. And the harvest of sugar-snaps and snow peas has been excellent. The flowers planted as companions have inspired poems and painted my meditations majical. I have to plant the purple hull peas after I pull out the broccoli plants. I know that the process of balance will be an ongoing one, but I'm learning to listen to those majical spirits of the plants called Devas.

*Gail Clear Nightsky has lived in her small handbuilt home for several years now and can often be heard talking to rocks, mosquitos, plants, deceased relatives, and deceased pets, much to the distraction of her partner who has an auditory screening deficit.*





ONE WAY TO MANAGE DIVERSITY

By Gail Clear Nightsky

What a difference!  
Our little garden  
Here out front  
Nestled in her protective fence  
ribbons a'flutter

And the Devas  
There behind the string laced with torn strips of blue and white  
cloth to stop any human passage  
wild trees and vines raise the hymn to life  
in an ever changing cathedral of greenery.

What a difference!

Our neat raised beds  
With rows of broccoli  
Onions, sugar snap peas...

The Devas' Sanctuary  
Growing in seeming wild abandon  
A place untampered with for at least three years  
No human destruction in three years  
(unless you count the rain and air  
and I'm not for the purposes of this poem)  
Three years haunted by birds, animals, devas, growth, death, growth again  
with no human intrusion.

And today I look at  
the difference  
And see the similarities, too.  
One way to manage diversity.

There seems to be only wild abandon there  
But working its patterns of precise  
Beginnings, beings and endings  
Order pervades all.

The paradox of wild order:  
Does that notion live somewhere in our DNA cells?

zana  
tucson, arizona



# Spider Womom and Her Web A Lesbian Vision

By Snake ♀  
Oregon

How to tell of a Vision, not a dream? It is seen with something other than an ordinary eye. Time and space shift. A different knowing.

I was freshly come from my celtic land of ancient sacred rocks and sea, land deeply imbedded in my bones; a huge part of me formed, informed by that spirit-filled landscape.

I lay between the worlds of dark and morning light, in the high dry mountain land of Colorado; still jet-lagged, not yet awake, not asleep.

All at once I was aware of the Earth in all her roundness in front of me. Above and to her left, very close to her, was a hugely powerful shining presence. As I looked, amazed, I heard/felt very strongly the words, "I am Spider Womom." I was awed by the power of her presence. I looked at the Earth again. All over her, touching her, was Spider Womom's Web, the strands hanging broken and limp. Then I heard Spider Womom say, "Whenever wemoom meet, open their hearts to each other, touch deeply, a strand in mended."

As I heard this I felt, deep in my belly, something jolt, join, reconnect, come together. When this happened I saw the Web become whole, complete.

Instantly, shimmering, sparkling, iridescent energy was rushing, pouring through every strand.

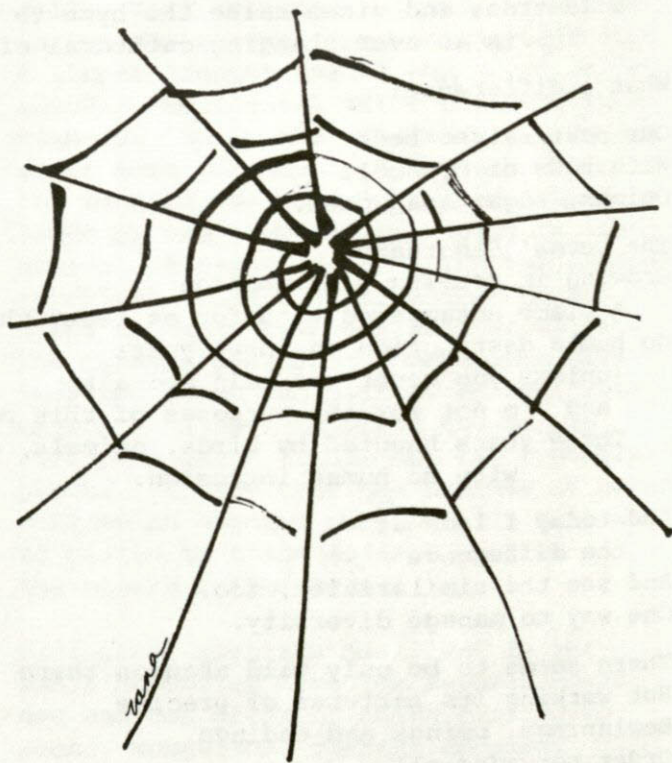
My hands reached out gently, feeling the energy surrounding the Earth. I knew, because the Web had been mended, become complete again, that everything was different. New possibilities existed. What had happened before was no longer possible. My other mind said, "Rape in its many forms is no longer possible."

At that moment the Vision faded. I lay looking at the delicate pre-dawn morning light through the window, filled with a sense of a different knowledge, of having been gifted, shown something extraordinary.

I lay there musing. Why had this Vision come to me, a woman not of this land? Perhaps it was because I came from an ancient Earth-honouring tradition. I wondered also how many other wemoom have had similar Visions. I remain deeply changed and know part of my work is the telling of this Vision.

*Snake ♀ : I am a Pisces, with Cancer Moon and Taurus rising, living on land in Oregon, going thru my midlife transformation/healing. Living as simply and separatistly as possible, slowing down, learning to Listen.*

*I would also very much like to hear from other wemoom who have had/are having Visions/dreams.*



zana  
tucson, arizona



# Lesbian Land-based Communities A Search for Viability

By Siné Anahita  
McLeansville, North Carolina

(A paper for Introduction to  
Feminist Theory)

Miguela of Arco Iris, a lesbian land-based community, recently wrote an article for MAIZE that told of the heartbreaking and demoralizing experience of yet another woman leaving the land. Why do women leave the land? In an attempt to analyze lesbian land communities on the basis of long-term stability, there are some questions to be addressed: What causes lesbian communities to disintegrate? Are there any historical community structures that we might adapt to increase the viability of lesbian land communities?

Reading a sociological approach to problems common to contemporary American communities confirmed that lesbian communities are undergoing problems similar to hetero- and mixed-group communities. *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* by Benjamin Zablocki studied 38 rural communes in order to determine the reason for disintegration of each. Not surprisingly, the largest number of groups, an amazing 32%, folded due to unresolved conflicts around power and influence. The second most prevalent reasons given for disintegration tied, at 11% each, among 4 factors: 1) legal/official pressure against the group 2) public opinion/action against the group

3) loss of ideological fervor/consensus and the resulting inactivity (a condition he names "loss of salience") and 4) problems around sexual issues. 8% of the communes folded due to an insurmountable ideological schism. Although lesbian communities are radically different from contemporary straight communes in many ways, it is apparent by studying problems within our land-based communities that we share many similar struggles with heterogroups.

Since 32% of rural communes fold because of unresolved power issues, the biggest challenge facing lesbian land groups seems to be to construct creative ways to deal with power and influence. An attempt to deal with the question of power and influence is most clearly illustrated in the type of decision-making process a group will adopt. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter notes in her book *Communes: Creating and Managing the Collective Life*, decision-making structures generally fall into one of four categories: anarchism, organized democracy, charismatic leader and variations of these and other traditional systems.

Comparing each of these heterogroup systems that attempt to define power and influence through different decision-making processes with systems lesbian land-based communities have devised make it clear that lesbian groups have encountered similar challenges, as well as new challenges (example of boy babies born within a strictly separatist community.)





zana

Many communities begin with one form of decision making and evolve through other forms until the group disintegrates or stabilizes. Typically, the first state a new community attempts is anarchism. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter's research indicates, anarchism is the most unstable of the systems: the average life span of an anarchistic community is only one to two years. This makes it seem a poor choice for a decision-making process in a group that wants to maintain a longer, more stable permanence. Yet most groups begin this way, often as extensions of close friendships. Anarchism allows great personal freedom, ideally putting no limits on individual behavior: for this reason I believe it especially appeals to lesbians, who come to land communities abused by patriarchal rules and actions. Within small groups an anarchist dynamic can exist which for a short time can be rewarding to all members. But anarchism does not provide several processes/institutions that seem a prerequisite for long-term survival.

An organized democracy usually attempts to institutionalize systems aimed at answering some of the needs anarchism ignores. Informal coalitions within an anarchist group can concentrate power unequally. An organized democracy, on the other hand, pursues consciously stated egalitarian ethics and often the leadership is rotated among all members of the group while an elected committee maintains control by making the decisions that the rotated leader merely institutes. A forum for group and individual participation like group meetings and voting is an integral part of an organized democracy. The kibbutz is of course the best-known as an example of an organized democracy. Stability there is historically related to smaller size (150 maximum) to allow for direct democracy, but some kibbutzim are experimenting with larger sizes (1500).

According to Kanter, there are some prerequisites for long-term survival of an organized democracy. Along with small size, she maintains that a homogeneous population better weathers the inevitable storms. Former Golden member, zana, wrote in *Lesbian Land* that the diversity of women she lived with was negative for her. She recognized the irony in her situation: by recognizing diversity they invited divisiveness. Reconciling lesbian principles of diversity with long-term group survival needs of a homogeneous population is obviously necessary. Sarah Lucia Hoagland in *Lesbian Ethics: Toward New Value* discusses our need for diversity and plurality in our communities as a function of viewing ourselves as "one among many". (p.241) She states that when we view ourselves this way "we begin to understand how to *work within limits*" (emphasis mine). If we continue to pursue our lesbian ideal of diversity, and accept the resulting growth and change Hoagland predicts, is it inevitable that the herstorical pattern of community disintegration will follow?

