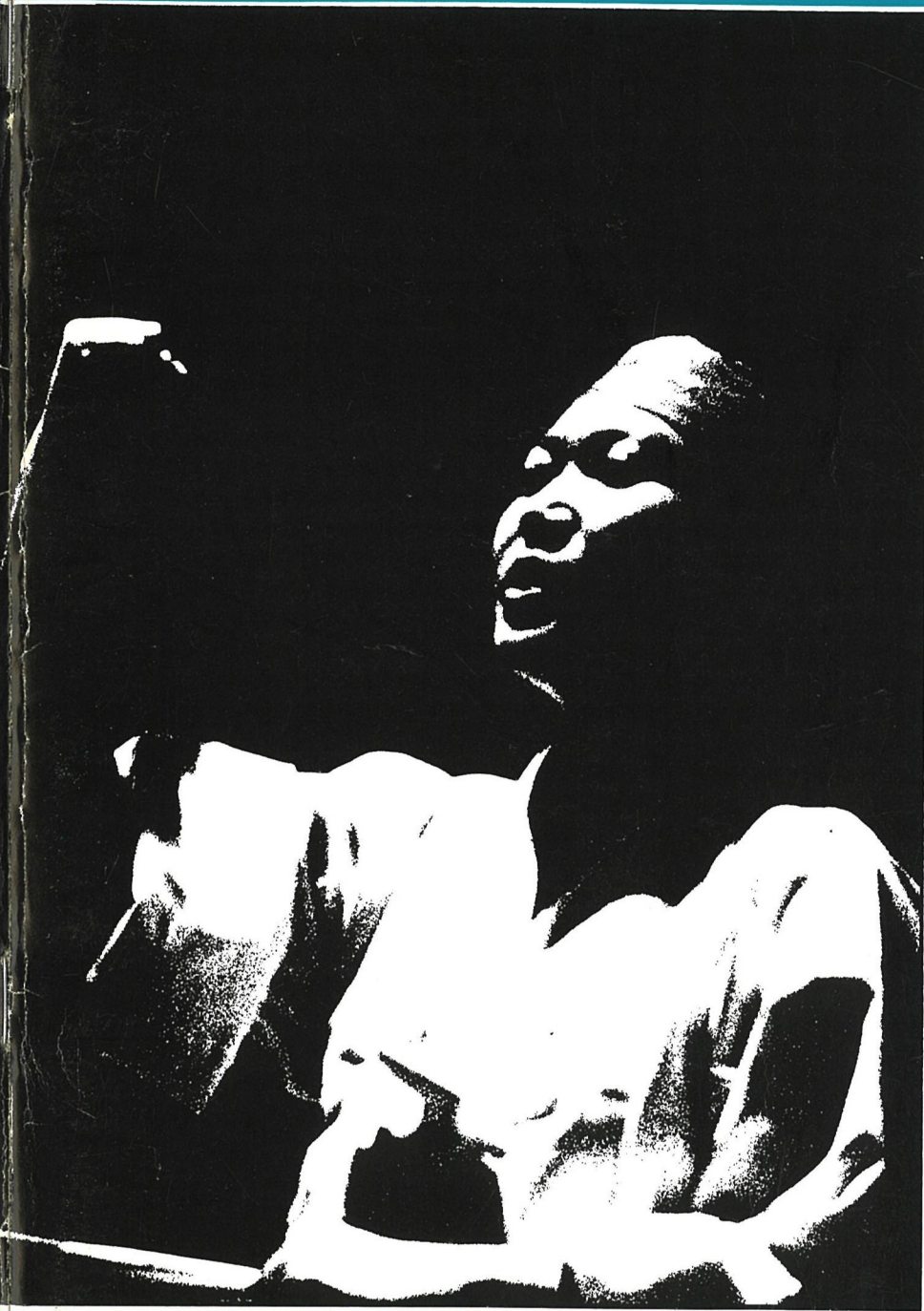


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A Canadian Feminist Art Journal

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Empowerment &
Marginalization
Issue

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WARC

WOMEN'S ART RESOURCE CENTRE

MATRIART

C o n t e n t s

FOREWARD

The conversation starter of the nineties may be "Where were you when the U.S. opened war on Iraq?". For many of the design group of this, the third edition of *Matriart*, the answer will be, "At the Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) finishing the Empowerment and Marginalization issue." Though I wish global politics had never reached this point, it is an appropriate time to encourage discussion of power and empowerment. Here we question how cultures become marginal, and seek means of connecting across the barriers of race and religion.

This issue features Brenda Joy Lem's commentary on the Asian Film Festival "Yellow Peril", and Janet Tulloch's discussion of the Hag Show. Sarindar Dhaliwal's *Frangicide Part Two*, concludes a series started in *Matriart One*, and Ayanna Black and Dore Michelut explore the Japanese poetry form *Renga* in *Linked Alive*, introduced by Daria Essop. Sandra Haar describes the contemporary suppression of Jewish Art history, and Joy Asham Federick writes about the appropriation of First Nations art. Here also is a sampler of the 1990 *Womyn Rising Festival* including poetry by Ritz Chow and Nicole Tanguay, commentary by Rhonda Hackett and photographs by Regan McClure and myself.

We bring you the art and poetry by Rebecca Belmore, Roxanna Farrell, Brenda Joy Lem and Eva Leware. From the WARC Artist Files, our profiled artist is Iranian-Canadian Parvaneh Radmard. Our reviews section includes Catherine Brooks on the play *Moonlodge*, and Ayanna Black writing about bell hooks' *Yearning*.

Also in this edition, Linda Abrahams reports on the WARC sponsored Public Discussion on Ritual Abuse, and Carol Watson focuses on *Women as Mothers* another WARC sponsored event.

We hope that *Matriart Three* will spread ideas for empowerment, and perhaps, encourage the communication we need to create peace on local and global levels.

Anne Vespy

WARC UPDATE

WARC, in keeping with other changes occurring in the 90s, has made a commitment to ensure that its current mandate is met. This mandate includes more representation from women of differing racial backgrounds and sexual orientations. This will be met by reaching into the various communities for new committee members and artists.

Some of WARC'S 1990 activities have included public discussions with artists: Kaucyilia Brooks in conjunction with A Space Gallery, Wendy Coburn at YYZ Gallery, and Janice Andrea at Garnet Press. WARC was also a co-sponsor of *Healing Images*—a successful month-long series of events organized by Bunch of Feminists on the theme of women and violence.

Many stimulating and essential programmes are in the works for 1991. One such programme includes a weekend-long conference to complement this issue of *Matriart*. The Empowerment and Marginalization Conference will give participants an opportunity to attend workshops and lectures on every aspect of the arts. These will be conducted by such women artists as: writer and publisher, Makeda Silvera; performance artist, Rebecca Belmore; video makers Debbie Douglas and Gabriella Micallef; artist Banakonda Kennedy-Kish and others. We hope you will participate in this wonderful event.

Also some thought-provoking public discussions are planned such as the one organized with the group show, *Don't Remain Silent*, an exhibition which commemorates the Montreal massacre.

WARC will offer the usual array of helpful workshops on topics such as grant writing, gallery proposals and feminist art criticism. Of course, all of these events will be documented and placed in our ever-expanding library.

We realize that WARC could never accomplish any of its many tasks without the time and energy of the volunteers who form the main body of this organization. We give thanks to all the women who make WARC the thriving and vital place it is.

Daria Essop

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WARC

394 Euclid Ave. Suite 308

Toronto, Ontario

M6G 2S9

(416) 324-8910

This issue was coordinated by the WARC Publication Committee:

Linda Abrahams Susan Beamish

Donna Creed Claire Carew

Daria Essop Roxana Farrell

Cynthia Lorenz Carla Murray

Pam Patterson Carol Watson

Loren Williams Anne Vespy

Production Coordinator: Loren Williams

Editors: Pam Patterson, Anne Vespy, Carol Watson

Design and Layout: Susan Beamish, Cynthia Lorenz,

Roxana Farrell and Loren Williams

Ventura Publishing: Rob Ellis

Cover Photo: Binari Cultural Performer at Women Rising Festival, photo by Regan McClure

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MATRIART welcomes contributions to future issues (for information please contact WARC). We also encourage response from our readers; your opinions, criticisms and concerns are welcome. Views expressed in MATRIART are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of WARC. We reserve the right to edit submissions for brevity and clarity.

Please contact WARC at (416) 324-8910 for further information and advertising rates.

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AT YOUR OWN PERIL

YELLOW PERIL: RECONSIDERED—AN EXHIBITION OVERVIEW



Yellow Peril: Reconsidered is a national touring exhibit of 25 Asian Canadian artists working in film, video, and photography. It opened in Montreal earlier this year, has recently closed at Gallery 44 and V Tape in Toronto, and is going on to Winnipeg, Halifax, Vancouver, and Ottawa.

For those of us involved in assembling the exhibit **Yellow Peril: Reconsidered**, it was as much a process of self discovery as an effort to make what we already knew about ourselves known to others. We all felt a certain rage, rage at historical injustices such as the Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act, or the World War II internment of Japanese Canadians, and the current hostility levelled at Hong Kong Chinese and those who look the part. We were also aware of the effects of media stereotyping on the mainstream perception of Asians. As artists we knew of the systemic exclusion of Asians from exhibition spaces, publications, and other forums made available only to white artists to communicate with the public, and with one another. Cautious of being grouped together and typecast, artists of Asian descent have, until recently, tended to dissociate themselves from one another, rather than meet together for the sake of dialogue and a sense of belonging however genuine or artificial.

By examining what had gone on in the past, it rapidly became evident to us that until this now, the artistic communities had little recognition of Asian Canadians as an indigenous group. On the other hand, certain practices with respect to "Orientals" have been all too common. As Paul Wong writes in the exhibition publication, these practices have included bringing Asians, especially dissident Asians from countries with non-democratic (read non-Western backed) forms of government into exhibition spaces to be embraced as both radical and genuine. It can also be seen in the unsolicited appropriation by non-Asians of the "interesting" elements of Asian cultures such as religious practices, music, or artifacts, and the perpetual exoticization of Asian habits, customs, and bodies.

Multiculturalism encourages pretty songs and dances that many of us have not practised for generations, but it does not address the problems of daily life for Asian Canadians. These problems are different from those of non-Asian Canadians and they are less likely to be addressed because the requisite sources are never consulted. I will admit, it has become a litany—not because the problems have gone away, but rather because it has been screamed into the wind for so long that one simply gets tired.

The works in the exhibit are our attempts to carve out a sense of identity, to unravel aspects of our lives that may not be evident to those looking at faces which they have pre-defined as inscrutable. There are recurring themes although their treatment is as diverse as the artists involved. I will deal in this article with works created by the exhibition's women artists.

For Asian women, issues of sexuality are very much connected to issues of race. Chick Rice in her photo series *Tommy 1978-88* is concerned with beauty. Tommy is a sometimes androgynous shadow. Posing as the death and body-obsessed writer Mishima, he is indisputedly masculine: in a photo from a previous series entitled *Animals and Vegetables*, he could easily be a woman. The photographer's identity is intimately tied up with that of the model. We are uncertain as to whether it is the depicted face or the camera's eye that makes us see what we do.

Helen Lee's film, *Sally's Beauty Spot* might be criticized for re-glamorizing Asian women's sexuality. However, it does position the subject in the hands of a young Korean Canadian woman rather than in those of a white male protagonist as in the case of *The World of Suzy Wong*, which Lee's film carefully, if somewhat safely deconstructs. Is that which is beautiful by necessity also sexually objectified? At the end of the film we see Sally modelling for a photo shoot. Although she is looking into the camera for most of the shots, is it a co-incidence that the one that "worked best" for promotional purposes showed her looking away?

Laiwan's phototext piece, *Ubiquitous China*, questions the (English) colonizer's tendency to sex-identify colonized nations, China specifically, as female.

Brenda Lem's film, *The Compact* addresses the daily difficulties of a "mixed race" couple. What happens when someone who is perfectly ordinary is exoticized? What kinds of notions does the exoticized self entertain about her identity? Lem's film also views cultural variation in familial values as the norm. One example is the separation of this from parents in Western societies. This is juxtaposed with the great importance placed on family belonging and the maintenance of traditional Chinese ties.

The video, *Silence into Silence* produced by L'Amitié Chinoise de Montréal and Le Videographe deals with conflicting values between generations. Should a different place necessitate different values, different priorities? In this video, a young woman wishes to remain behind in Montreal to pursue her career while her family moves to Edmonton to open a restaurant. There is an underlying assumption in this tape that the new (Western) way is better, that individualism is indeed a loftier ideal than filial piety. Although it does grant some understanding to the latter, it points to the complexity of an older generation's ideals. To its credit, it is produced in both Cantonese and English, thus speaking to the Asian community rather than lashing out in hurt and anger against an undefined white audience.

Midi Onodera in *The Displaced View* is also very conscious of

her audience. The subjects in her film speak both English and Japanese, but only the English segments are subtitled, thus inferring, technically at least, a Japanese speaking target audience. Onodera deals with her relationships with her mother and grandmother, the barriers imposed by language, and the other ways in which one can communicate. There is a strong underlying sense of loss of personal history with the passing of a generation. The film is a positive step in retaining as much as possible of this history.