On another note, Kanter suggests that a relatively simple agrarian lifestyle aids in the maintenance of an organized democracy. The rotating job structure demands that most chores and responsibilities not require specialization or elaborate explanation. Each task must be understandable to each community member



for the rotating job structure to be effective and equal. More complex tasks involve specialization and ultimately are assigned more status, resulting in an uneven social arrangement.

The final, very important prerequisite for the success of an organized democracy Kanter discusses is the necessity of maintaining a separatist attitude toward the world outside the group while maintaining a strong sense of group identity. Along with this strong sense of group comes a need for each person to fully participate in the group's processes. Her analysis of the successes of the kibbutzim stresses the need to socialize each member to the group so that public/group opinion becomes the motivating factor of each individual. Group goals then become personal goals.

Hoagland, however, warns against patriarchal cooperative values that institutionalize the cooperative group over the individual. She views "lesbian connection as an altogether different fabric" (p.289) than straight cooperative values. She believes that lesbians should not institute community social structures with binding regulations on behavior because the resulting system would not create "lesbian value and revolution." The lesbian ideal she promulgates of "risk and change" superceding "preservation and security" seems to directly challenge the validity of Kanter's research on group stability in relation to lesbian communities.

Yet a third structure for decision-making that Rosabeth Moss Kanter describes is the charismatic leader structure. This structure tends to be the most stable of all, avoiding a troublesome decision-making process by concentrating all power within one individual. Kanter points out that this is often a highly-motivated, enthusiastic person who attracts and inspires others. The Oneida community combined charismatic John Humphrey Noyes with religion and a participatory democracy to create one of the longest lasting and most stable community in American community history. Oneida held group meetings to discuss proposals with the alternatives actually decided and implemented by a committee.

Charismatic communities proliferate around religious and political ideals. Although some women's communities have followed a highly-charged woman as a leader, the example of the Redbird Collective documents Kanter's ideas about informal leaders and power coalitions not even articulated by the group. American lesbian communities and ideals tend toward not relinquishing personal autonomy, even to another woman. Interesting, though, is the highly productive, stable atmosphere charismatic-led communities produce.

Outside of these formal systems of decision-making lie informal systems. Perhaps not tacitly agreed upon, or even recognized by the group, they exist within communities as within almost any social group. Seniority often functions as an informal power.



zana



Power/decision-making in lesbian land communities is predictably a highly-charged and divisive issue. But lesbians have created and adapted interesting methods of coping with this largest of all challenges to the survival of communities. A Woman's Place in Athol, NY, tried many ways of decision-making. That ultimate feminist ideal, consensus procedures, left women drained and decisions still unmade. They tried an elected leader but the rest of the women felt powerless. The women finally adopted a form of majority rule alongside group meetings to allow every woman to have input and feel heard. In *Lesbian Land* the survivors of A Woman's Place stated the need for a women's tribunal system to prevent having to rely on patriarchal legal procedures, a sentiment echoed by the women of Arco Iris; unfortunately, AWP was forced to rely on lawyers and courts to settle differences and thus it folded.

By contrast, the women of Kvindelandet in Denmark adopted a form of consensus-socialism where group decision making was implemented without resorting to acrimonious group meetings. The women felt that their experience as Danish citizens within a liberal socialist government contributed to their success at collective decision-making. Unfortunately, external factors were at work which undermined their solidarity and the group folded.

Joyce Cheney, when discussing Redbird Collective in Vermont, offers vital insight on the nature of power within a group. Although Redbird was committed to total egalitarianism, an informal "pecking order" was established. This pecking order was determined by the "maleness" of a certain job, the amount of time/energy spent working, biological motherhood, and (like heterogroups), lover relationships with the informal, unacknowledged leader. Although some women's status fluctuated, Cheney recognized that the informal leader was always at the top, and another woman was always on the bottom.

After struggling to work within a consensus framework, the women at ARF in New Mexico created an interesting alternative to simple majority rule. Although they called themselves

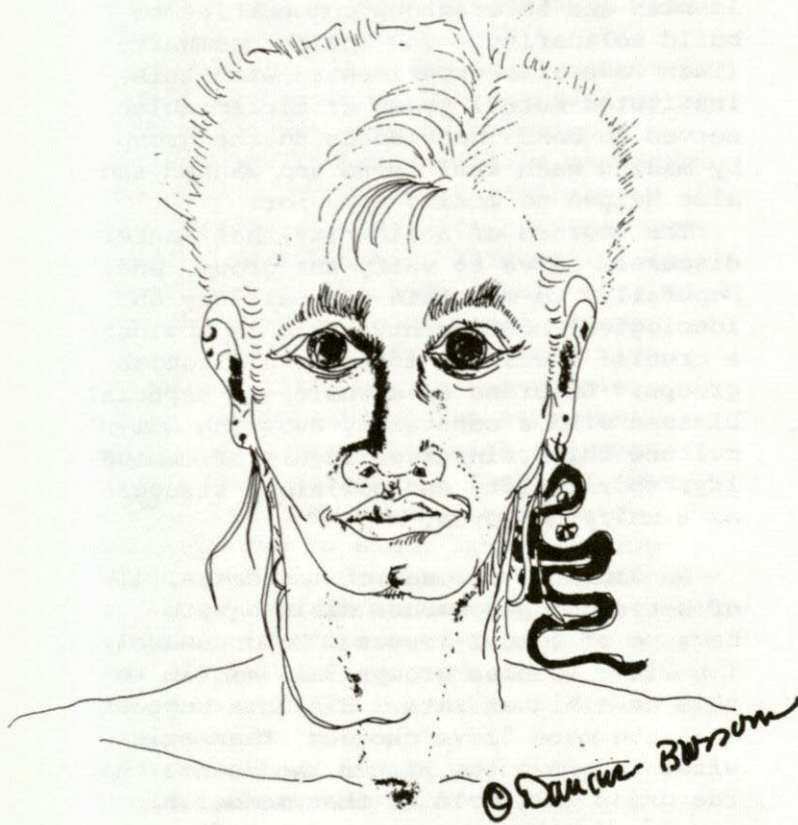
anarchists, they participated in group decision-making by majority rule. As far as possible, they allowed dissenters an exception to the rule, an intriguing possibility for many situations.

Adobeland in Arizona seems to be essentially a combination of charismatic leader and organized democracy, with admission power generally held by the woman who owns the land. She states in *Lesbian Land* that so far she has not turned any woman away. At the time of her interview, Adobe was considering creating a decision-making "tribal council". At the present the women participate in group discussions with a passed rattle acting as agent for personal power within each woman. While a woman holds the rattle, she holds the attention, and hopefully the respect, of the rest of the group.

Even though these lesbian land communities have experimented with decision-making structures in highly creative ways, it is clear by the number of disintegrated groups that we have yet to perfect the ways to distribute power and influence. And, although power issues are the reasons 32% of the heterogroups folded that Zablocki studied, other issues are given for the demise of communities. Two of these, legal/official pressure and public opinion/action against the group seem related. And at 11% each, a combined total of 22% of the groups Zablocki studied folded due to external pressure. This seems particularly alarming to lesbian land groups. Our legal status in most countries as outlaws and deviants seems to make us particularly vulnerable to external pressures. Adobeland, for example, experienced official action masquerading as zoning violations. Adobe observed in *Lesbian Land* that the non-conventional activity of the women on the land (howling at the moon, no shirts, shaved heads) provoked the neighbors into trying to force them off the land by the zoning offense. Fortunately, the women solved their problem by installing the required septic tank, and being zoned as a campground; thus legal, the women were not subject to further harrassment.



Most heterogroup communities have prevented legal/neighbor harassment by being legal also. In most cases, illegal drugs are banned; in the 1960's and '70's drug violations were often used by local authorities to close down communes. Many lesbian land communities also ban illegal drugs as a way of easing external pressure and also for ideological reasons.



Mau Blossom  
Doniphan, Missouri

Zablocki's studies indicate another common reason communities disintegrate: 11% of the communities folded because of "lack of saliency." Another 8% fold because of an insurmountable ideological schism. I believe these two reasons to be interrelated and I look to the evolving womyn's spirituality movement to provide possible context for preventing them from occurring.

Kanter stresses the need for cohesion to maximize group stability. She finds many values important to cohesion that are also integral aspects of womyn's spirituality. She discusses shared

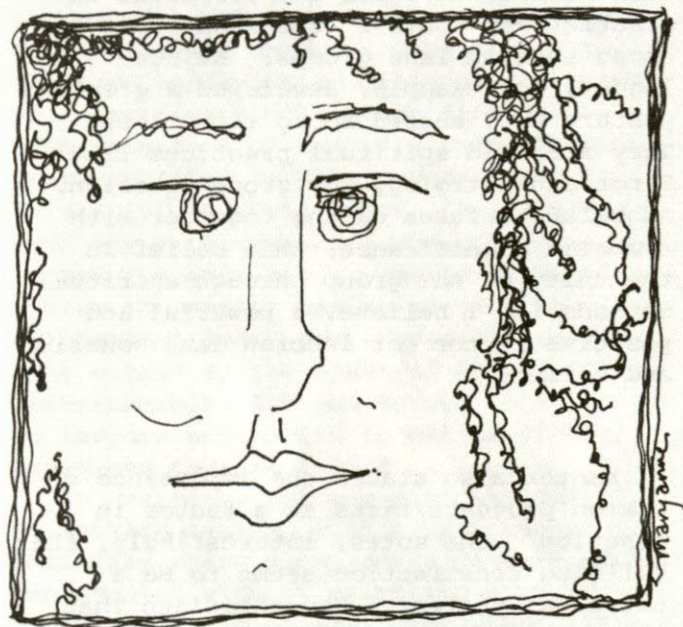
rituals and symbol sharing as an important cohesive factor. As an example she mentioned the Oneidan custom of holding ritual community purification rites, after visitors left, to re-unify the group. The Shakers, also, glorified their bonds with each other through hymns and special greeting ceremonies. Such rituals as these are reflected in practices of womyn's spirituality among lesbian land groups. Kvinde-landet, for example, developed a greeting gesture they shared among themselves. They also did spiritual practices like Tarot and astrology for group cohesion. Adobeland infuses eating together with symbolic significance; this belief in the unity of the group through spiritual methods is, I believe, a powerful and positive factor for lesbian land cohesion and saliency.

Kanter also states the importance of common projects/tasks as a factor in cohesion. She notes, interestingly, that building construction seems to be a universal unifier. She theorizes that the completed buildings serve as a permanent monument to group activity through individual action. Many communities, both lesbian and heterogroup, use shared work as a unifying factor. The Shakers are renowned for their high value of work. Adobeland also finds connection with others through shared work. Arco Iris in Arkansas values work as meditation, finding spiritual connection with the task. With that spirituality as stimulus, the women of Arco Iris have affirmed the unifying power of shared labor. And, as a result, they now find themselves in the midst of the fruits of their labor: a windmill, a cistern, several houses, large productive garden, and a cottage industry. Their hard work has enabled the group to cope with severe environmental limitations.

The women of Golden also felt work as a common commitment helped to unify the group. But the women also felt pressure around work issues, especially as related to disability. This theme of work and disability is bound to come up again and again in lesbian land communities as we struggle to make access for each of us.



The "creative anarchy" the Kvindelandet created was, unfortunately, plagued with problems around work. A split between who did and who did not work and the differing amounts of energy spent by women caused problems. It is clear, then, that shared work is not always effectively utilized as a cohesive factor.



maryanne

Gwen O Demeter, for example, in MAIZE #10 (Fall 1986) discusses the puritan work ethic and its negative ramifications for lesbians living in land communities. She sees the work ethic "as recognizing a person's value only in relation to how much she works." (p.19) Finding work a negative, joyless experience, she extols the joy and satisfaction of relaxing while birdwatching and hammock-lying. Her call to "dismantle the...work ethic inside each of us" is a radical difference to Kanter's observations on work as unifier.

Another source of group solidarity Kanter observes is a common rejection of past lives and a sense of separatism from the rest of the world. This functions to keep members involved in the group and not distracted by the outside. Separatism and the resulting group identity was utilized most effectively by the Redbird Collective which even called for lovers to be collective members.

Indeed, most rural groups choose an isolated environment ideally suited for physical separation from the rest of the world.

Alongside of separatism Kanter stresses community-building social functions as vital to a community's success. This seems to be the easy part of any community! Potlucks, rituals, dances, community sings, sweats: all these events and more have been utilized in both lesbian and heterogroup communities to build solidarity. The Oneida community (Twin Oaks also experimented with this) instituted mutual group criticism which served to bond individuals to the group by making each feel loved and wanted and also helped to modify behavior.

The sources of solidarity that Kanter discusses serve to unify the group, and, hopefully, to maintain its saliency and ideological commitment. This is obviously a crucial focus for intentional lesbian groups. Lesbians as a whole are especially blessed with a constantly evolving womyn's culture that reinforces ideals of community, spirituality and political struggle as a unifying force.

As Zablocki's research indicates, 11% of heterogroup communes disintegrate because of sexual issues. Unfortunately, I believe lesbian groups fall victim to this at a higher rate. His data suggest that the more "love choices" that exist within a group the higher the chance that the group will fold or that membership turnover will be constant (p. 147). Within a lesbian community, the number of "love choices" within a group is going to be greater than within a heterogroup community. Historical and contemporary communities have instituted controls on sexuality in an attempt to deal with its power. The Shakers were strictly celibate, with limits on all touching, even handshakes. On the other hand, Oneidans practiced group marriage to avoid the unique power coalitions of pair-bonding. They believed that by making sexual expression routine, its intensity would be reduced. Redbird members also practiced unique sexual arrangements in an attempt to diffuse the power of sexuality. At one point they drew names to assign lovers on a rotating semi-monthly basis. Their radical experiment was an effort to



institute their political convictions on the nature of love and sex. Their goal was to rotate through the entire collective sexually to dis-empower the bonds monogamy held on them and to ultimately allow them to have "open sexual options."

Celibacy as a regulator of sexuality seems a more prevalent solution to the problem of sexuality. Not much of a regulator, though, as, according to Zablocki, 60% of members admit to violating celibacy regulations! (p. 341) As he points out, reaching a consensus on celibacy is easy; the practice of it is much harder. One heterogroup's approach was to make celibacy mandatory only within the physical environment of the community; lovers off-premises were allowed. Predictably, this policy led to problems of the individual becoming more attached to an external person than to the community. The positive effects of this celibacy-on-premises policy was to relieve the stresses associated with living with a former lover. D.W. Outpost, a lesbian community in Missouri, experienced many major upheavals due to ended love relationships. Her constantly shifting herstory, largely due to love changes, often results in population turnover so intense as to have all new members each year. Although the group as a living collective has existed for almost 15 years, the constant turnover allows for no individual stability, and ultimately, for no group stability.

Zablocki and Kanter both offer insightful information on creating long-term communities. The lesbian land movement can learn much from their work. But much of their material seems contradicted by lesbian theorists like Hoagland who present the lesbian ideal as radically different from cooperative values. Perhaps a synthesis of several ideals would best provide the context where we can honor both cooperative values and our deeply-held lesbian ideals. Meanwhile, lesbian communities are also creating new ways of viability by experimenting with decision-making structures, social bonding, womyn's spirituality and sexual arrangements. Although we seem far from the ideal of long-lived lesbian land-based communities, I am confident that our persistent efforts to create community will be rewarded.

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maryanne  
miami, florida



# When the Earth Beckons

By Lilith Lynn  
Sebastopol, California

I shall go back  
to water  
to rocks and sticks  
and tree roots.

Water rushing in  
filling these holes,  
these secret places.  
Water--hot water  
or cold--  
oh, too cold,  
cold on hot places  
water rushing over them  
sweeping away all doubt,  
all unknown, unknowable  
desires.

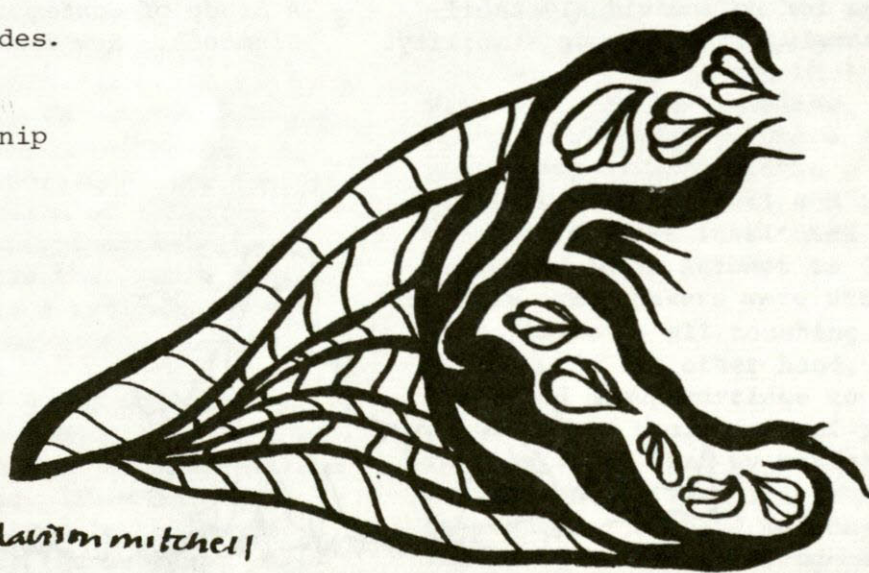
I shall use sticks  
again in the mountains.  
Curly tree roots,  
plucked from stream banks  
smoothed by earth  
and time.

I shall use sticks  
with blunt ends  
and round, smooth sides.  
(Sticks and stones  
that have no bones,  
no sharp teeth that nip  
nails that scratch  
or hands that clasp  
too tight.)