Perhaps it is this sense of impending loss that triggers the rash of nostalgia that overtakes even those that have been here for several generations. Richard Fung calls those going through this process, "born-again Asians". Curious about one's past or trying to eke out a more satisfactory sense of self, one may attempt to "return" to Asia and be disappointed. It is neither more nor less beautiful or exotic than Canada, as Melanie Boyle's *I Have Always Loved the Romance of Travel* intones. Either place can be the subject of a tourist experience. Laiwan, in juxtaposing an image of China against one of a remarkably similar looking Canada both blurs and clarifies the relationship between the two. Asians living in the New World, can not define ourselves as belonging to either one place or the other, despite seemingly obvious geographic separations. Regardless of Laiwan's inability to speak or write Chinese, she is aware of having been colonized by the English and their language drives her to feel in some ways more akin to a tongue she does not even understand.

In Sharyn Yuen's *Jook Kaak*, the experience of "going back" is a real and sensory one evident in the gorgeous unevenness of her handmade paper and the human faces imprinted on it. The accompanying text is personal and concise. The experience remains tactile, close, imperfect, rough at the edges, but in the end fulfilling.

While many Asian Canadians face the difficulty of how to identify and preserve their heritage, there are many non-Asians that have attempted to do it for them. Jin-me Yoon's *(Inter)reference: (Im)permanent (Re)collection* imitates a museum piece—high art attempting to capture a lived experience in a box. It warns of the distortions that take place when members of one culture attempt to encapsulate the experience of members of another, an experience preserved in that "other" only as a fleeting memory.

We are just beginning to deal with our own issues. There is much anger and resentment at the white middle-class establishment. Our sexuality has unfairly been tied-up with what can only be termed racial (not cultural) identity. There is confusion over notions of the family, of values, morals, and ideals. There are language barriers that can not easily be reconciled. There is a sense of nostalgia for something lost. A nostalgia which is as artificial as the conditions, constructive though they might be, that give rise to it. **Yellow Peril: Reconsidered** offers no cure-all solutions, but it does present the state of the situation, offering an aerial view to clarify where dialogue has taken place and where the gaps are.

Larissa Lai

Fencepost Sitting and How

Joy Asham Federick

Albert Einstein was being interviewed by a reporter about a recent scientific discovery. At the end of the interview, the reporter asked Einstein for his home phone number to check out the technical facts pre-publication to ensure their accuracy.

Einstein went over to the phone book, looked under the E's and told the reporter his telephone number. Shocked, the reporter said: "But, you're Albert Einstein and you have to look in the phone book because you can't remember your own telephone number!!!"

Einstein sighed his reply: "I use my brain to think."

It wouldn't be fair of me to expect you to read this, without letting you know what you are in for. It's a participatory article, requiring some work from you. Gosh, don't put it down, you might enjoy it.

Parts of this writing will require you to transfer information: I rely heavily on the use of analogy. Some basic and familiar literary structures have been ignored, as have other barriers that prevent conceptual and cultural understanding. In this way, I have attempted to replicate, in English, some of the texture of Aboriginal experience.

Think of this as a paint-by-number reading experience: analogies, footnotes, boxes full of examples, quotes, anecdotes are used to reinforce themes and scatter your linear, herded thought patterns into a right-brain intuitive mode. Not scientific you say!! Bah, Humbug!! If you believe the issue of who tells our stories can be addressed through scientific theory, statistical analysis of dependent and independent variables with cost-benefit ratios applied, put this article down right now. I talk of texture, etiquette, truth, thought, philosophy, caring altruism, commitment. These commodities are immeasurable, and, within present society, scarce.



Rebecca Belmore, *Bah-shqua-wush II: means any kind of bag*, 1988
photo courtesy of Thunder Bay Art Gallery

Reading hint: it may help to read the italicized passages and footnotes first, it may avoid flipping!

Telling Our Stories—Who should do it?

Okay, now that I've set the stage for three-D reading, it might help you to know why I am writing this article. Seems that there has been a bit of controversy about who owns stories and concepts Native.

I was asked for my opinion on these matters, Native writer that I am, and felt the answer on many levels: knee-jerk,

That's Ours!!, survival, Our Culture is Dying!!, sympathetic, Who am I to say who can and cannot write whatever?, matronizing, Some of my best friends are non-Native writers, artists and educators... querying, Why would others want to write about us? critical, Do they use our stories and concepts as well as we do?

I realized, that, maybe these are questions that others have and maybe I could form the words with curled fingertips on keyboard and answer them with thought...

I Fell Off To One Side

Querying: Why would others want to write about us?

I believe there are several reasons for this phenomenon. We're interesting. We seem to strike a chord with both the bigot and the revolutionary: one for the purpose of oppression and suppression, the other for the purpose of cause. We seem to have influenced even the Pope to look at our spirituality. Environmentalists are beginning to look and say, "How could this continent survive for thousands of years before we came... maybe the First Ones here knew and know something."

Yes, we're interesting to look at, analyze and speculate upon, take under advisement and pray for. All these things also fulfil a further purpose: during the scrutiny of us, others procrastinate from looking at "self".

This statement may seem harsh, and, by no means do I mean to blanket everyone with tar. I believe the Pope is well-intended and that there are others of altruistic motivation. There are also other motivations, such as these subjects, the growing market for things-remotely-Native, and the need to exercise power.

THE SOCIOLOGIST

I was at a feminist dinner one night, when, sitting across from me was a Caucasian female sociologist. She was practising Cocktail Anthropology (Footnote 1) on me and badgering me with endless questions about "what is it really like to be a Native woman". I was hungry and wanted to eat.

Sometimes we evade these questions, you know, just wanting to be. But finally, figuring if I ever was going to eat in peace, I'd better answer. I told her what it's like in this skin, the good, the bad, the perceived ugly, and, once more, picked up my fork.

"That's not what it's like at all," she said.

At times, envy enters it—who wouldn't want to paint like a Norval Morrisseau or Rebec-

ca Belmore? Imitation is considered the highest form of flattery—but is it good art?

Critical: Do they use our stories and concepts as well as we do?

World renowned British philosopher and sage, C.S. Lewis, in Mere Christianity, talks of a beam of sunlight coming through a hole in a barn roof. There are three ways of perceiving that beam: you can look at it and see just the surface of the beam; you can look along it and see the edge of the beam and the sun and the sky through the hole in the roof; or, you can be within it and feel the warmth and texture of its caress, and actually know the beam.

In 1986, I coordinated the Third Nishnawbe-Aski Writers' Conference in Sudbury. Saul Williams (Footnote 2), well-known visual artist from Weagemow, Ontario, attended and shared his incredible ability to capture visual wisdoms in both illustrations and words. He wrote of the first time he came out of Weagemow: "I was fourteen and fifteen... when I saw my first TV. It looked like a suitcase with a window to nothing..."

Our cultural perceptions and first-hand experiences within the beam, allow us to communicate cultural texture. Plain words, basic language, grammatical structures that do not impair our expressiveness are used freely, directly and spiritually.

I have coined the term "literary hierarchy" to refer to the literary structure known as "beginning, middle and end". The parallel in Western theology is Creation through Apocalypse. But, if you believe in a Continuum, concepts are formed in an entirely different manner.

Our legends tell of Tricksters and Giants and mirror the follies of man. Continuous reflection on the nature of Human Beings. Our "taboo-systems" are characterized in the scrapes, scuffles, scabs and scatology of Little Shadows (Footnote 3) and Mega-Imps.

Our stories reflect long-term planning. They do not necessarily have a beginning, middle and end. We are told that when it is essential for us to understand the wisdom of the recounting, that piece of knowledge will be there. And it is.

Our stories reflect life as it really is, and are not "formula" oriented. There is no beginning, there is an always was, and, with no end, there is an always will be... The spiritual nature of the concept is addressed through style and with language that is relationship-oriented. English, with its noun predominance does not allow, within rigid hierarchical style criterion, for relationships to be explored, relationships that help us to understand our place and value in the Big Picture. Native writers, tend, as Native people do, to use verbs and adjectives freely. This textured way with English provides concept and depth and warmth and fuzzy wuzzies. Helps us feel good, and just plain feel. And out of the subliminal influence of this style the spiritual circle is strengthened.

I have talked here of the way many of us are, how we verbally express ourselves. But, intrinsic to the communication of cultural concept in whatever artistic medium, is knowledge of the subject. More is known of the beam from within the beam than by looking at it.

There is another way to perceive the beam, though, that I have not alluded to as yet.

DOUBLE WAMPUM

When the Mohawk Nations first exchanged commitments of cultural respect with representatives of the British Monarchy, they honoured the British with gifts of double wampum belts. The belts, in the wampum beadwork, always included two parallel lines of coloured work. These parallel lines represented two canoes gliding along the same waters, not interfering with each other, yet going in the same direction. Such was meant to represent the two cultures: sharing

equally of the Creator's gifts, but not imposing on one another.

There are those who can look along our beam, travel in the same direction and not impose. At times their presence in the same waters is soothing and helpful... and, they not only truly want to help but are the only ones who can...

ROBERT BRINGHURST

For a while I worked as an editor in the field of Aboriginal book production. We were attempting to establish a Native language publishing house, with our own imprint. We found out many things: block funding from Canada Council would only be available to us once we had published a minimum of four titles, for at least two consecutive years.

There was a catch though, making this hurdle even more difficult. The catch was, that, due to the fact that we wanted to publish in Ojibway and/or Cree, none of our books could be counted towards the four annually required. This was due to the fact that Ojibway and Cree were not considered Official Languages. We were told, "make the books half English translation and we may consider them".

Now, our purpose for wanting Aboriginal language publications was not commercial in nature: our languages are dying through lack of support systems, and, if you know Those-Who-Walk-With-Two-Legs in the same way I do, you know that we like to take the course of least resistance. In other words, because we are surrounded by English, and adequate supplies of writings in our own language do not exist, we have come to a place of ease with English that we may not have with our own written languages. A half and half publication would be defeating our purpose. One would have to be very dedicated indeed, to not flip to the back and take the easy-English way out.

I thought and thought. Canada Council would not listen to us, nor were they ready to make exception. Ahah!! We will make the other half French, I thought, and we would fulfil two purposes: no flipping to English,

due to ease, but should the books be used in schools they could be dually beneficial, providing support materials for French classes as well. Now, on the surface this appeared a good temporary solution. But, I have the unfortunate ownership of something called "conscience". I realized that the budget at Canada Council for Francophone publications was severely limited. If it was manipulated by us to also support Aboriginal language publications, it would detract from Francophone cultural expression. A moral dilemma.

There are knights in shining armour, you know. Robert Bringhurst (footnote 4), non-Native Canadian poet extraordinaire, galloped to the rescue. Highly thought of by Canada Council, he made our case for us. This time, they listened and the policy was changed.

Knights in shining armour are not confined to the Middle Ages, nor are some policies of cultural control as exercised in Canada. Robert's advocacy and subsequent policy change by Canada Council took place in 1987.

Matronizing: Some of my best friends are non-Native writers, artists and educators...

ADELE KOZY

I had the fantastic opportunity of being part of the Baffin Writers' Project in January/February 1990. My role was to provide creative writing workshops to Pond Inlet community and school. I worked closely with students and teachers and focused my day-work in the school. At night I undertook community doings and otherwise enjoyed billeting with an Inuit family.

I soon came to realize that, in the very dark months of constant nighttime North of the Arctic Circle, internal timeclocks change, at least, seemed to, in relation to mine. Home and family visiting, friendly conversations and amiable silences lasted till two or three in the morning. I enjoyed this, although at times, an early rise next day was difficult.

I seemed to be not the only one with 9-o'clock-sharp problems. The school seemed to have a somewhat disused air in the mornings, and gradually as the day progressed, the rustle and rumble of students increased. At four, one day, I entered a senior classroom to discuss the "play-in-progress" with the class teacher, Adele Kozy (Footnote 5). I expected to find her student-free and available.

Instead, a glowing and energetic group of senior students with that anxious-to-learn look on their faces were grouped around Adele. Disentangling herself from the rabid young scholars, she came over to me. I explained that I was sorry to interrupt her, that I didn't know she had a class. Adele answered:

"Now is the time of day they are willing and ready to learn. A great opportunity. Let's use it."

One teacher changed so the many students didn't have to.

There is a difference between education and learning, just as there is between intelligence and wisdom. Wise Adele.

Sympathetic: Who am I to say who can and cannot write whatever?

In sorting this out, I had to ruminate a bit on the censorship issue. A bannock and tea, apple-pie and Motherhood, don't touch it with a ten-foot fencepost (Footnote 6) issue. The kind of issue that has allowed anti-Semitic (Footnote 7) education to take place in Canada, the kind of altruistic goal conveniently used by the "other side". Now, I say other side, because there really are Positive and Negative forces. I do not believe that I can move into consensus with everyone around me, lest my own integrity be lost. I can examine my own ethics, and, sometimes, smack dab, there I am: opposed, not consensed and certainly not willing to move into the middle and be a part of the problem. Some compromises are not good for the soul.

So, if I were to tell the producers of Native-image art and artwords (Footnote 8) that I wanted to censor them, they would likely knee-jerk. (Is there an echo in this room?) Instead, all I can do is suggest and hope that the well-intended may want to carry their intentions through to result and do so courteously, by respecting both us and our wishes.

WINDOWS OF THE SOUL

Dominant culture of North America dictates the use and reliance on eye contact as a means of determining sincerity, honesty, self-confidence, etc. Yet, to the Swampy Cree, etiquette required that you avoid direct eye contact as much as possible as the eyes were considered to be the Windows of the Soul.

For one to stare into your eyes was an intrusion, and to focus on another's was earnestly avoided. Negative stereotypes were not assigned to this behaviour, indeed, the person who practised such avoidance was considered to be both respectful and humble.

What I suggest to the non-Native arts producer then, is that you examine your own filter-screen, pick out the lint, and, if altruism is found in what's left, communicate your message. You may still get roasted, but, at least you have fulfilled your fundamental responsibilities of your own etiquette, and maybe learned some of ours. Regardless, you have learned to use the right fork.

Sometimes, progress requires more than etiquette—that is, the reaching out and welcoming of others—it requires competition to be set aside and cooperation to be put in its stead. This is the very real and significant role that non-Native artists and consumers of art can play, helping us to bring down the barriers that stand in our way to full creative and cultural expression.

My father (Footnote 9) and I were watching television one night and the story we viewed was set on a sheep ranch. Being a watcher of *Other Human Beings*, I was particularly

interested in how smart the dogs were: they herded, they looked for the lost and wandering lambs, they protected from and warned of danger.

I said to Dad: "I don't know how they can be trained like that. I wish I knew the secret. Their trainers must be very clever."

Dad answered: "The secret is simple, they are not trained by man. They are trained by the other dogs."

You can help teach an old sheep-dog new tricks... help us train and sensitize others...

My rambling thought patterns did not stop there: I went on to look at my own life-learning and found that, gosh, I don't learn best by being "outlawed". I no longer spend days horn-locked in splay-footed discussions and verbal coercions. I now spend time with the willing, and share my own willingness to learn with them. Only the unwilling need to be policed (Footnote 10). For the willing, maybe some self-censorship would work... the following is a self-inventory check-list for the well-intended non-Native artist contemplating the use of concepts and stories Native.

SELF-CENSORSHIP CHECKLIST

The Ethical and Protocol Positives:

Am I doing this with permission, both before undertaking and before releasing completed artwork or writing?

Do I have the consent of those affected?

Have I attempted to use "as near as... that man's words" (Footnote 11)?

Am I being humble? honest? responsible? caring? open-minded and aware of my own filter screens?

Am I doing this to support the emergence of Aboriginal artists?

Am I art-driven?

Am I courteous and fair?

The Disgruntling Negatives:

Am I caricaturizing instead of characterizing and thus increasing negative stereotypes?

Am I commercially-driven?

Am I reading my own cultural interpretation into what I perceive?

Am I failing to credit sources?

Are my intentions destructive?

Am I being arrogant? dishonest? untruthful? disrespectful?

Needless to say, I hope those contemplating using our stories and concepts check off



Rebecca Belmore, *Tikanogan II*, 1987, photo courtesy of Thunder Bay Art Gallery



Rebecca Belmore, *Sac-e-deh-ni O-wuna-shkit: means a burning skirt*, 1988, photo courtesy of Thunder Bay Art Gallery

everything in the first section, and none in the second. If this is not so, there is always hope that one day Jimminy Cricket (Footnote 13) will visit...

Knee-jerk: That's Ours!! Survival: Our Culture is Dying!!

Last year, while in attendance at a national meeting of an alternative arts group, I took part in a debate on the question of ownership of things and concepts Native. What surprised me was a rather hostile remark by the "other side" when a Native colleague used a quote from a non-Native source. The hostile remark was a fine piece of rationalization: if Native people did not want their stories and concepts used, why, he

asked, was my colleague quoting a non-Native?

There are several reasons for this, some very obvious. We, due to the dominance of Western European culture in our lives, have had our own history torn from us and thrown away. We are forced to live without our history, due to the intervention of invasion. And, in this case, my colleague was being challenged for using a cross-cultural example. Once again, the "blaming the victim" cycle in action. However, we maintain the place of etiquette, credit the speaker/originator/writer, know full well that this is mere courtesy, like using the right fork. We know the rules. What constantly faces us, though, is the rule-makers use a spoon.

A more subtle reason addresses the issue I call "over-specialization". Dominant society has narrowed the focus of life to be strictly material achievement (ie, dollars and jobs) and has funnelled students, Native and non-Native alike, into dizzying heights of technical and professional expertise that has excluded the more generalist and spiritually-oriented, holistic, analogous thinking process one can achieve from not just one teacher or area of specialty, but from many. The kind of thinking required from you in this article.

We do not, as others discount our ability to project learning, discount this ability in others. We know that life has many teachers and that all wisdom is neither concentrated in one Human Being, nor in one area of specialty. I don't confine myself to olde English literature, nor do I voraciously devour only computer magazines. Much of my learning is from listening, participating in and feeling life. These things then become *my history, my tools for the future.*

One may say the same, perhaps, of non-Natives using things and concepts Native. But, a much larger reared-ugly-head emerges: it is not dominant culture and language that are in fear of demise. Don't force us over the buffalo jump to cultural extinction, either through watering down our cultural integrity or making us survive culturally anaemic. When you have let us write our own hundreds and thousands of books, filled concert halls, galleries, stages with our cultural expression, then, and only then, when our culture surrounds us, living, breathing, acting, developing, secure: tell us then not to use your words, look at your art, use your tools to paint and play. How jealous the heckler of my colleague seems, to begrudge her use of a non-Native example, especially when the originator was fully credited. And, here, I finally get off the fencepost and hold hands with Mother Earth and say: for those of you who want to know what Aboriginal people are like, let us tell you. Participate in our writings, feel our visual art, move with our music, hear in your

heart our stories. For those of you who would rather do art about us, then get to know us. Then comes the next and major step: get to know yourself. Re-examine your motives. If they equal Robert Bringham's and Adel Kozy's go for it. I know there are those out there that do art for the same reason I write: I can't help it.

For others, a few words from *Chaucer—The Canterbury Tales*. I dedicate these to W.P. Kinsella:

"Whoever tells a man's tale should use as near as he can that man's own words, however rude (Footnote 14) they may be: or else, by finding other words, he might tell the tale untruly. Forgive me, too, if I have not given their dues to the folk I have described; my wits are poor, as you must be aware."

A word about Einstein: he explored philosophy, theology and art and credited these as the sources of his creative, scientific thought. A scientist or professional cannot be great unless she opens her mind to the generalist experience. I find the root of creativity exists in the reassembly of basic information, but in a new and original way. And then, once in a while the imagination floods with the awareness of the eagle, and there's this thing called Inspiration. Inspiration is definitely from a source that cannot be seen, heard, touched, tasted, sniffed or folded, stapled, mutilated. Yet, it cannot be denied. It makes beadwork out of keyboard, calico of handi-wrap and moosehide of vinyl. Inspiration, imagination: not high-tech tools, but grounded, culturally-based, and, oh-so-definitely in the beam.

This article could have been written in technical nomenclature and points made through the comparison of dearth of Native-written literature to the excess of non-Natives writing about us. It could have led you by the hand, or been a lecture. In doing so, it would have ignored the best Nation: No, not Canada, Mr. Mulroney, but, the Imagi-Nation (Footnote 15).

Have I required you to work? to think? or, is just some small haze of confusion lurking behind the Windows of your Soul? Any of these doings are worth the writing of this, even the latter. We are told that confusion always precedes periods of understanding...

Joy Asham Fedorick (Footnote 16)

1. Cocktail Anthropology. Poem by Aboriginal poetess Skyros Bruce, Tawow, circa 1972. Complete poem:

Cocktail Anthropology
Want to measure how long
My fingernails grow
Skyros: please call, write, I want more words from you!!!

2. Saul Williams. Little Crane Clan of Weagemow, Ontario. Visual Artist, Photographer, Teacher, Writer. Illustrated completely in one day at the Conference, the Chaka-Pesh and the Moon Legend. Then, he put down his art-tools and we found out that he could write, man, really write. Then, he finished off his week by giving art instructions to Lil Beavers. He told us at the end: "I didn't know I could be useful." Gosh, humility in incredible action.

3. Little Shadows: Chaka-Pesh, for example, legendary boy, mischievous and unable to listen to direction, even knowing the consequences. Indian legends and stories are peopled with such characters, reflecting the very nature of man him/herself.

4. Robert Bringham: Author of *Pieces of Map, Pieces of Music* and all sorts of other neat stuff. Resource person to the Second and Third Nishnawbe-Aski Writers' Conferences, 1986 & 87. Supporter and promoter of Native artistic and cultural self-determination.

5. Adele Kozy: Teacher of senior students at Pond Inlet School, N.W.T. Understands and transmits that the primary purpose of her work is for the students to learn, not fit into rigidly imposed and culturally incompatible boxes. Thanks Adele.

6. fencepost: Play on words: Frank Fencepost, one of W.P.Kinsella's major characters in books written about life through the eyes of Indian people.

7. It is a little-known fact, but **Hitler was an artist.** He painted very realistic, military structures on

canvas. His work varied from copying buildings that already existed, to putting on canvas the buildings he wanted constructed. There is no guarantee that just because a person is an artist, they are honourable and good.

8. artwords: word coined by author, quite accidentally. Others might call it a typo. I don't ignore such slips, because sometimes they say things a writer can understand: the product of creating art with words. As a lay-linguist I also am well aware that coining is a major way of keeping language alive.

9. Father: Orton M. Asham. Cree Nation, Native Veteran, wise young man.

10. Ursula Franklin. Environmentalist. Vision TV, videotape key-note address, Women and Environments Conference, Toronto, 1990.

11. Tales from Chaucer—The Canterbury Tales, done into prose by Eleanor Farjeon. pp.14. Published by The Medici Society Ltd. Reissued, Crown 8vo, 1948, printed in Great Britain at the Chiswick Press, London, N.II.

12. Ibid.

13 Jimminy Cricket. Walt Disney character from the movie Pinocchio. Jimminy would sit on Pinocchio's shoulder and whisper in his ear what the right thing was to do.

14. rude: not as familiarly used these days, the Webster Dictionary presents a definition that seems to carry the intent of Chaucer "roughly put together".

15. Imagi-nation: stolen from Santa Claus quote in the movie Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street. Circa 1945.

16. Joy Asham Fedorick is a cultural activist who is of the Cree Nation. She spends all her time, with the exception of errands, writing and/or talking about it. Other diversions include chasing cats off the keyboard of her computer, where desk-top publishing is also undertaken. Involved for centuries in community development, spiritual matters occupy her these days, and the moving forward, through accurate, factual and ethics-based information, the quality of life in the Native community. Circa 1947.

Floating Footnote to be applied everywhere: There are no absolutes, including this one.

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Linked Alive

Renga Poetry by Dôre Michelut & Ayanna Black

Introduction

Linked Alive is a collaborative, poetic creation by writers Dôre Michelut, Ayanna Black, Anne-Marie Alonzo, Charles Douglas, Paul Savoie and Lee Maracle.

Linked Alive embraces a traditional form of poetry called, renga, as a tool for communicating. Renga is a process involving two or more people writing one poem together by alternately linking images or concepts to create a sequence. The Japanese took the concept from the Chinese and developed it into a complex literary form that was central to their culture for centuries.

Following the release of *Linked Alive* and prior to their departing for a book launch in England and Italy, I spoke with two of the contributors and creators of the project, Dôre Michelut and Ayanna Black.

Ayanna Black claims the idea began when she and Dôre were discussing Creative Artists in the Schools as an Ontario Arts Council project. Ayanna was thinking along the lines of teaching oral traditions. She says, "We both come from oral traditions. I am of African/Caribbean background. In Jamaica the oral tradition is strong, for example the Dub poets use the tradition musically. What they have learned to do is transfer the oral to written form."

Dôre continued, "That's how the whole process began. We were on the phone speaking. Ayanna asked me what forms were available to teach with. I had stumbled on the renga at University of Toronto in 1969 and realized it would be a perfect form to use in the classroom. Ayanna with her quick mind said, 'Oh Dôre we have to do this!'"

It was the idea itself as well as what had already been accomplished in the renga (for example the Paris experiment) that attracted the two women to the form. Dôre said, "It just took us; we had to adjust to its form. We adopted the form and adapted it to our needs because the Paris experiment wasn't that successful.

Four people that represented their various cultures descended into a Paris basement for one week, talk about tension. What they produced wasn't a regular book, it was full of problems but we are grateful that they published it."

Dôre: "We talked about the form, theoretically it seemed to fit all our requirements, all our needs of communication, all our hopes for the writing process. This form could be inhabited."

Ayanna: "For me it seemed a perfect way to write together, but at the same time you are getting to know the other person. It's not superficial. It's not just like in a class where you are told to write a line or to collaborate on a project. You actually live together when you're doing renga."