I shall fill myself  
with things  
of the Earth--  
brown sticks,  
gray stones,  
rushing water--  
cool water, fast water  
water that once was Sky  
that once was Ocean.  
Water that will love me  
as I should be loved--  
with excitement,  
with fond awareness  
of my private necessities.

Why settle  
for mere flesh  
when the Earth beckons?

12 February 1984



*Kate Davison Mitchell*

Kate Mitchell  
San Francisco, California



# Dykeecology

By Nett Hart  
Foreston, Minnesota

So, we had Earth Day. One thing seems clear, cynicism about cosmetic companies that lead marches to the capital aside, is that there is a large number of people who are, to varying degrees, motivated to do "something" about the relationship of culture to the environment. This movement should not be discredited. Instead, I offer, that those of us who have lived in more environmentally sensitive ways since the first Earth Day (and before), have much to contribute and that Lesbian feminists have significant assumptions about our relationships in the world that need to be heard. The environmental movement desperately needs perspective and new metaphors. The earth is not a hypochondriacal old woman who is ailing and needs the advances of science/medicine to correct her imbalances and keep her alive, as portrayed in the media extravaganza. Nor is she an infant in need of continual monitoring and care by "those who know best" as other illustrations proposed. Perhaps we could look at the simple truth that the earth is not what is in need of change, balance, or supervision. Heteropatriarchal society (hetpat) is--and change in a big way.

## *Women Identify with Nature*

We do not need to argue from biological determinism to see that the relationship of women to nature differs from the norms of hetpat. Using nature writers as an example, it is the women among them who are willing to take in the natural world on its own terms, to observe as a participant, to be aware of the whole cycle. Women most often make an intuitive connection to nature that is not sentimental, that allows for the changes *within* nature. Women are

part of nature, that is, nature for us is not a place upon which we do our actions, but a web of lives to which we are connected. We come to nature curious of her workings but without an intent to then use that information to control her to our ambitions.

All at once something wonderful happened, although at first it seemed perfectly ordinary. A female goldfinch suddenly hove into view. She lighted weightlessly on the head of a bankside purple thistle and began emptying the seed-case, sowing the air with down.

The lighted frame of my window filled. The down rose and spread in all directions, wafting over the dam's waterfall and wavering between the tulip trunks and into the meadow. It vaulted towards the orchard in a puff; it hovered over the ripening pawpaw fruit and staggered up the steep-faced terrace. It jerked, floated, rolled, veered, swayed. The thistledown faltered toward the cottage and gusted clear to the motorbike woods; it rose and entered the shaggy arms of pecans. At last it strayed like snow, blind and sweet, into the pool of the creek upstream, and into the race of the creek over rocks down. It shuddered onto the tips of growing grasses, where it poised, light, still wracked by errant quivers. I was holding my breath. Is this where we live, I thought, in this place at this moment, with the air so light and wild?

PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK - ANNIE DILLARD

## *Woman Identified As Nature*

The roots of anti-nature and misogyny are the same--anti-matter (anti-mother), a fear (therefore hatred) of the natural cycles, fear of what is beyond his control, fear of what necessity may be withheld from him. Lesbian feminists have decoded the misogyny on which hetpat runs as this basic hate/fear which is a unilateral war on all that is truly alive and connected. The mentality of this anti-matter assures that women will be treated as nature and that what is done to nature is done to women.





Nett Hart

*MOUNTAIN SONG*  
By Holly Near

*I have dreamed on this mountain  
Since first I was my mother's daughter  
And you can't just take my dreams away  
Not with me watching*

*You may drive a big machine  
But I was born a great big woman  
And you can't just take my dreams away  
Without me fighting*

*This old mountain raised my many daughters  
Some died young, some still living  
But if you come here for to taking our  
mountain  
No we ain't come here to give it*

*I have dreamed on this mountain  
Since first I was my mother's daughter  
And you can't just take my dreams away  
Not with me watching  
No you can't just take my dreams away  
Without me fighting  
No you can't just take my dreams away*

Hetpat thrives on the "assurance" that the earth and women, like the giving tree, are happily available to meet the needs, and whims, of others. Without the simple, happy slavery of the oppressed, the whole system crumbles.

The crisis mind can offer no solutions. Those who dare to think of solutions are precisely those who were declared incapable of thinking. Like the women in the Third World, they are clear that the issue is survival, and they have the relevant expertise. 'Rational' man of the modern west is exposed today as a bundle of irrationalities, threatening the very survival of humankind. When we find that those who claimed to carry the light have led us into darkness and those who were declared to be inhabiting the dark recesses of ignorance were actually enlightened, it is but rational to redefine categories and meanings. Recovering the feminine principle as respect for life in nature and society appears to be the only way forward, for men as well as women, in the North as well as the South. The metaphors and concepts of minds deprived of the feminine principle have been based on seeing nature and women as worthless and passive, and finally as dispensable. These ethnocentric categorisations have been universalised, and with their universalisation has been associated the destruction of nature and the subjugation of women. But this dominant mode of organising the world is today being challenged by the very voices it had silenced. These voices, muted through subjugation, are now quietly but firmly suggesting that the western male has produced only one culture, and that there are other ways of structuring the world. Women's struggles for survival through the protection of nature are redefining the meaning of basic categories. They are challenging

the central belief of the dominant world-view that nature and women are worthless and waste, that they are obstacles to progress and must be sacrificed.

**STAYING ALIVE - VANDANA SHIVA**

Who's going to save the whales? Who will be the first to market a hairspray that doesn't need fluorocarbon propellants and is not sprayed in rabbits' eyes? What exciting questions Earth Day brings up! How many ways can you list to use old tires? What "safe" biocides are there? What is the best home water purifier? Maybe we should be asking instead whether earth can (or should) support hetpat society even on "alternative" energies and greater efficiency, whether it is really patterns of consumption that have brought the ecosystem to a crisis or the essential anti-matter/misogyny that underlies all structures of this society. Instead of looking for cosmetics that do not harm the environment or need to be "tested" on animals, we need to ask why women are not acceptable as we are. Instead of focusing on consumption we need to focus on non-sustainable consumption of resources, those earth elements that are depleted by the abuses of techno-industrial society. I suspect some of this guilt-by-consumption is really a fear of abundance--earth centered abundance--which brings us right back to anti-matter and misogyny. We don't need eco-solutions: we need a revolution.



### Beware The Ecologists in White Coats

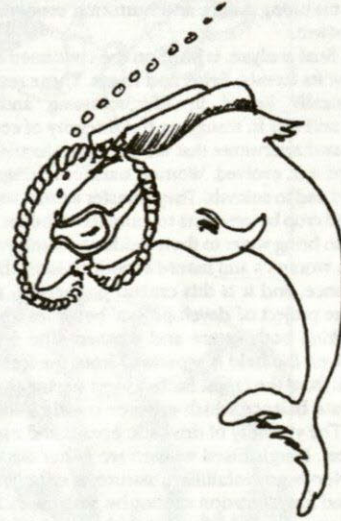
What we know from living on/with the earth is invalidated by professional ecologists. The necessary changes are both simpler and more complex than the science of ecology can encompass. It is important to remember that not everyone is life-focused and so we should be wary of the suggestions that come from those not at home on the earth: the deep-ecologists who believe humans need to become extinct for earth to survive, the religious groups who are not attached to this life but awaiting an afterlife, and the scientists who envision a non-earth life in space labs and artificial environments. Any solutions that are posed by "earth's problems" miss the point because unless the totality of nature and natural interaction is taken into account, anything we "do" works for further disintegration of the web of life.

In some quarters nowadays it is fashionable to dismiss the balance of nature as a state of affairs that prevailed in an earlier, simpler world — a state that has now been so thoroughly upset that we might as well forget it. Some find this a convenient assumption, but as a chart for a course of action it is highly dangerous. The balance of nature is not the same today as in Pleistocene times, but it is still there: a complex, precise, and highly integrated system of relationships between living things which cannot safely be ignored any more than the law of gravity can be defied with impunity by a man perched on the edge of a cliff. The balance of nature is not a *status quo*; it is fluid, ever shifting, in a constant state of adjustment. Man, too, is part of this balance. Sometimes the balance is in his favor; sometimes — and all too often through his own activities — it is shifted to his disadvantage.

SILENT SPRING - RACHEL CARSON

The scientist/outsider Rachel Carson called attention to the deadly widespread implications of pesticides in her book *Silent Spring*. Even though this book touched off the environmental movement, she was discredited and derided and is little acknowledged now. H. Pat Hynes recounts in her book *The Recurring Silent Spring* the development of the Environmental Protection Agency which was founded as a direct result of the outcry caused by *Silent Spring* and the waste of its legacy this bureaucracy has

become. Once an independent agency peopled by environmental visionaries, the EPA has succumbed to politics that protect special interest groups. Who is surprised? Can "science" rescue the environment? Is it possible that the same worldview that is capable of, and willing to, destroy the earth can save it?



Nett Hart

### The Future of Earth Is Female

The identity and destiny of woman and nature are merged. Accordingly, feminist values and principles directed towards ending the oppression of women are inextricably linked to ecological values and principles directed towards ending the oppression of nature. These values and principles are distilled from women's experiences everywhere and of all times. Their realisation for women and the earth is predicated on women and men refusing to endorse the destructive values that drive sexism, racism, classism, and speciesism. It is ultimately the affirmation of our kinship with nature, of our common life with her, which will prove the source of our mutual wellbeing.