Dôre: "You don't talk about poetry, you live it. Everything that those words imply is at stake. You can't use an extra word that doesn't belong to you, it's wrong. It's the living poetic process itself, when it's reflected by the reader who is also the writer. It goes back and forth. In our tradition (Western) you write and then you wait until the reviews come out. You read in the future but the future is present when you're writing renga. You're incorporating the reading into the writing. It's a terrifying thing."

"One rule we developed which wasn't in any of the original forms is if what a person offered didn't strike resonance, if there was nothing real there to take we would hand the verse back and discuss it. Something must be offered that the other person could take. This process eliminated a lot of wasted paper, waste of words. We actually wrote what was essential. Each person practically edited the other as she wrote, for reality, for truth, for resonance."

"In the end what happens is that reality is made, not fiction. And the reality isn't on paper, it's what comes between us. It's a tangible experience that has been lived and sewn together through the written page. It's an amazing way to get to know someone else."

Ayanna: "The first piece began with Dôre and I going to Mexico. We lived, ate, danced, travelled, laughed, cried and slept in the same room. That's how the renga between us evolved. Mexico was a good backdrop for it because of the spiritual and cultural

traditions it represented, like Japan. We were very centred there."

Dôre: "It was a process of really discovering each other and the renga was a tool for that. We weren't there to collaborate on a piece of writing, we were there to have the experience. It ended up being so intense. It was the experience that the renga generated and we generated the renga through the experience. It became so lived."

Ayanna: "My experience with Lee Maracle and Paul Savoie was completely different from with Dôre. They were all intense though."

Dôre: "We were blown away by the experience. We realized this form was bigger than both of us and that somehow we had to share it. The renga form had a statement to make about writing and about poetry, the metaphor and how metaphor binds the flesh and emotions. So what we decided to do was to expand, to link across the country. Ayanna would go West since she knew Lee Maracle and I would go East of Anne Marie Lorenzo who writes in French. The language wasn't important after a certain point."

"We had a bit of a problem finding men to undergo this process. It's not kosher. I asked Charles who was delighted. Ayanna asked two men before she found Paul Savoie who agreed. We decided to extend to men because we felt the form was bigger than political factions."

Ayanna: "We also wanted to respect the form since it's from another culture."

Dôre: "Our concern was that this form be socialized as much as possible. We wanted to extend it as much as possible. We are very excited about it; I feel we have a literate culture yet we have no literate space that we occupy together."

Linked Alive uses the collective process of poetry, which is interesting in itself because poetry has always been thought of as a solitary and personal experience even more so than other writing. *Linked Alive* challenges this notion with brave and vibrant words which were produced in this most remarkable manner.

Daria Essop

Magic, you say
is political:
my call makes you call.
Beauty, I say
is political:
your form makes me form. Michelut

Black Because patterns
you have released
inside your inner space
inviting to enter, dancing
gentle, exploring that which is not learned.

A cistern for that which is not learned
beauty jumps, whole
through the voice
word to word
shaping both rainwater and thirst. Michelut

Black Magic is like
corn grains I sow. The seeds
are organized in the soil;
I have no control
which form they develop.
The grains are the magic
magic of life.

Animals and Gods bear their own.
You and I
gardens, cannot.
My womb cannot bear
less freedom for my unborn. Michelut

Black Yes.
I have made my decisions
for my unborn.
How dare
the power brokers invade you and me
around the round table.

The ring expands.
Two centuries later
it is heavy on the finger
heavy like nostalgia
alarming in my sex.
The born, reborn. Michelut

Black Pain, anguish
my incision lines for centuries.
Aristocrat, professor
why *him da* study Plato at his age?

The past goes quickly into future:
I should have, I should
I hug the stairs going down
shoulders twisting, fitting
the incision lines. Michelut

Black Sail ship!
Centuries ago I was caged
like an innocent duckling.
He pumps water
pump
I hug iron bars.

The water breaks. Earth,
ocean cradle
cage to a vein of gold
pumped through. Michelut

Black My womb sadly blossoms. My flesh
jagged.
Match box sterile room.
A binder and pictures.

The morality squad asks,
"Can you identify the doctor?"

Decided, I say
"I will not." But asleep
or awake, it still takes me.
The faces, pictures.
When the months bleed
we cry. Michelut

Black His face: a sunflower.
He shares ruins. I centre
his Mayan space.
In his eyes
my shaman.

The cicada alights.
The shaman takes root.
The tree offers up its flowering.
Mother? Michelut

Black I did not see her.
Quietly she taps.
My pulse, a drum beat
her flowering.

We do not choose
without being chosen. Sunflower
our timebinder
our puppet and dancer. Language
our drum. Michelut

Black History denies
that which is ours.
The aristocrat professor
the wilting sunflower
our hieroglyphs.

Our story holds.
It keeps us from the price of wild
sunlit longing. The cost
of the loveliness of given sadness.
A partnesses
unaware that life is free
for the asking Michelut

Black I know sadness
(eleven years old).
My father disappears
swallowed by land. No geography.
I recreate his perfection:
Houdini.

She took him in
(apart)
His names, born at birth, continue:
father, carpenter, Him, black hole,
love. Michelut

Black The long journey
I was already in his body.
Cloudbursts
exploding. Not smothered.
Men always does.

"But it has eyes!" she exclaims
as the waiter brings the fish.
The dignity of food
body into body. Michelut

Black I say, "I killed
a cockroach this morning
why do I feel guilty"
You say, "Killing I understand done
with dignity."

You say, "I threw it back."
Hunger is what survives
not the sacrifice.
Mother, what hunger took you? Michelut

Black My tongue paralyzes.
The aristocrat decides:
Bach, Liszt, Mozart, Beethoven.
The hunger continues:
Cecil Taylor, Terry Jenoure, Monk, Dollar Brand.

Any tongue
that truly speaks, risks.
Ayanna, is your hunger black? Michelut

Black Dôre, my hunger is like a forest.
Many trees: oaks
cedars, pines.
I give you my humanity as you
give me yours.

O Floating Red Seed
red word adrift in a patchwork of power
poetry takes root;
it gives form as it penetrates. Michelut

Black We decide.
Our roots pierce
the earth for hunger.
the form satisfies
the goddess within

Amen.

PASSING OVER PRACTICE

The Problem of a Jewish Art History

We were assigned a research project on art history in one of my art classes in high school. We were all expected, I suppose, to choose a specific period or style. Melanie Davidowicz wanted to write a survey of Jewish art throughout history. She was told not to: Any Jewish production, apart from subject matter, would not be distinct in style from other (European) art produced at the time.

People's interest in their own culture is thwarted

through the instillment of shame, internalized oppression (e.g., anti-Semitism), the promise of painless assimilation and, the enforcement of white, Christian (among other) values. I would argue that Jewish ex-

perience in white, Christian cultures is a distinct one; that the cultural expressions of such difference must be understood within the denial of our historical specificities and the denigration of our cultural differences. Jewish culture does not simply disappear under the influence of a pervasive white, Christian culture; the absence of an historical discourse on cultural production, itself, must be seen as part of conditions within which a marginal culture exists.

At the time I was surprised by Melanie's proposed topic; it seemed unthinkable. I also admired her. In this article, I will address some of the issues she was up against, as well as some of my own in trying to articulate an identity through culture.

My high school art teacher's reasoning raises several assumptions about what constitutes a distinct art practice and, by extension, a culture. Throughout history, in Europe as elsewhere, Jews have formed their own communities, whether due to anti-Semitic regulations or persecution by the majority population, or due to a recognition of ourselves as a people—religiously and historically.

Dominant discourse sees marginalized people's creations primarily as "culture," only sometimes as "art." Cultural objects that serve, functionally or aesthetically, only the communities from which they come

are not "art"; they are, therefore not found in the art historical canon. The exceptions are objects that arise from dominant cultural values and experiences. They are imposed as *the* cultural expression of the time.

Without a doubt, some Jews, like some from the dominant culture with whom they shared geographical location, produced works which conformed to the "art" idiom of the time. Whatever such artists drew from Jewish culture or experience would be seen to add or contribute to the collective knowledge of the dominant culture and its art. A work gains its status as "art" the more closely it conforms to forms recognizable to the dominant standard. Work that is deemed too rooted in the marginal culture from which it comes, particularly in terms of its subject, is not considered art.

Aside from obvious differences in subject matter, cultural difference is relegated to an elusive, essential (that is, not political) "sensitivity." This encourages a "search" for marginal expressions, concealed as they are in the dominant culture. We have seen this operate in terms of looking for a "gay aesthetic" or a "lesbian subtext," in art or film from a time when those communities were not politicized around sexual difference and not visible to themselves in this way. It also indicates how marginalized peoples express themselves, by encoding and allusion, within a hostile culture. The necessity of constructing this type of history signals a political agenda in which difference is central to, rather than enhances, the dominant discourse.

Feminist art historians are either "finding" works of art by women which were often recognized in their time but overlooked in the art historical canon, or examining those cultural expressions denigrated as "feminine" preoccupations, as craft (not art). These revisionist agendas come out of the different politics within theories of women's liberation.

Gay liberationists have stated: "[T]he ruling elites... have taken over our talents and used them for their own profit, like the Kennedys who decorated their court with Gore Vidal. . . . We refuse to entertain them any longer with 'camp' for their profit."(1.) Like feminist historical approaches which seek to use gender difference as the basis for a specifically women's art history, the statement quoted above asserts a refusal

on the part of marginalized people to perpetuate that marginal position culturally.

In this society, propagandized as liberal and democratic, to self-identify as different is the basis from which to understand art that draws attention to difference, that speaks to the experiences of its own audiences as its central concern. "Coming out" politically, as a feminist, (during my time at the Ontario College of Art) was the necessary precondition to my interest in feminist art; the presence of lesbian art and culture affirmed my sexual identity. In this way, identity and culture inform, influence, and affirm each other. Throughout, however, I avoided at all costs thinking of myself as a Jew. That I could manage to do so in some way reflects the absence of Jewish issues in my courses: I did not raise the issue because, in part, I did not perceive a context for doing so.

The Women's Studies course I took at the University of Toronto was able to evade relevant criticisms by women of colour. We (predominantly white women) were only encouraged to examine the condition of *woman*, located firmly but invisibly within the upper and middle class, heterosexual, Anglo-white experience. This became most acutely apparent to me, while considering an assignment. We were asked to apply various (white) feminist models to, among other situations, our families. Thinking about the factors that have shaped my parent's interactions—as Jewish immigrants from different classes, cultures and languages, dealing as well with Holocaust survival and psychiatry—I became angry with how little the frameworks we had learned applied to my parents' lives, and by implication, mine. Still, I could not address these issues and opted for a different essay topic.

Jewish writers, for the large part, have seen their role in terms of white, Christian culture, "[a]s perennial outsiders," (2.) contributing "trenchant social commentary." Jewish criticism may be related to gay "camp," both developed through each group's exclusion from dominant culture. Political agendas, however are developed not only from, but beyond experience. Predominantly Ashkenazim (3.), Jewish writers and critics in North America retain a conception of their

socio/political position that is European in origin: as persecuted outsider.

In viewing how a variety of Jewish cultures have developed in different geographic locations, part of our history is how we have interacted with dominant cultures, as a group and as individuals. In the context of European and North American colonialism, and Jewish presence in societies of changing racial demographics, a political identity cannot be formed solely out of thinking of ourselves as "outsiders."

This traditional cultural expression celebrates a reclamation of the past as resistance to assimilation, but ethnicizes itself in the refusal to politically address the creation of marginalized culture. To find a Jewish presence in contemporary culture requires an insider's knowledge and conjecture. The exceptions do not in themselves form a discourse.

There are critical theories which offer tools to understand the position of "otherness." In bringing an historical knowledge to contemporary situations, we recognize that Jewish experience is based in both our allied and our oppositional positions vis-a-vis dominant culture. This must form a political basis to address Jewish experience and Jewish cultural production, historically and in the present.

Sandra Haar

Thanks to Martha Judge and Beth Walden for discussion and criticisms.

ENDNOTES

1. "Working Paper for the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention." *Out of the Closets: The Voices of Gay Liberation*. Karla Jay and Allen Young, eds. (New York: Douglas/Links, 1972). Quoted in Andrew Sorfleet, "Homomyopia," *Fuse*, 13:1&2 (1989), p. 44.
2. Naomi R. Goldenberg. "The Tribe and I: Thoughts on Identity from a Jewish Feminist Atheist," in her *Returning Words to Flesh: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Resurrection of the Body*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990) p.60. An excellent essay on the fluid identities that result from various allegiances (as a woman, as a Jew,...) and their political necessity.
3. Specifically, Jews of German (15th c.) and Eastern European (16th c.) descent. Generally, Jews from Eastern Europe. They make up approximately 95 per cent of North American Jewish population; worldwide, the percentage is 85.