THE RAPE OF THE WILD - ANDREÉ COLLARD

Nature is not passive. The work of nature creates all wealth. The Chipko women of India have a saying "Money grows on trees" because the wellbeing of a whole way of life depends on the life of the forest, providing habitat and food for wild and domestic animals, shelter, firewood, and the rich diversity of plants that feed their families. What is sustainable culturally, environmentally, economically, is the work of women with nature, the common work that uses resources and also tends to the perpetuity of that resource.



The existence of the feminine principle is linked with diversity and sharing. Its destruction through homogenisation and privatisation leads to the destruction of diversity and of the commons. The sustenance economy is based on a creative and organic nature, on local knowledge, on locally recycled inputs that maintain the integrity of nature, on local consumption for local needs, and on the marketing of surplus beyond the imperatives of equity and ecology. The commodity and cash economy destroys natural cycles and reduces nature to raw materials and commodities. It creates the need for purchase and sale to centralised inputs and commodity markets. When production is specialised and for export, surplus becomes a myth. There is only indebtedness, of peoples and nations. The debt trap is part of global commodity production and sale which destroys nurturing nature and nurturing economies in the name of development.

Sustenance, in the final analysis, is built on the continued capacity of nature to renew its forests, fields and rivers. These resource systems are intrinsically linked in life-producing and life-conserving cultures, and it is in managing the integrity of ecological cycles in forestry and agriculture that women's productivity has been most developed and evolved. Women transfer fertility from the forests to the field and to animals. They transfer animal waste as fertilizer for crops and crop by-products to animals as fodder. They work with the forest to bring water to their fields and families. This partnership between women's and nature's work ensures the sustainability of sustenance, and it is this critical partnership that is torn asunder when the project of 'development' becomes a patriarchal project, threatening both nature and women. The forest is separated from the river, the field is separated from the forest, the animals are separated from the crops. Each is then separately developed, and the delicate balance which ensures sustainability and equity is destroyed. The visibility of dramatic breaks and ruptures is posited as 'progress'. Marginalised women are either dispensed with or colonised. Needs go unfulfilled, nature is crippled. The drama of violence and fragmentation cannot be sustained and the recovery of the feminine principle thus becomes essential for liberating not only women and nature, but also the patriarchal reductionist categories which give rise to maldevelopment.

The revolutionary and liberational potential of the recovery of the feminine principle consists in its challenging the concepts, categories and processes which have created the threat to life, and in providing oppositional categories that create and enlarge the spaces for maintaining and enriching all life in nature and society. The radical shift induced by a focus on the feminine principle is the recognition of maldevelopment as a culture of destruction. The feminine principle becomes a category of challenge which locates nature and women as the source of life and wealth, and as such, active subjects, maintaining and creating life-processes.

STAYING ALIVE - VANDANA SHIVA

### A Sustainable World

In the realization of how unsustainable is Western techno-society, many are looking for alternatives. But the future will be characterized by *change* not alternatives. Organic gardening will serve as an example. The assumption is that there is nothing wrong with the way food is grown except that the "side-effects" of ground water pollution, soil sterility, massive erosion, pesticide-residue on food, and agricultural workers' health hazards make the system less appealing. So, if food could be grown with the same techniques and produce the same marvelous harvests without the side-effects, then that would be prefer-

able. Organic gardening is described as gardening without chemicals, but "natural" poisons are still allowable: rotenone, pyrethrum, nicotine, sabadilla dust, ryania and concentrates of metals. Surely the effects of these methods are less toxic, but is this method sustainable? Will we find concentrations of natural poisons just as troublesome?

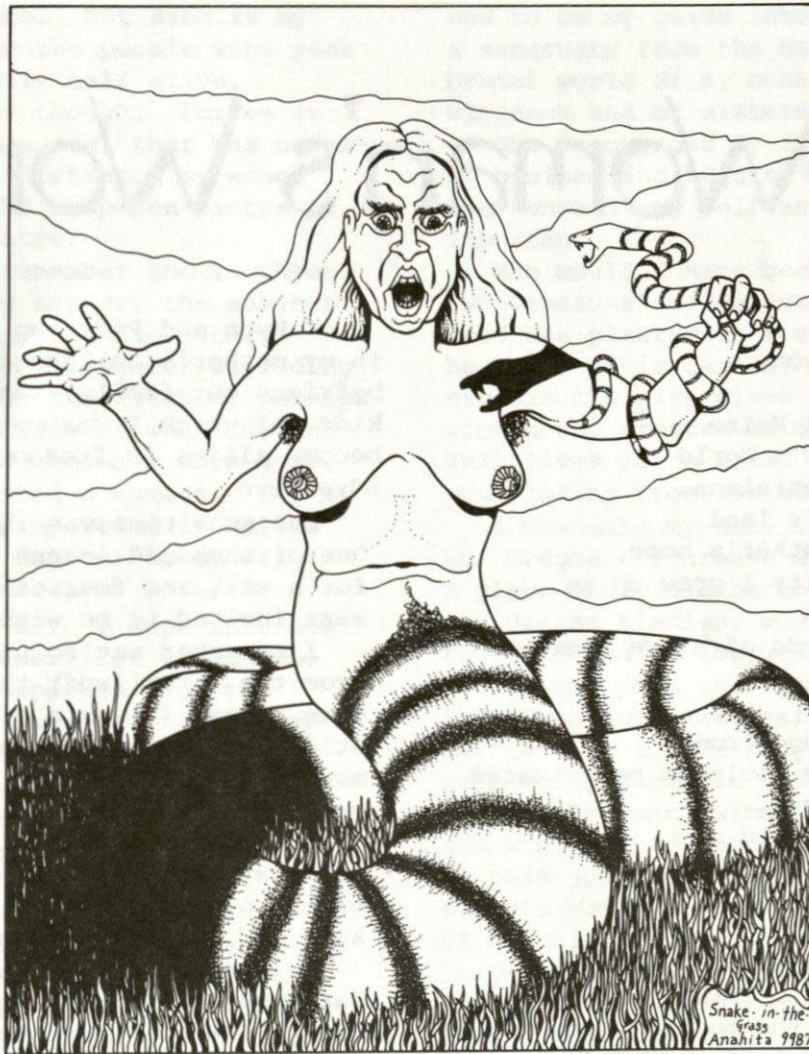
Sustainable organic gardening begins in the understanding of the whole of the garden's immediate ecosystem as an *organism*. It is not the work of the gardener alone that is productive, but the contributions of the soil, the groundwater, the sun, the worms, the rain, the plants, the rabbits. The gardener is interactive, not the central actor. The gardener may add water, straw, compost and labor but her contribution, no matter how extensive, is part-time compared to the other producers. When she understands this, it is unthinkable to endanger the balance of the whole for short term gains that have little long term benefit to the whole.

Here, organic gardening is not a substitute, an alternative, for the norm. The choices the gardener makes come from her connection and participation in the whole. Her activity makes sense in the workings of the whole. She is not motivated by fear of what might happen if she doesn't do it this way nor is she looking for the results of normalized chemical gardening. Her garden will develop its own norms, its own productivity levels, its own beauty.

### The Future Is Lesbian

This is an obvious conclusion that hetpat society is not yet willing to embrace! The "problems" of the environment are not fur coats and pesticides, oil spills and teak bookshelves. The problem is the anti-matter assumptions that put human society in the foreground and nature as a passive backdrop. Alternative technologies within the same ideology will produce their own "problems" in time, perpetuating the crisis mentality that requires superfund rescues. The mother nature I know is not about to check into a hospital to be rescued from her ways. In fact, this whole method of debasing then rescuing is what must end.





Siné Anahita  
McLeansville,  
North Carolina

Lesbians, with everyone else, have been born and socialized into this anti-matter, anti-woman maze, but somehow we have each found a way out, a way to embrace our womanselves, embrace another woman, and make the female connections. We are not an alternative lifestyle. We are a different way of being human and a different way of living on the earth. And who we are seems to fit rather well with the plant/animal/mineral life of the planet. The more we value our womanselves and validate our perceptions of the inter-relations of things, the more the choices we make for our lives follow the flow of the natural world.

Nearly half the world cannot be Lesbian. Others may not choose it. That is inconsequential. But the leadership for a sustainable world most certainly will be Lesbian. What must be changed to survive on the earth is not our laundry soap but our relationship to what is female,

what is matter. The earth culture that survives is that which takes in the earth on her own terms and celebrates her fertility with her in an abundance of woman-loving/matter-loving energy. I can hardly wait for the next Earth Day!

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Thanks for the development of this paper to Sarah Chambers and Catherine Azora-Minda.



# A Woman's World

By Ní Aódagáin  
Days Creek, Oregon

I open the pages of Maize  
and read of a Woman's World  
in Madisonville, Louisiana.  
100 acres of woman's land,  
15 miles from my mother's home,  
30 miles from the city I grew up in,  
the city I ran from  
urged on by the words of Marge Piercy  
and Anne Kent Rush.

Hoping to find refuge from  
the racism and male violence perpetuated  
on those city streets,  
seeking a woman's world  
I came to Tucson;

To Doreen,  
blond-haired Jewish dyke, member  
of the Desert Dykes on Bikes, who  
drove me fast over the mountain passes  
and loved me softly into a woman's world

To Sharon,  
ex-junkie, ex high-class prostitute  
who would become long-time friend,  
loyal throughout the stormy, who  
would lead me

to Tania,  
most precious sister, deliverer  
of my tormented soul to the web  
in which stood my first family of wimmin;  
wimmin who lived on the earth,  
as tribe; wimmin who enfolded me  
as I threw off the last of the patriarchal  
masks I wore.

now, years later, miles and miles away  
from the humid swamps of my  
southern childhood,

I read of a Woman's World  
in Madisonville, La.  
The very name of the town stirs up  
images from many years ago;

of Wynn and Pat, two ex-nuns enrolled  
in my mother's college class. They would  
befriend our family, take the youngest  
kids, of which I was one, on excursions;  
become allies in freedom, laughter, newness,  
adventure.

One such time was in Madisonville, La.  
One of them had access to a house there  
for a week and four of us nine children  
were invited to be with them.

I remember eating unripe persimmons  
from the first fruit tree I had ever  
come across (I was a city kid). I can  
still taste the sourness that puckered my  
mouth and made me spit the wanted fruit  
out.

I remember a beach that bordered a  
waterway, with mountains of rock to  
climb on, tiretubes in the water and some  
kind of shellfish to gather.

I remember an evening walk to the  
Dairy Queen, bright lights and strangers'  
faces, the walk home out of town, back  
into the darkness, past the water while  
being explained \* about fireflies and  
star formations.

I remember the taunting of my brothers  
toward a neighbor boy who had a large  
growth on his head, thus becoming the  
week-end monster used by the older kids  
to frighten us younger ones.

I remember having my own room in this  
house made of wood, with flowered wall-  
paper, a creaky old iron bed and a  
window that looked out onto the  
persimmon tree.

I remember that Madisonville wasn't  
a pretty place. It was a half-abandoned  
small town outside of a thriving city in  
the deep swamps of So. Louisiana. Linked  
to a railroad, there was a feeling of

\*My Writer's Group balked at this  
colloquialism. I decided to keep it  
as is, for the little girl inside who  
remembers it that way.



left-over importance. But even in my child's mind I knew the people were poor and the town was only half alive.

It didn't matter though. For me it was a place that was new, that was unfamiliar, where I could stretch my wings a bit, away from the unspoken dictum of my Catholic mother's home.

Most of all, I remember the laughter. Wynn and Pat making supper, the subject of mutton coming up, the dictionary being pulled out, the laughter exploding and rippling through the kitchen; perhaps from one of our notions of what mutton was, perhaps it had become a word game. Perhaps it only lasted a moment. But as I sit and remember, my being is filled with the memory of days of laughter, of warmth, of goodness, of love.

Those wimmin loved me. I know this now. They were some of the first wimmin who did. They saw me separate from the family dynamics I was caught in. They saw me not as "bookish", "sickly", "too sensitive" or "temperamental". They saw me as unique, intelligent, worth of notice, and I luxuriated in their nurturance.

Is it cosmic coincidence or mere accident that 25 years later, a little girl grown up become radical dyke would find in the pages of a country lesbian journal the name of the place where she was first nurtured by wimmin-loving wimmin?

Many years later I would find out that Wynn took my mother to her first and only women's consciousness-raising group. When I was 19, my mother would tell me that she was shocked when asked to look at drawings of labia in flower forms. The goddess of mirth fills me as I realize it could have been my friend Tee Corrine's Cunt Coloring Book my mother came upon (no pun intended).

Wynn would soon disappear from our lives, becoming politicized and venturing to Cuba as part of the Worker's Brigade. The last I heard of her was that she had gone to New York City and was "practicing" radical lesbianism (a quote from my aforementioned shocked mother).

Pat still writes, though sparingly. She lived in New Orleans for a long time. She became my closest friend for most of my early teen years. She contin-

ued to be my guide into other worlds and a sanctuary from the harsh, sometimes brutal world of my brothers' subtle violence and my sisters' jealousy.

She encouraged my dreams, comforted my bruised and hurting heart and nurtured the sense of my self as worthy and important.

Who would I have become without these two "amazons" of deliverance? What seed was planted in a small girl's heart by their caring? How does one explain the gift given by these two wimmin who created an opening in their full lives for a child who so lacked any real loving from her own blood family?

I now make my home on Woman's Land in So. Oregon. I create sanctuary for wimmin; a place where old hurts can be salved, new dreams kindled, where wimmin are safe... to touch and be touched.

Did the path that led me here begin in that long ago place called Madisonville, La? And do I dare conjecture about that path being a circle that spirals out through the many wimmin's lives I touched and who touched mine and then returns me to this journal's page that announces a Woman's World in the deep southern swamps of my childhood?

Or rather, is it a web that the Great Mother Spiderwomon weaves along whose silken threads I have been traveling, day in and day out, year in and year out, doing the dance of my own seemingly separate life, till the moment of understanding comes. That, rather than performing a solo piece, I am part of an intricate, magical ensemble of wimmin loving wimmin loving wimmin.

From So. Oregon to California to New Mexico to Arizona to So. Louisiana, the web is wide, the circle is strong, the dance is powerful. A Woman's World is made. And to think it all began in Madisonville, La.

*Ní Aodagáin: I live at OWL. Open Woman's Land in So. Oregon. This July, I celebrate my fifth year of calling her my home. I continue to be nourished and challenged by the vision and reality of wimmin living together, creating our unique lesbian culture.*



# On The Land

OWL FARM  
Days Creek, Oregon

Spring is here! The sun is shining after some weeks of rain; OWL is looking beautifully green and fresh! The OWL residents are getting prepared for the summer months. A major Spring cleaning of the Main house and green house and land is happening.

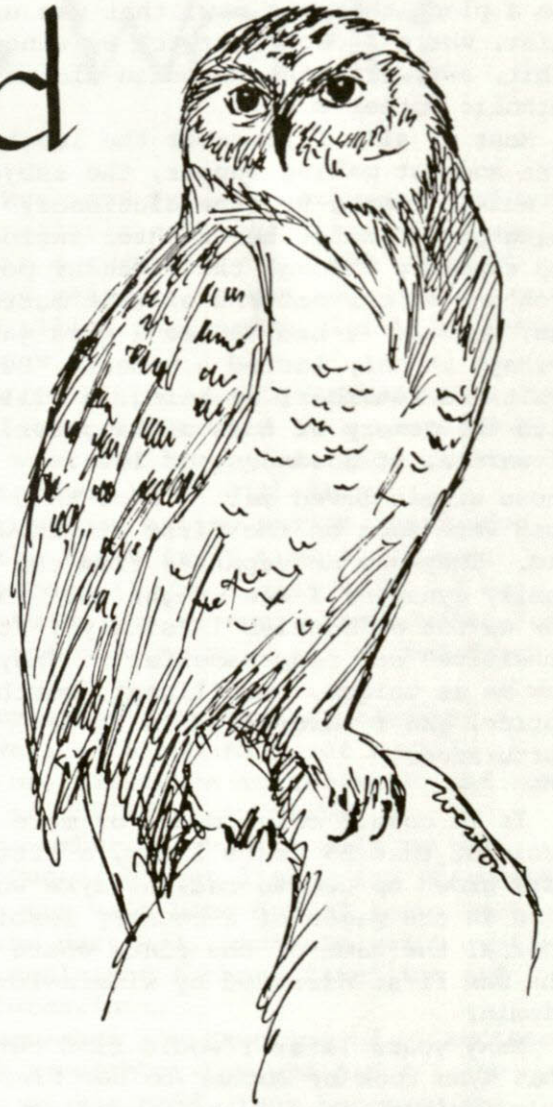
News of visitors is quickening and we look forward to a busy summer. We have a new resident, Danu. She is residing in Coop West, the renovated room of the Coop. Welcome, Danu.

Boa has donated four trees: 1 plum, 1 apple, 2 walnuts. This adds to our existing orchard of 2 cherries and 3 apples. So visions of fruit pies are dancing in our heads. These have been planted and fenced. Also Boa has given the farm 2 blueberry bushes and 3 black currant bushes. Thank you Boa.

Our bathhouse/greenhouse project is almost finished. We're lining up for our first bath! Hot baths after a long day! Yea!

The residents have been coming together to talk about the larger responsibility of keeping the Vision of OWL as a sanctuary for wimmin alive! We have talked about community and what each of us wants and needs and what we can realistically take on. It's an exciting time to be living at OWL.

Kit is not longer living at OWL. Thank you Kit for your hard work in renovating Coop West and creating another living space at OWL. We appreciate your hard work and wish you much joy and peace wherever you go. For the first time in many years, OWL farm was full over the winter months. All living spaces are



Jennifer Weston  
Ava, Missouri

currently occupied. Wimmin wishing to live at OWL this summer should plan to camp out. Visitors are welcome in the main house for stays up to two weeks. Write to the farm for more details, POBox 133, Days Creek, OR 97429

Residents Reports  
Newsletter of the  
Oregon Woman's Land Trust



NEW MEXICO WOMEN'S LAND TRUST  
Tesuque, New Mexico

Here is an update to keep you informed on what is actually happening here on women's land in New Mexico. The New Mexico Women's Land Trust is legally incorporated now, as of March 30, 1990. We have been actively fundraising through letters, events, and dances. Our Mardi Gras dance was quite successful, raising \$680.