Jung Ho's Daughter



I
In
a cool dark room
Auntie kneels
on the damp earthen floor
hypnotized
staring into
schizophrenic light
candles
changing shadows
on brick walls
looming small
large retreating

A Buddhist drone
verses chanted
in fields
gongs
someone wailing
white
Auntie, stone-faced
recites bible scriptures
My mother, too young
to understand
shaking,
trying to wake
Grandma, from death

My mother four years old
is learning
more than Chinese
is learning on the run
Too terrified to move
lying rigid
her face hot
on the cool floor
bombs
searing the sky
black
Thirteen years, thirteen dialects.

II
Dad says
"She oughta be ashamed

Born in Canada
been back
over thirty years
and can't speak English?"

Mom still cooks
while we eat
My brother makes
a joke we all laugh
Mom says
"Nei gong mwhat yah?"
We say
"Nothing"
Mom comes to the table
We finish eating in silence.

My sister,
"All American"
Dad would say
She, the pitcher
he, the coach
on the neighbourhood
softball team
I'd straggle
out to left field
skinny with braces
praying
the ball didn't
come my way.

III
I'm overseas
HongKong
learning Chinese
"Ni hau ma? Wo hen hau.
Ching dzwo. Si si ni."
I sound like a
wind-up doll
to friends
who tell jokes
in Chinese
I say
"Nei gong mwhat yah?"
They say
"Mo gwan see"

It was nothing.
I am learning
more than Chinese.
In Hong Kong, I get
paid twice
the local
because I'm Canadian
but less than half
of a Brit
because I am Chinese
I read articles in the
South China Morning Post
patronizing, denigrating
the locals
A friend tells me not to
write anymore angry
letters to the editor
I might end up with
concrete shoes in the
fragrant harbour.

IV
At last I am in China
I visit my family village
Nam Kai
Everyone meets me
for the first time
but they know me
from the pictures
on the wall
They embrace me
"Jung Ho ga nui
fun gay la!"

Ho's daughter
I kneel on the earthen floor
shame
flushing my cheeks red
I lay my hot face
against the cool
terracotta
silently weep.

Brenda Joy Lem

" در سرگاه آزادی جای حق زن خالی است "

تلاش من در ارائه این ندایشگاه نمایانند وضع زن در ایران و محرومیت و قربانی شدن او بخاطر جهل و تعصب است.

در این دوره از تاریخ که زن در بسیاری جوامع دنیا توانسته به بزرگترین حقوق انسانی و آزادی و برابری با مرد است ، باید در نقطه دیگری از دنیا محروم از کلیه حقوق خود می باشد ، جای تاسف و شگفتی است که در رژیم گذشته زن در ایران توانسته بود در مقام مقایسه با دیگر جوامع اسلامی بیشترین حق اجتماعی خود برسد .

در آغاز نهضت مردمی و انقلاب در ایران که در سال ۱۹۷۹ بوقوع پیوست زنها در کلیه مبارزات علیه رژیم گذشته همراه با مردان برای به دست آوردن حکومتی آزادتر و انسانی تر که همه ملت از حقوقی مساوی برخوردار باشند و در کنار آنها زنها هم بتوانند به جهش های والاتری دست یابند مبارزه کردند ولی آنها نه تنها موفق به پیشرفتی چشمگیر نشدند بلکه به منتهای محرومیت حقوقی و اجتماعی خود در مقایسه با گذشته رسیدند . فدا شدن و مبارزه برای پیروز شدن انقلاب که ملت ایران بیاری یکدیگر بعمل آوردند در تاریخ بعنوان مبارزه ملتی آگاه برای رسیدن به هدف های انسانی ثبت خواهد شد ولی تغییر رژیم سلطنتی به رژیمی مذهبی برای زنان نه تنها نوید جامعه بهتری را همراه نداشت بلکه آنها را از آزادی های گذشته هم محروم کرد و استبداد و تعصب کلیه امیدهای آنان را به یاس کشانید . پایه گذاران رژیم اسلامی مبارزه با زنان را خیلی زود شروع کردند و نه تنها قدردان همت آنان در باروری انقلاب نشدند بلکه کلیه آزادی و مزایای اجتماعی او حتی انقلابی ترین حق یک بشر را که انتخاب لباس و ظاهر است نیز تحت کنترل شدید قرار دادند . زنی که داشت خاطرات محرومیت های گذشته مادران رافراموش می کرد خود گرفتار دامی مهیب تر شد .

این رژیم بسیاری از فعالیت های زنان را در اجتماع مورد نفی و کنترل قرار داد . مثلاً زنان در شغل وکالت محروم از ادامه کار بعنوان فردی فاقدمصلحیت برای قضاوت بدیگران شدند و در مدتی کوتاه زنان فعال در جامعه محروم از ادامه کار در صورت خودداری از پوشش اسلامی شدند .

ایران کشوری است با فرهنگ دیرپا و غنی که روزی پیشرو تاریخ بشری و تمدن اصیل انسانی بسوده است چنانکه در زمان کوروش حدود سه قرن گذشته توانسته بود برخوردار از جامعه ای آزاد ، برابر و انسانی باشد و حتی در دوره ساسانیان زنان تا مرحله حکومت و سلطنت ارتقاء مقام یافتند . در این دوره از تاریخ که زنان در بسیاری از جوامع به باروری حقوقی و انسانی خود رسیده اند ، جامعه ایران به مرحله ای از بربریت و توحش نزول کرده که زن را به عنوان موجودی خطاکار و تباه بجرم زنا در ملاء عام سنگسار می کند .

Parvaneh Radmard

Artist's Statement

"In the dawn of freedom, women's rights are missing."

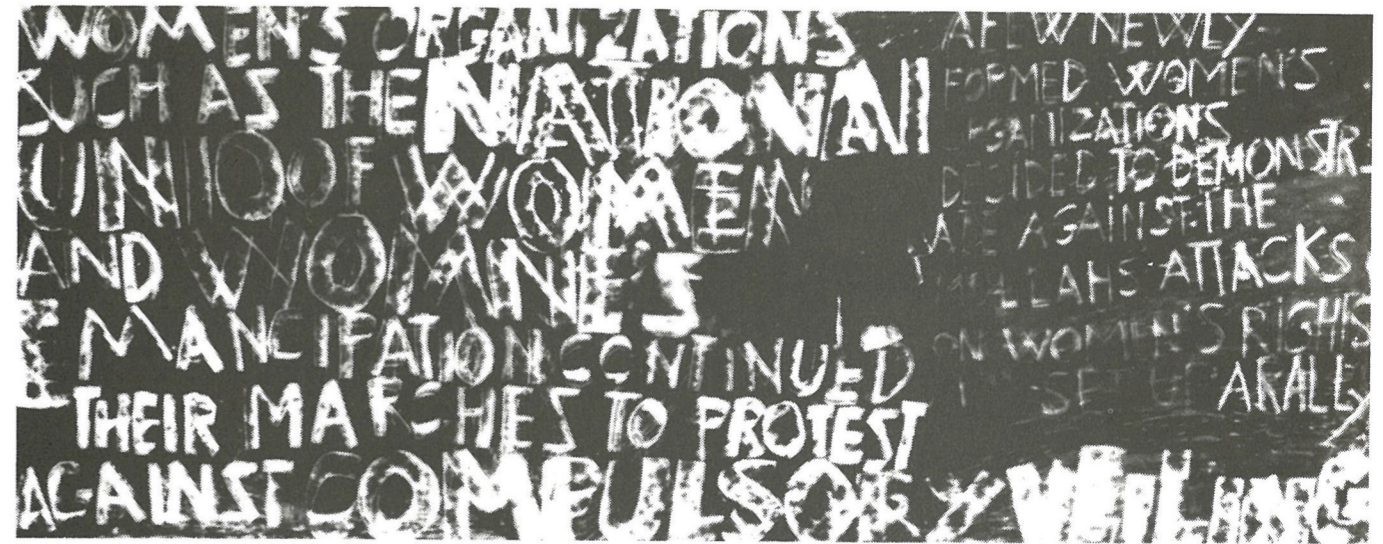
I have tried to show in my work the suffering of women who are victims of fanaticism and violence in this century. It is regrettable and painful to see that in some parts of the world, women are deprived of their rights and freedoms, while in progressive societies, women have succeeded in gaining the most equality and status that they have ever had.

In many Islamic countries, women are suppressed by the deeply patriarchal society. Parliaments in some Islamic countries have based their criminal codes on primitive Islamic laws. As a consequence married women convicted of adultery can be sentenced to death by stoning and fundamentalist muslims still arrest women on the streets for failing to wear proper Islamic dress. Many similar cruel rules are enforced by these governments.

Selected Exhibitions

- Gallery 76—Toronto, 1990
- Malaspina Gallery, Solo show—Vancouver, 1989
- 9th Int'l Print Exhibition—Urawa, Japan, 1989
- Bishops University—Quebec, 1989
- Univ. of Guelph—Guelph, 1989
- Art Dialogue Gallery—Toronto, 1989
- 3rd Int'l Biennale Exhibition of Prints. Museum of Modern Art—Taipei, Taiwan, 1988
- North York Art Council Juried Exhibition—1988
- Univ. of Guelph—Guelph, 1987
- Int'l Exhibition of Work on Paper, Contemporary Museum of Modern Art—Bahia, Brazil, 1986
- Open Studio, Solo show—Toronto, 1986
- Del Bello Gallery, Solo show—Toronto, 1986
- Open Studio—Toronto, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988

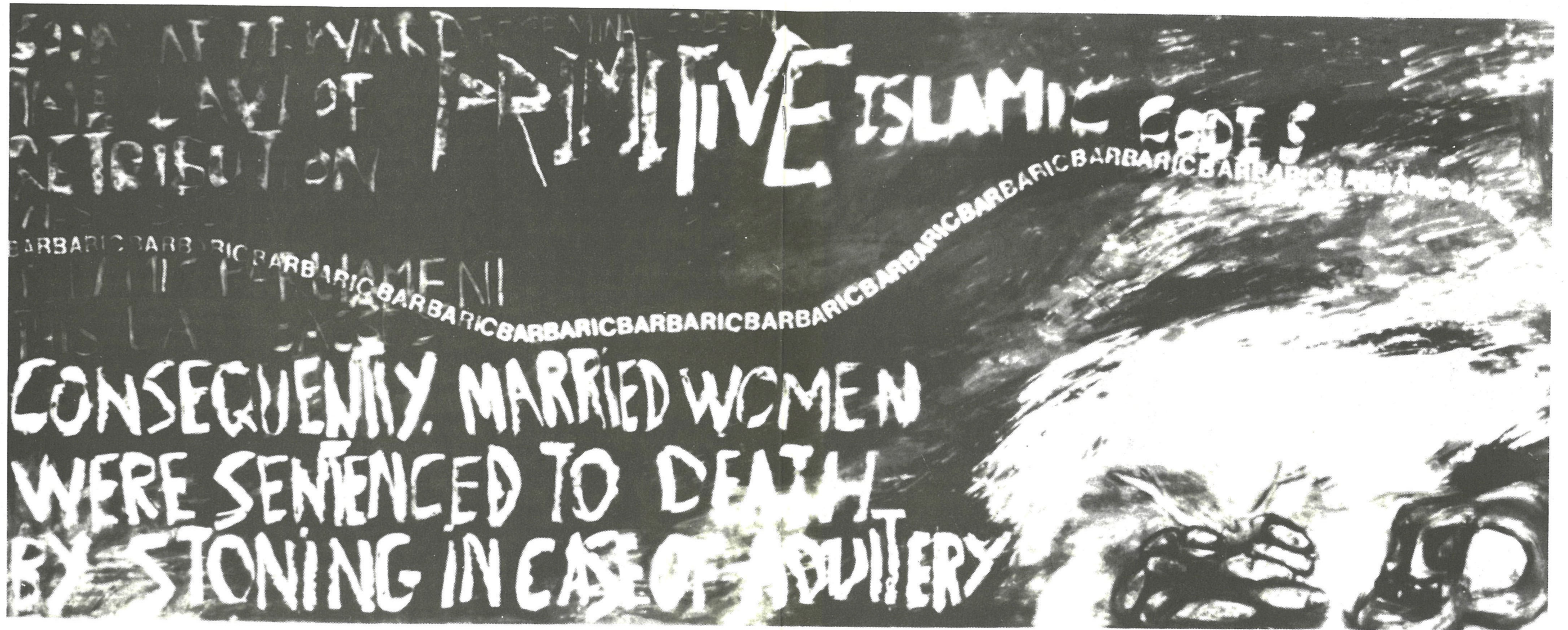
Parvaneh Radmard was born in Tehran, Iran. Her work has been exhibited internationally and in Canada where she has resided since 1979. Parvaneh Radmard is one of over 900 artists represented in WARC's artist files/Slide Registry.



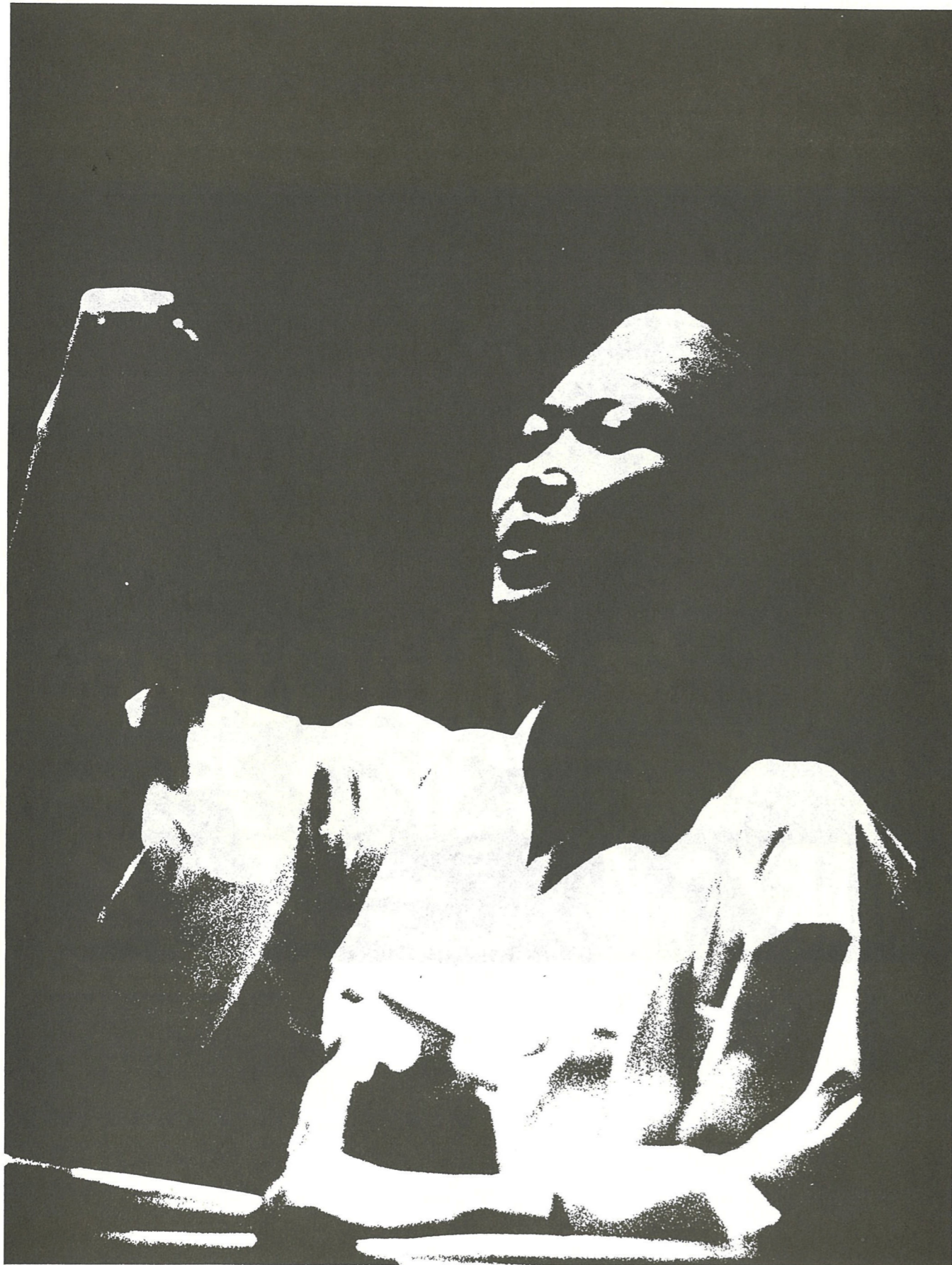
Parvaneh Radmard, Untitled, 1989



Parvaneh Radmard, Untitled, 1989



Parvaneh Radmard, Untitled, 1989



WOMYN RISING

FESTIVAL

Womyn Rising was produced by Multicultural Womyn in Concert (MWIC), a non-profit women's music and cultural production company. MWIC has been involved in promoting a women's culture which is anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and which supports those who are differently abled, poor or working class. Their main project for 1990 was to pull together women from a variety of cultures and artistic traditions into a festival format where all women could share their art and experiences.

The Womyn Rising festival featured artists from the South Asian, South East Asian, Palestinian, Black and Native Communities. As one example, Toronto poets Susan Beaver, Carol Camper, Ritz Chow, Pauline Peters, Leleti Tamu, Nicole Tanguay and Clarissa Chandler read to wildly enthusiastic audiences on two nights at A-Space Gallery in Toronto. Their poetry touched on topics ranging from political activism to erotica. As women of colour in North America, racism and the struggle against its many manifesta-

tions were themes common to much of these women's work. Issues of race are never simple, and the poem "Half Breed" by Nicole Tanguay, printed on page 32, is an example of this complexity.

The festival lasted for two weeks and was successful in opening awareness of cross-cultural and cross-orientational issues. Although some events were lesbian only most had both straight and gay performers. Thus not only did the lesbian audience learn more about various cultures, but those who came expressly to see, in that case, Asian Dancers also were exposed to the art and cultural ethos of Asian lesbians. Quite a feat when one considers that prior to that night much of the audience did not know there are Asian lesbians.

The festival was quite successful, and MWIC hopefully will continue to hold similar events on a yearly basis. Some of the festival highlights follow.

Anne Vespry

Launching the Womyn

The Benefit for the Mohawk Nation and Mary Pitawanakwat:

Drummer and singer Betty Belanger, and lesbian poets/authors Beth Brant, Chrystos, and Doreen Silversmith provided exciting and enlightening entertainment at the benefit held November 3, 1990 at Trinity St Paul's Church. Both Mary Pitawanakwat, an Ojibway woman from Saskatchewan who has charged her former employer the Secretary of State with sexual and racial harassment, and Ellen Gabriel, a negotiator for the Mohawk Nation at Kanasatake, presented informative overviews of the various levels of Native struggles.

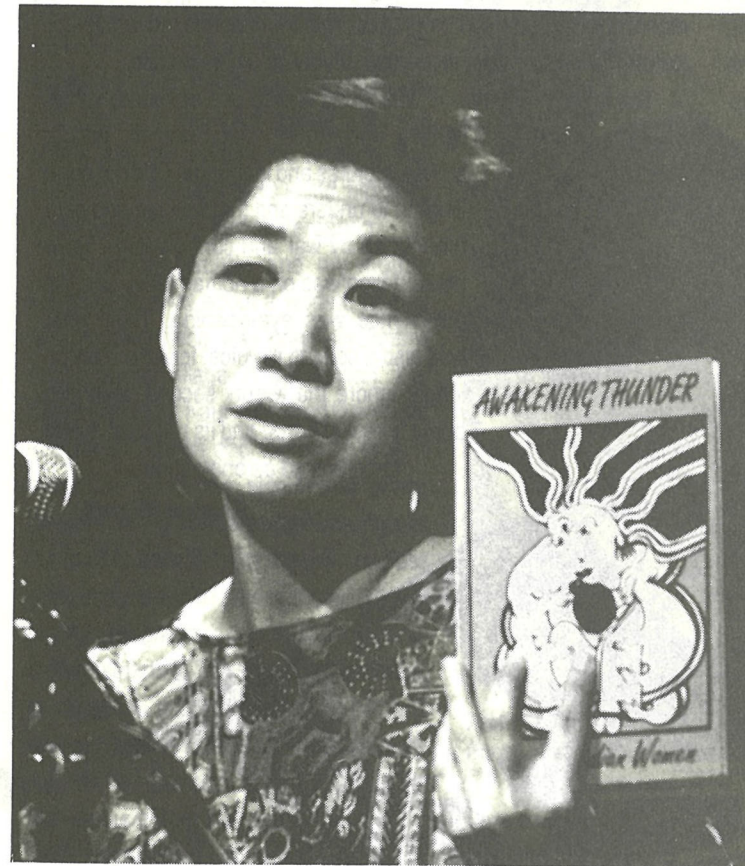
One of the highlights of the evening was Chrystos' discussion of the impact of the current fad for appropriating Native spiritual customs on Native communities. Chrystos' poem "Shame On" is a moving indictment of "shame men" and "shame women" who, like Lynn Andrews take rituals and spiritual ideas from indigenous cultures without asking, or giving anything in return. Feminist bookshops are finally beginning to realize that it is morally wrong to encourage such culture pirates, hopefully other feminist culture producers and distributors will follow suit.

("Shame On" is available from Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1H2 for \$3 + postage and handling or in Chrystos' book *Dream On* forthcoming in May 1991.)



Chrystos, discussing poem "Shame On", Womyn Rising Festival, photo by MAVerick

Rising Festival



Mona Oikawa, Womyn Rising Festival, photo by Regan McClure

Asian poets Ritz Chow and Mona Oikawa read at Harbourfront as part of the *Binari* evening. Ritz Chow's poem "inverted flames" sees its first publication in this issue of *Matriart*. Mona Oikawa is shown speaking about *Awakening Thunder* the first Canadian collection of writings by Asian women, published by Fireweed.

inverted flames

in india, men burn incense and women. the incense has a pleasant aroma; its smoke drifts among rested souls. the women char and scream. their ashes fall though soil, ground deep into the sandals of passing men, the playing feet of children.

in the yards, women burn unattended. their flames are blue with oxygen, wavering before the still huddle of vegetables. the women stand rigid as lampposts and iron grills. the pattern of fire over sari is etched by dry winds. uncharred women cry gently by the frames of windows and doors. children run, scared and excited by the warm grey ashes coating their faces and limbs. young men continue, side-stepping spectacles. older men sit on pavement and watch the fires die.

the women weave a skin of air and light. the leaves lend their restless green; the sky, its opened blue, within the flames, the women dance nude. they sing a song and keep time with their bones. the heat between their legs rises with the wind.

after watching a documentary on wife burning in india (channel 19)

Ritz Chow

Binari Korean-American Cultural Troupe

Five Toronto Asian and South Asian lesbians read their poetry at Harbourfront along with *Binari*—a Korean cultural dance troupe from New York, on Saturday, November 10. The event was presented by Multicultural Womyn in Concert, Asian Lesbians of Toronto, Korean Womyn's Collective and Young Koreans United as part of the Womyn Rising Festival. The event was wheelchair accessible and visually interpreted into ASL.

I did not expect Harbourfront to be so intimate, especially considering the large number of people who attended this enlightening evening. However, closeness to the performers was enhanced by the blurring of the physical stage. A single light was used to highlight the poets in a sea of darkness, and they decided to sit in front of the stage. While *Binari* used the stage, they also came out into the crowd, breaking down the boundaries between audience and performer.

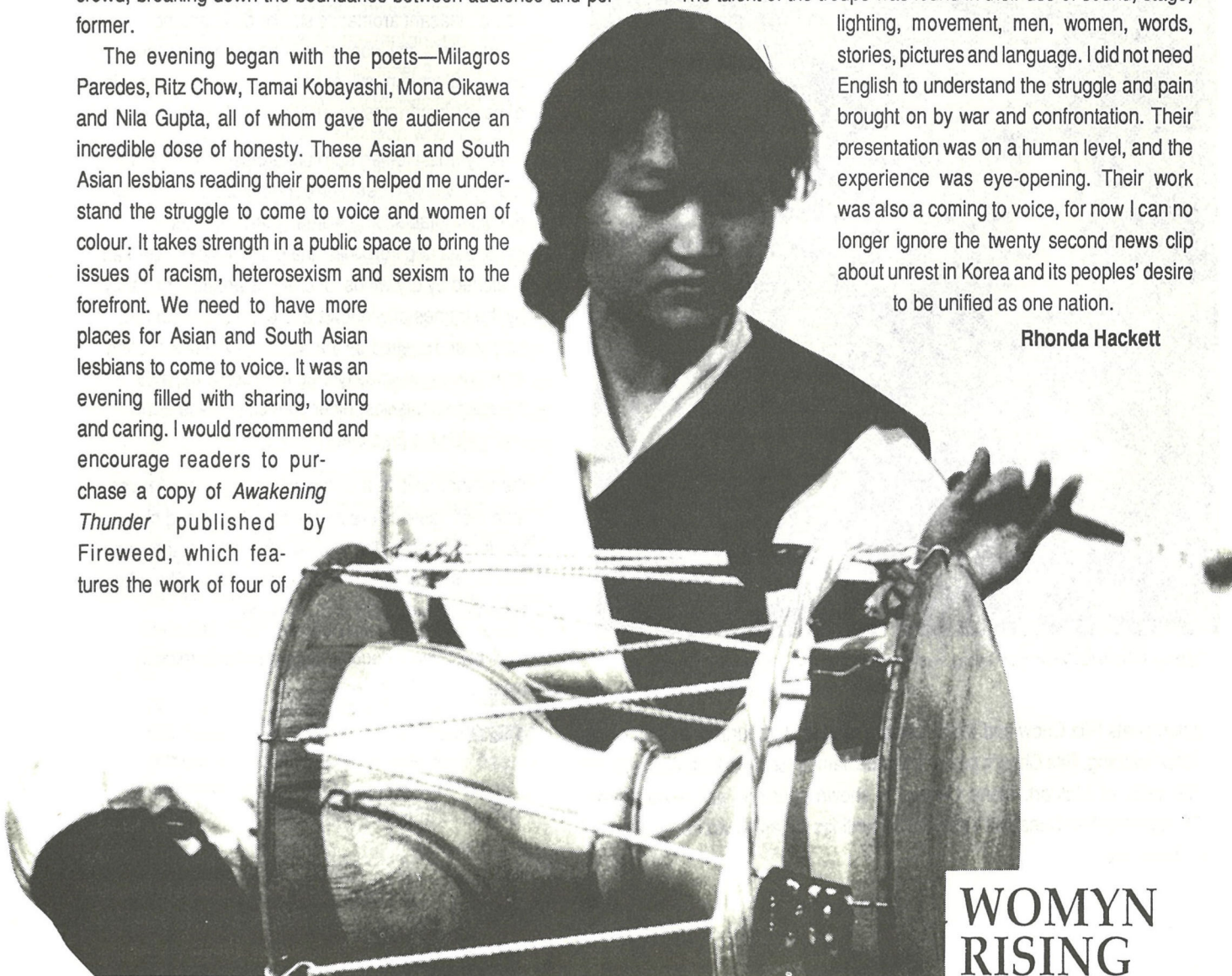
The evening began with the poets—Milagros Paredes, Ritz Chow, Tamai Kobayashi, Mona Oikawa and Nila Gupta, all of whom gave the audience an incredible dose of honesty. These Asian and South Asian lesbians reading their poems helped me understand the struggle to come to voice and women of colour. It takes strength in a public space to bring the issues of racism, heterosexism and sexism to the forefront. We need to have more places for Asian and South Asian lesbians to come to voice. It was an evening filled with sharing, loving and caring. I would recommend and encourage readers to purchase a copy of *Awakening Thunder* published by Fireweed, which features the work of four of

the five poets who read at this event, and is the first anthology of Canadian Asian women.