With the help of many local women, Arf residents, and women from around the globe, Arf and the vision of the New Mexico Women's Land Trust are settling into a solid reality. We've raised \$5000, but we have many expenses. We are raising money to pay off the deed signers in order to transfer title to the land to the Land Trust. The deed signers' initial request was for \$153,000. Now they are asking for \$107,000, and that we close (have the money for them either in cash or loans) soon. We need your help to raise as large a part of that as we can now, so that our monthly mortgage payments will be low enough to continue to assure low enough rents to make Arf accessible to all women.

As many of you know, Arf is 25 acres of open women's land, 15 miles north of Santa Fe. Arf is a healing haven available to all women and children. Arf is sanctuary not only to those who live there, but to the local women's community and women and children from far and wide for camping and enjoying simple living close to nature. It is imperative that we succeed in raising enough energy and money to keep this sacred women's land for generations to come.

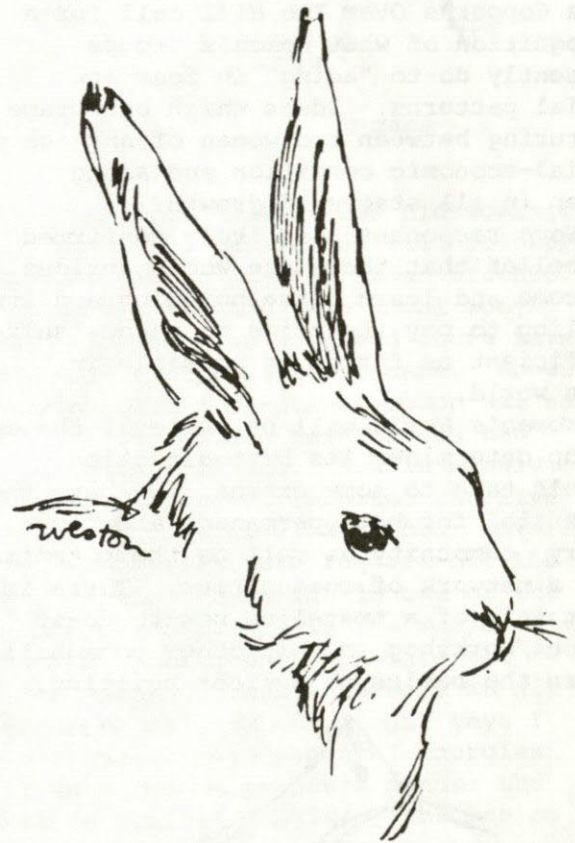
Thirteen local craftswomen have offered prizes to be raffled during Arf's Summer Solstice Celebration, June 16-24. We are also soliciting monthly pledges from supporters who wish to contribute smaller amounts on an ongoing basis. We will mail monthly reminders and send an annual accounting for tax purposes.

In addition to asking for money contributions, we also need names and addresses of other sympathetic women and organizations who might help us keep this precious land. We need ambassadors in other cities and states and around the world to help us with our money-raising efforts.

Together, we can preserve Arf, birth the New Mexico Women's Land Trust, and expand our base of safe and open women's land for all of our futures.

Please address all contributions to: New Mexico Women's Land Trust, POBox 707, Tesuque, NM 87574. We are very appreciative of your support.

Sincerely,  
New Mexico Women's Land Trust



Jennifer Weston



# Letters

Dear MAIZE,

One page in MAIZE, (last issue, Spring '90, in On The Land about *Woman's World*) and the responses during the first 2 weeks are amazing. I have already heard from women with great ideas about community that are *new and refreshing*. Ideas that incorporate Sonia Johnson's world of abundance to replace the prevalent scarcity attitudes which defeat many operations. Ideas which value *all* of women's skills and products in a barter system. Ideas which encourage all ages to find places at *Woman's World* with valuable "today" contributions to make and receive. Ideas which encompass Baba Copper's *Over The Hill* call for a recognition of what women's groups presently do to "aging" in fear and denial patterns. Ideas which encourage nurturing between two women of any age or social-economic condition and among women in all stages of growth.

Some responses have truly confirmed my belief that there are women anxious to come and learn house building and are willing to pay the price to become self-sufficient as far as is possible in this world.

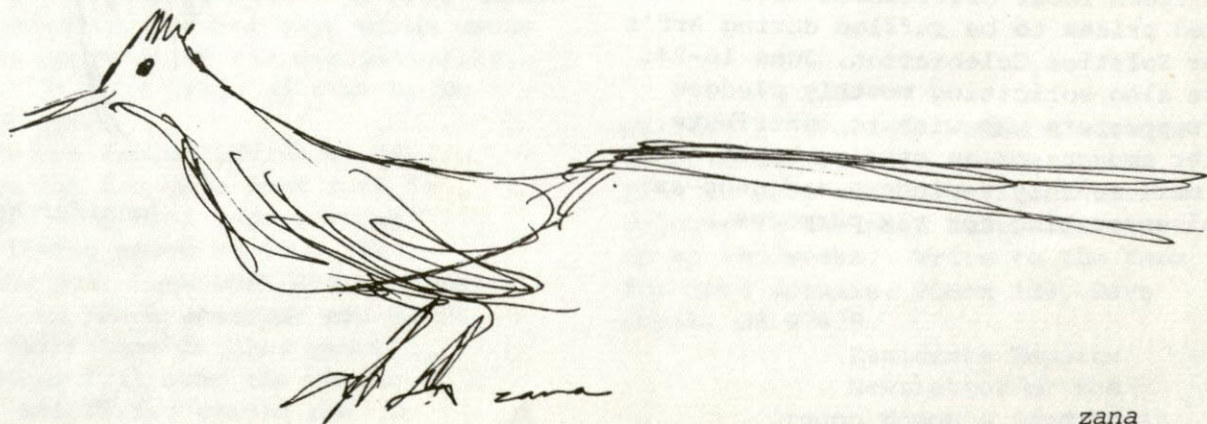
*Woman's World* will be whatever the early group determines its best direction should take to some extent. We have the potential for both permanent and temporary community as well as the potential for a network of communities. There is even talk of a traveling how-to-do-it circus/workshop to help other communities learn the basics of shelter building. We

could use responses from more women who already have some knowledge in electricity, plumbing, sewer filtering, composting and solar systems, etc. A crying need today is for barbed wire fence construction to keep out hunters and allow the few deer, fox, quail and wild turkeys to flourish! We particularly need women with a year or two to devote to this project who might live in the country and earn their income in the city or have retirement income. Young women are responding and anxious to "come learn" and that is wonderful! We also want women in their 40's and 50's and 60's who want to work and be a part of a community! Some of the women over 70 are interested in creating a semi-active space for retirement and some slower living! Since our crones have so much wisdom to give to a community and also need the nurturing of all ages, what a rich group we can become with diversity!

All this sounds idealistic, I'm sure, to women who have already struggled through personality conflicts and need-clashes in close-living communities. I intend for the skills and tools of re-evaluation counseling to be available for all of our women so that there will always be a path to solutions *daily!* I believe this will make a major difference in the flow of energy in and around our communities in the future! The future is so exciting for *Woman's World*, I am looking forward to the next 20 responses to our first announcement in MAIZE. What a great publication for us country dykes who are having our love affairs with the land!