Binari closed off the evening after a short intermission. *Binari* is a cultural troupe that performs Korean people's drumming, dancing and theatre. I had never before experienced Korean performing arts and it was terrific. I learned that I knew very little about Korea, its people and their struggles. I learned of the incredible similarities and differences between their struggles and my own. I felt the intensity of the performers as they constantly dissolved the boundaries of the stage, moving in and out of the audience, as well as encouraging audience participation. Involving the audience altered the performance from separate to connected, representing the movement for Korean unification as a movement involving all the people.

The talent of the troupe was found in their use of sound, stage, lighting, movement, men, women, words, stories, pictures and language. I did not need English to understand the struggle and pain brought on by war and confrontation. Their presentation was on a human level, and the experience was eye-opening. Their work was also a coming to voice, for now I can no longer ignore the twenty second news clip about unrest in Korea and its peoples' desire to be unified as one nation.

Rhonda Hackett



WOMYN
RISING
FESTIVAL

Binari performing at the Womyn Rising Festival, photo by Regan McClure

Frangecide Part 2

London 1957

As a small child I would listen to my mother and her friends talking. They would press tea and scandal upon each other whilst sitting in a sort of rigid formality, pretending not to gossip. The folk stories of India bore into me. Some frightened me and some I asked to be told over and over again.

My mother had one friend whose face was fair and unlined. She was my favourite. I called her the green-coat-auntie. She always wore a coat cut in the fifties style of languorous curves. It had a wide, scalloped collar that lay flat and soft off her shoulders and was a rich mossy colour—a shade that still evokes the sincerity and warmth of a five year-old's world, hip-deep in women, kitchen and kindergarten.

Green-coat-auntie and my mother would often chat about a woman of their acquaintance who was originally from a neighbouring village in the Punjab. Her name was Surjit Kaur. She lived in an outer suburb of London and visited us once a month or so. I can picture her sitting upstairs on the double decker bus, right at the front in order to enjoy the view: endless rows of post-war houses with their pride of plucky little gardens punctuated by identical highstreets of Sainsburys, Woolworths, cornershops and rundown green grocers. She sat, her handbag clutched awkwardly against her stomach, her face squirming with distaste from the cigarette smoke and the raucousness of the teddy boys seated behind her, who would be swearing, hooting and crushing out butts with the vindictive toes of their winklepickers.

She was in her mid-fifties, and apparently a notorious killer of new-born baby girls. Her victims had been, not only all of her own daughters, but various other girl children that she had "disposed" of, as a favour to members of her extended family. In her fervour, she never considered whether her actions would perhaps be a horrific surprise for the parents, and several of the murders were quite unexpected and unasked for. The stories about Surjit Kaur terrified and fascinated me. How could it be allowed? Where were the police? Green-coat-auntie had known of three or four deaths, and my mother recounted further incidents embellished with details of poison being administered and heartrending descriptions of hungry babies wanly

crying far from the lactating breasts of their mothers. It filtered into my child's consciousness that you kept one girl child to help with the housework (one dowry was affordable) but any more girls would be a financial liability. Boys were strong sons to be proud of, whose birth

would be feted with whisky and celebratory laughter. They would grow tall and handsome (sons are never ugly in the eyes of their mothers) and would provide in one's old age. I can remember Surjit Kaur asking me if I knew how to cook curries and dals. She cackled and continued, "I think all girls who don't know how to keep house should be done away with. If they don't know how to run a home I say get rid of them, otherwise they'll just grow up to be sluts and scrubbers." A woman tittered. My mother's face became prim and stony. I looked at them blankly. Scrubbers? I didn't know what the word meant though it suggested certain images to me. But was she talking about me?" I had just been fitted at infants' school that afternoon with a glittery silver halo for my part as an angel in the Christmas pageant. My friend Hilary was the other angel and we would stand on chairs (angels are tall) in the back row. I envisioned both of us stripped of our heavenly costumes and garbed in grey with sagging floral pinafores, our hair tied up with scarves in square knots like charladies. I saw us with metal buckets and



Mother and 2 Daughters, London 1957.
Photo courtesy the author

huge scrubbing brushes, on our knees cleaning the white porcelain tiles of the underground public lavatories on the pedestrian island at the Broadway. Hilary would share my fate as she didn't know how to make dal either; in fact she didn't even know how to eat it. She would wrinkle her nose and say it smelled funny.

At this time my mother gave birth to my sister. I was very proud of this little baby (though in later life we were to have the bitterest fights). It was the custom of the Indian women to come calling, bringing sweetmeats and congratulations. When Surjit Kaur arrived with her handbag and a plastic sack full of little, brown paper packets of ladoos and jelibies I stood at the foot of the stairs, arms stretched from bannister to wall, screaming hysterically. "Don't let her kill the baby. Don't let her kill the baby".

Sarindar Dhaliwal

BIRD WOMAN

Eve Lewarne

full bodied woman wrapped in feathers
gliding along on wings of a song
a raven on your left shoulder,
trickster supreme, cajoling you on
the shaman's staff just within reach,
fly birdwoman to your destiny.

sit not alone in a tree, vulnerable
head tucked under a ruffled wing
sighing, forlorn, dreaming of eagles
weave your own song of power and joy
birdwoman born from darkness and light
aglow with the golden sun and cool moon.

perched on the edge of a branch
ready to fly, brilliantly plumed
awaiting but a sign from east wind
to accept the fire within and glide
under eternal skies, shaman staff
in hand, an eagle in disguise.

COMPROMISED

Roxana Farrell

But what can make this real pain sting so viciously in the root of my soul
It that was pure born is nevertheless jeered by those cold, empty-handed
lacerations and sores; causing tears

I don't know why

I could cry but what for
It would only flame the hatred that sweats and boils within me
I am vaporous puddles
My heart is hardened and I am alone

Alone

I want to fight but already the battle has been lost
For my soul has been starved from the passion for rigour and devotion

From desire I am weak
Without reflecting back, I know I long for it
I try to forget

(Rapid Heartbeat)

Heaven help me.

MOONLODGE

A Review



Moonlodge is a play written and performed by Margo Kane. It presents the story of Agnes, a young Native woman searching for her stolen identity. Margo Kane created this work from the lives of real women she met on her own journey. Directed by Floyd Favel, it was staged in a wooden-based translucent teepee which served as the background for all the events which reflected Agnes' experiences. This teepee is the Moonlodge, and the Moonlodge is a medium for Agnes' discovery of her true self.

In this one-act play, Agnes is wrenched in terror from the safety and warmth of early childhood in a large extended Indian family by the unknown implacable forces of authority. She is passed through an endless series of foster homes where only the Christian grace at mealtimes seems different to the child. In the foster care shuffle she ends up living with the warm, eccentric Millie who is kind to her and with whom she develops a close relationship. But Millie cannot fulfil Agnes' yearning for her lost self. Some of the funniest scenes are of Agnes as a young girl in Brownies, and Millie interpreting Agnes' desire to go to camp as the child's search for her roots. Millie's well-meant but clumsy allusions to these "tribal" roots are painful for Agnes to endure.

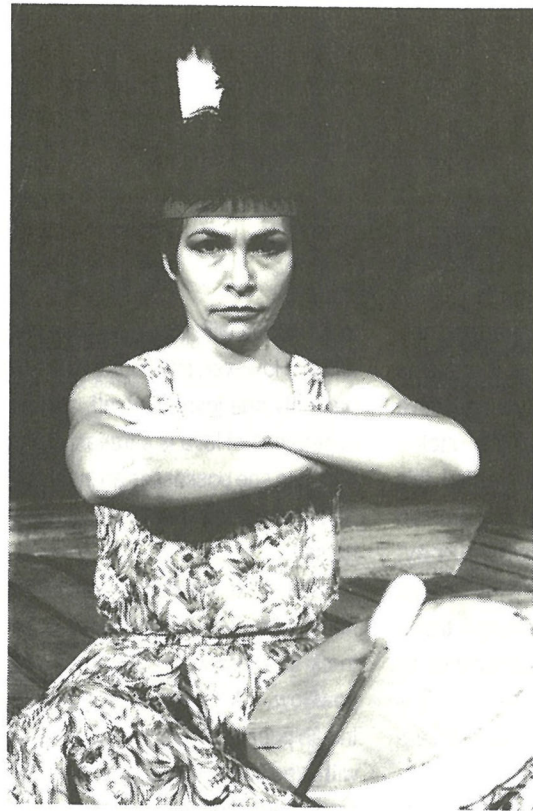
Agnes, bedecked with flowers in her hair, leaves Millie and safety to find excitement and adventure. Songs carry us with Agnes into the spirit of the Sixties. She wants to travel to California so, she hitchhikes and narrowly avoids being victimized. At a gas station stop, she meets an incarnation of her idol Marlon Brando, complete with a powerful chrome dream machine. She joins this motorcycle lover and accompanied by "Born to Be Wild", roars down the highway

to California with him. She lives her adventure to the fullest. However, she finds that the Brando incarnation has only one lover, himself, and as a result her first experience of love is a travesty. Agnes is remarkable because she possesses an innate sense of self-worth. She leaves this man and continues searching for herself.

She next meets an incarnation of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Indian Cowboy" who is travelling by pickup truck to a powwow. She goes with him to her first powwow. A powwow is a traditional gathering of Indian people, where they celebrate being themselves with traditional songs and dances. Powwows were among the first stirrings of Native revitalization in Turtle Island—the name given to North America by those of us who are native to North America. At one time in Canada these dances were illegal.

Agnes is overwhelmed by the call of the drum. She is also an accurate observer of the styles of the different dancers. She wonderfully mimics the styles and pokes gentle fun at the vanity of male dancers who studiously ignore her youthful admiration. You will remember Moonlodge every time you attend a powwow in the future.

When she won't admit to being cold or wanting to share his blanket the magnetic wonderful one departs the truck and leaves Agnes alone. She awakes in the morning and meets her neighbour Edna, who offers friendship with coffee and by asking simple questions about Agnes' family, her tribal affiliations, and her birthplace precipitates Agnes' panicky departure from the powwow. Edna recognizes that Agnes is searching for her lost heritage. She knows that Agnes not only doesn't know where to look but doesn't even know exactly what it is she is looking for. Edna is grounded, sure of her place in her family and her identity. She does not coerce Agnes but gives her an



Margo Kane, *Moonlodge*, 1990.
Photo by Greg Staats

invitation to come to visit. There is a vivid contrast between the two women, and Margo Kane transforms herself from one character to another with certainty. Throughout the play Margo populates the stage with her incredible energy and deft portrayals of Agnes and the people Agnes encounters.

Agnes goes to the city and becomes an idolized Indian Princess for a group of hippies. Owing to her lack of connection to Native tradition, she is soon subjected to cruel questioning and exposed not by natives, but by those who have learned about the culture from books. She is broken-hearted but now ready to begin a new stage in her journey. She seeks out Edna and the Moonlodge.

At the Moonlodge, she learns of her place in the circle of life. It is here that she finds herself. The Moonlodge is a place where Native women traditionally retire when they are on their moontime or menstruating. It is regarded as a time of great power and a time for a woman to collect her thoughts about her experiences and share them with other women. It is a

place where Elder women teach and learn from the younger. It is a sacred place to pray, to sing, to learn and renew oneself to continue the journey through life. We do not follow Agnes' journey further but we are left with the sense that she will grow to wholeness.