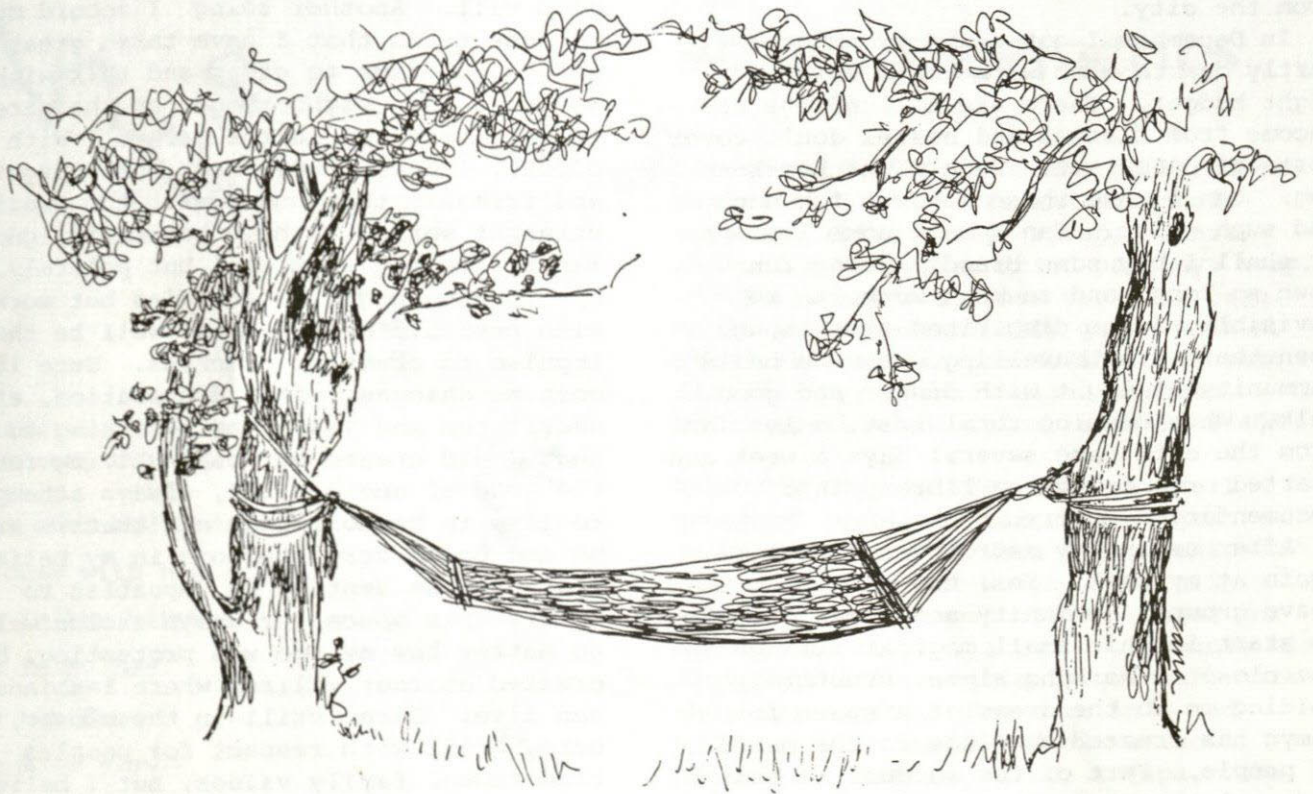
Blessed Be  
Shewolf

PO Box 655  
Madisonville, LA 70447



zana





zana

TO MAIZE,

28 March '90

*"By loving womyn we can liberate the world"*

On February '90 OASIS started its 3rd year in this location. Rent contract for one more year. Like many dykes I found an abandoned place and with rent reduction fixed it up. It is a true paradise now. Seems many of us develop house-repair and building skills fixing up places for landladies or landlords who then do something else with the property. Is it lesbian sensibility or karma, this need to create beauty and fix things? Is it an act of land and house healing, making the earth a better place? And once it's beautiful we enjoy the fruit of our labor, then move on. Yes, with increased skills and maybe it will nourish the people who come after us? Bring them spirit and soul?

OASIS is beautiful now. Each morning and at dusk I greet the spirits of the four directions and spirits of love and light live here. The garden, with a lavender flower carpet from the huacaranda tree, yellow calendula, pink abundant begonias, greens of veggies,

some tomatoes, nasturtiums blossoming, is a delightful harmony of wild volunteers and cultivated, planted green friends.

Although not too many local womyn come, according to a friend there have been many changes since I came. About ten years ago a bi-sexual woman was so much stared out and hassled she had to leave the village. Now in slowly increasing numbers, lesbians can live here, love themselves and their lovers. This energy goes into the air all the time. Since Tepoztlan is one of the highest power places in the world, I'm sure this energy goes out into the larger world to create harmony in all relationships. My astrologer says I have brought transcendental energies that have opened people's minds: the women to see alternatives, the men to realize that women can be strong and live alternatives.

About 10 lesbians living here regularly come to the monthly womyn's dances and womyn from Cuernavaca and Mexico City. A lot of networking happens on a daily basis. More womyn use the somewhat rustic hostél or lawn for tents, both travelling womyn and womyn



from the city.

In December I got a kidney infection partly due to much work and a very very tight budget. There are no fundings and income from fiestas and hostel don't cover costs of OASIS yet. Each night bookkeeping. Can I make those xeroxes for such and such group? Can I mail some letters or shall I buy some bread? Being run down so long, and so much work, to me invisible, I was dispirited even though when there are travelling womyn we build community at night with dinner and good talk. When needing total rest, a lesbian from the city came several days a week and started organizing the library/info documentation centre.

After seeing my astrologer I feel ok again at my work. Yes, the price was to leave groups, community and womyn culture to start in this small magical village in the closet. Working alone, stubbornly holding on to the dream of a space for womyn has created openings in the minds of people. Part of the success is that I do a lot of "sensing". Sensing is a type of thinking that is connected to the heart, the body, the intuition and spiritual energies. In the beginning there were problems. There was no electricity here, so I got it via an electric cord from the neighbor. During the fiesta=womyn's dance, she cut it off because she was afraid of reactions from the barrio. I did pray and channel a lot of energies into this. I prayed that the conflict was a challenge and opportunity to overcome differences in culture and grow closer together. I prayed for love and harmony in the barrio and village. Before Christmas this is posada at all the neighborhood churches from the 16th -26th. First rosary during which I meditated (admire the beautiful womyn) then each night 20-40 womyn from their big basket hand out fruits, nuts, candies or cookies to everyone. I did it one night too. Although I am totally opposed to the Catholic church that harms and oppresses so many womyn it was at that point important to integrate in the important barrio custom and the energies are happy. I like it that everyone gets sweets. No difference of poor and rich. Being in my own pagan way part of it didn't harm me and created connection with the womyn and

good will. Another thing I accord my success to is that I have taken great effort and time to greet and talk with womyn in the neighborhood, on the street, in the store and in the market. With effort, I have always been more outgoing and friendly than usual with the traditional straight world. I have basically ignored men or treated them cool but politely. Not feeding negative energies but working with positive energies may well be the impulse to creating openness. Sure it has cost me changes, often desperation, efforts, sacrifices and yes, I am beginning to see that I did create harmony. Living for the good of one and all, always attempting to live in harmony with all that is around me and being very stubborn in my belief that Goddess sent me to Tepoztlan to create this space for womyn exclusively, no matter how my ego was protesting, have created another village where lesbians can live. Sure, still in the closet, sure, still with respect for peoples traditional family values, but I believe that by putting all my energies into creating a place of love and light for womyn that positive energy has gone out. And it's womyn's culture and feminist publications that gave me courage and visions.

Travelling womyn welcome. Camping \$3-5, hostel \$5-10. Bedding and tents are more than welcome. Economical support, office supplies, xerox machine, refrigerator are more than welcome and love into the kosmos for a more harmonious world.

Maybe my writing contributes to developing strategies for a world of peace and social justice, a world in which all can be free to live and love, have food, shelter, clothing, health, education, culture and spirituality. Thinking about womyn in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, Columbia, South Africa, Angola, Tailand etc., I will continue with my little part of the struggle hoping you all can stop USA interventions and prepare womyn to elect better presidents. Unfortunately USA presidents do drastically affect the lives of womyn in Central and Latin America. Many don't survive.

Love to you all,  
Safuega

OASIS  
Lista de Correos  
Tepoztlan Mor 62520 Mexico




# Ants

By zana  
tucson, arizona

black ones and red ones  
and ones with big heads  
ants in the kitchen  
ants in my bed.  
some run fast  
some move slow  
some seem confused  
about where they should go.  
one type is huge  
another petite  
six in-between sizes  
trot under my feet.  
some drink from the toilet  
some clean up the stove  
some seek out my compost  
and some bite my toes.  
so many kinds  
on the walls and the floors  
and i'm not even counting  
their aunties outdoors!

Amy Lewis  
Serafina, New Mexico

# Announcements

 *LOOKING FOR LESBIAN GROWN*, gathered or processed foodstuffs and household supplies (like honey, syrup, flours, cheese, root vegis, dried parsley, soap, etc.) in trade for new books or cash. Would prefer organically grown with no chemicals used in processing, but some flexibility. Thanks. Diann Bowoman, 4471 Signal Road, Columbiana, OH 44408

*WIMMIN'S LAND IN VERA CRUZ*: A small group of lesbians started a project in the province of Vera Cruz, Mexico of buying land for womyn. Plans in February were: construct 10 houses for individual living, a community house with fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, workshop space, etc. For more info and updates: Lire Maria Medina Mariscal, Lirio #24, Colonia Salud; Xalapa, Vera Cruz, Mexico. Or all 9-3, M-F to Xalapa (91-281)559-86 or 5-4200 ext. 24

*WHAT IS LESBIAN COMMUNITY?* How are we building it? Call for submissions to *New Canadian Anthology of Lesbian Short Stories*. Payment for successful submissions. Send queries with SASE (incl. Canadian postage or Int. Reply Coupon) to Lee Fleming, ed. Gynergy Books, Box 2023, Charlottetown PEI Canada C1A 7N7

*WOMAN'S WORLD BEGINS!* Clean air, water and fertile soil! Write your dreams and I will tell you how they fit into the community of country women building their own houses! WW POBox 655, Madisonville, LA 70447

*CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS* for *Cats (and their Dykes)* an anthology. Send essays poems, stories, narratives, line drawings, and black and white photos to HerBooks, POBox 7467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061

*DOES ANY ONE KNOW* where to get a copy of Nancy Birnes' *Cheaper and Better: Homemade Alternatives to Storebought Goods?* Write Ann, c/o MAIZE



**\$ 3.50**

**Number 25**