That is my rendition of the story of "Moonlodge". I wish to add more about what this play means to me a Nishnawbe Kwe, an Ojibwe woman. Native theatre is important because it tells the stories of a Native person in a way that is closer to how it was lived than any number of factual accounts. As a Native person, it strengthens my identity. This is the magic of theatre. It is a generous gift to be given a glimpse of another's soul, and Native theatre offers that.

What is particularly important about this play is that it is about a Native woman and that a Native woman wrote and acted it. The voice is authentic and inspiring. One of the first important plays about Native people was "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe". It was a play written about Native people with the main character a Native woman. But it was written by a white man from the perspective of an outsider, who saw only the destructive impact of whites on Native culture and Native lives. Anyone who saw that play was moved to pity and sadness about the Native lot in life.

Moonlodge is an important contrast because it is the distillation of the spirit of the many Native women Margo Kane has met and given voice to. It tells the truth for many of us who have had to reweave the threads of our identity, lost by attending residential schools or as in the play, being survivors of the Child Welfare System. Moonlodge demonstrates our beauty, our strength, and our will to survive as whole people. We, Native people are not destroyed. We are throwing off the shackles of oppression and we are alive. We invite you to dance with us again as we did when first we met. One of the truths that Native people recognize is that "Women are the strength of the nation". These are times that offer a second chance for all of us.

Catherine Brooks

The Hag Show

Gablemore Studio
Waterdown, Ontario
October 27-28, 1990

In some pagan religions of European origin, Halloween is a religious festival marked by devotees as the turning point of the year. According to this tradition it is the time of year when the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is thinnest, the time to honour the dead (our ancestors) and to thank them for life.

The authority for conducting these festivals and other rituals of pagan worship lies largely in the hands of women. As part of a celebration honouring the wisdom of these holy women or hags, the Bay Area Artists for Women's Art (BAAWA) recently constructed "The Hag Show", a two day exhibition of art, found objects, magical potions and life-emanating elixirs.

The 16 women and one man who currently make up BAAWA are artists who live in communities strung around the Burlington Bay area. The idea for the organization came about when one of the founding members visited the Art Gallery of Hamilton's 75th anniversary exhibition and, to her horror, discovered only a few women artists represented in the large number of works exhibited. From this silent/invisible past BAAWA forged a link among community artists to ensure a noisy/visible future for women artists.

Part of this linking together involves creating close ties with local arts organisations to improve opportunities for women. BAAWA also offers programmes and workshops open to both men and women through the Hamilton Artists' Inc., an artist-run gallery and centre. And it has shows in alternative spaces, where process, a female discourse and alternative aesthetic considerations are part of the exhibition construction. In the HAG Show, this process resulted in a reverent/irreverent dichotomy.

Work such as the "Angry Woman Dancing Machine" by Jane Gordon, a pair of black-shoed, lavender-stockinged legs attached to a wall which, when operating, was described by one female viewer as, "Jane Fonda on valium", the "Marriage Box" by Marnie Stout and the "Babel/Babble Potion" by Dawn Beatty were representative of hags laughing at the reversal of haghood, patriarchy. Their irreverence was a celebration of the female who expresses her rage

by laughing at ridiculous aspects of male experience which have been universalized to become the dogma of mainstream culture. Laughter is an important weapon in breaking down the unquestioned power of male-defined authority. These funny, irreverent creations coexisted, however, with works that were inspired by deep reverence for the feminine principle. The close proximity caused some confusion in this reviewer.

Strong works of reverence included Jane Adeney's "Wyrd Sisters", a group of seven smoke-fired porcelain, womb-shapes with open mouths, placed around a cosmic dream-egg elixir forming a circle of power. The egg also had a mouth and when some of us started to spin the egg inside its circle, we found how quickly and deeply the female power within us switched on. Other work manifesting reverence included Dawn Beatty's "I and Myself", a glass-door cupboard containing various masks of Dawn's face with the names of eight Muses burnished on the door, Juliet Jancso's sculpture, "The Great Architect", Nora Kilkenny's mixed media work, "Things My Sister Taught Me", and Vera Dernovseks's painting, "The Life Dream". Beautiful to look at were Susan Boychuk's peacock feather and jewelled "Vanity Box", Justine Giuliani's "Acores-Series #6" and Donna Ibing's "Really Beautiful Women".

Jim Hart's work, "Les gemmes du rêve de soir" seemed full of grace as did many of the gentler pieces.

As novice hags, the members of BAAWA are struggling with the artistic manifestation of the feminine and the creation of a female discourse. This approach clearly places its members outside of the male discourse of mainstream art, where a "feminist voice" exists as a footnote to the main discourse. But it also marginalizes its members from the mainstream feminist ideology which still panders to male-defined constructions of strength and weakness, of wisdom and knowledge. BAAWA has no political agenda. Rather, like Jane Adeney's "Wyrd Sisters", it exists to give witness to feminine creation and to uncover and embrace the artistic-spiritual tradition that was almost lost to it.

Janet Tulloch

YEARNING

YEARNING

by bell hooks

Published by Between the Lines

Yearning is the fourth book on black feminist theory written by bell hooks. The ideas and content are not new, but rather are a culmination of her previous works. More academic than any of her other books, however, *Yearning*, is written with a different edge. This may be disappointing for some of her readers, especially non-academic black women, and other women with little formal education. But don't get turned off. Her commitment to accessibility is still present. As she said in an interview about black feminism ("Fuse", Spring 1990, Vol.XIII No.4):

"Developing a feminist struggle out of locations where we are, Black women looking at that political agenda might say, 'I want to start with the institutions in my life—the church, or what have you—that are important to me.'"

Her own location of origin was Hopkinsville, Kentucky and her real name is Gloria Watkins. She assumed the name bell hooks, the name of her great, great grandmother on her mother's side. She speaks about this grandmother as a strong woman who spoke her mind. hooks grew up in the tradition of the Southern black church, where she was influenced by women in the church. The foundation for her critical thinking originated there. She is the author of *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*, and *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*.

Yearning is a timely, and affirmative book. It is most important because without any trace of bitterness, hooks manages to depict a particular world—a world of black women from varied realities, and different age groups—with sensitivity, compassion, humour and depth. Depth that concretizes black women's realities. To quote bell hooks:

"... students are more engaged when they are learning to think critically and analytically by exploring concrete aspects of their reality, particularly their experience of popular culture. Focusing on popular culture has been one of the main ways [they find] to bridge this gap."



The central part of the book, in which she talks about black women's fears of disagreeing with their black brothers, is crucial and illuminating. hooks writes without any fear of wo/men disagreeing with her critical interpretations:

"Also they feared that disagreement among themselves might disrupt feelings of racial bonding and solidarity. Again, as we educate one another to acquire critical consciousness, we have the chance to see how important airing diverse perspectives can be for any progressive political struggle that is serious about transformation. Engaging in intellectual exchange where people hear a diversity of viewpoints enables them to witness first-hand solidarity that grows stronger in a context of productive critical exchange and confirmation... Initially they often assume that if you are critiquing a subject it must mean that you do not like it."

Political leaders like Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela are usually portrayed as God-like. They can do no wrong in the eyes of their followers. And in many cases, they are not seen with a sense of wholeness—their spirituality is not viewed with the same vigour and intensity as their political ideology when in fact for

them (the leaders) it is integrated and equal. In *Yearning*, hooks is seen as a disciple of Malcolm X:

"...in the early seventies, the book I read which revolutionized my thinking about race and politics was *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. His awakening to critical consciousness, lived through by many readers, stimulated our awakening."

Yet hooks' chapter, "Sitting at the Feet of the messenger: Remembering Malcolm X" depicting his complex spiritual quest is utterly unemotional. She wastes no time on political clichés in her analysis. Instead she respectfully allows his dignity, and his complete political/spiritual commitment to become apparent. She affirms his clear choice to place spirituality in its highest forum—the world—the universe:

"Had he chosen to abandon his spiritual journey, to retreat into a reclusive life, Malcolm might be alive today. Yet he chose the path that he knew would ultimately test him, require of him a spiritual submission that would necessitate offering his life. He gave that life to us freely, to the people, that we would know in our heart the meaning of spiritual and political commitment, the union of love that he felt between religious aspiration and progressive political struggle, the passionate longing for black liberation."

The chapter in which she interviews herself, "An interview with Bell Hooks by Gloria Watkins", is compelling and insightful. It is here that she gives herself space and time to nurture herself—listening to and affirming her many voices. In this chapter we see her questioning the value of pain and the struggle with pain:

"I say remember pain because I believe true resistance begins with people confronting pain, whether it's theirs or somebody else's and wanting to do something to change it. And it's this pain that so much makes its mark in daily life. Pain as a catalyst for change, for working to change."

Women are working in alternative spaces—and different organizational structures (for example, collectives)—to create non-patriarchal structures. Some of us have experienced a lot of pain. For some women this pain is so sharp that they have become silenced and have tucked themselves away from us and the feminist movement. hooks shares her concerns:

"I'm particularly concerned with what we do to heal ourselves to recover a sense of wholeness...Lately I say often that mental health is the important field right now, a central revolutionary frontier for black folks, 'cause you can't effectively resist domination when you are messed up."

Yearning supplements black nationalist ideology and illuminates feminist movements with an understanding of human behaviour. hooks reinforces the necessity of developing critical consciousness as an integral tool to use in the war against the diseases of racism, sexism, and cultural imperialism.

Ayanna Black

Ayanna Black is a Toronto writer. Her latest book, *Linked Alive* (with Dôre Michelut in collaboration with 4 other poets) is a collection of five renga (a Japanese linked poetry). The French edition, "Liens" is published by Editions Trois.

HALF BREED

2 sets of arms
 reach across
 2 different cultures
 to give birth to
 2 different entities
 in one
 half breed = half devil
 metis mestiza hupa
 combo
 2 in one equals
 discrimination amongst
 2 different cultures
 I fight I struggle to keep
 identities
 I fight I struggle to keep
 2 feet planted in one self

Nicole Tanguay

Labour of Love: Feminist Perspectives on Motherhood

An Exhibition at the Woman's Common

WARC sponsored a public discussion on the theme of motherhood and feminism on Sunday, August 19, in Toronto at the Women's Common. This was in conjunction with the exhibition, *Labour of Love: Feminist Perspectives on Motherhood*. Performance artist, Pam Patterson and video artist, b.h. Yael led the discussion by giving a brief account of their work and commenting on what motherhood has meant to them.

With "Entrapment" (1983), Pam began her exploration of women, their bodies and what happens when the personal space of women is either intruded on, or pushes up against the public domain. She found that the confrontation between the private face and the public face evokes discomfort, humour and new political insight. In "Suburban Mirage" (1984), Pam ironed clothes on the pavement below a highrise office block in downtown Toronto while perplexed businessmen peered out the windows.

In her latest performance piece, "Rocking the Boat" performed at the opening of *Labour of Love*, Friday, August 17, she addresses the issue of women's isolated pain as new mothers. Under a single hanging lightbulb reminiscent of a nun's quarter, or prisoner's cell, she describes her daily routine with daughter Erin, all the while folding diapers.

b.h. Yael wrote and directed the videos "Why She Got Pregnant", "Watch Your Language", and "My Mother is a Dangerous Person". In the latter, we meet the internalized voice of her own mother, a voice that she must confront in her real-life role as mother of two children. By dramatizing the two voices, she documents the beleaguered time we live in, a time of confused roles. Feminism has cut through socially prescribed women's behaviour and forced an opening through which women and men are free to choose an authentic life. Yael sees her role as video artist as one that creates new images to reflect and influence women's choices.

The discussion flowed from the presentations. Both Pam and Yael, and participants in the discussion shed light on the mother/not mother dilemma facing women. Mother is but a partial description of women's lives.

The dilemma has a keen and painful edge that bears a number of guilty contradictions: I want to stay home with my child but if I do, I will suffer the indignity of being seen as "only" a mother, appearing to the world as an all-giving, ever-available, loving cow with no native intelligence or abilities beyond mothering and I will lose any career advantage I have earned. Can my ego take it? And equally uncomfortable: I don't want to stay at home because I am

more than a changer of diapers and cleaner of bottles, but if I go out and work, I will have to leave my child with someone else and I find it painful to leave my child.

Flickers of resolution came when Pam said, "I don't feel guilty, no, I'm pissed off about there being so little good daycare." Others pointed out the value of children knowing that their mother is a person with her own life.

Both Pam and Yael talked of the depression that followed childbirth. When women have struggled individually and together to break out of the victim stance, the extreme physical fatigue and social isolation of the child's early years can cause them to regress to victim behaviour. To be forced to enact again behaviours you hoped long dead, can be disheartening to say the least. The audience asked: Why is the private world of mother and child not validated? Why is it often actively devalued? Why must women privately suffer the guilt of falling short of being perfect mothers in a society that polarizes women as madonnas or whores? Why does society deny adequate daycare and parenting relief? Why are professional childcare workers paid little more than minimum wage?

Yael pointed out that women are often complicit in breaking the wills of children during child-rearing. She saw women of her mother's generation being co-opted by patriarchy and become its advocates, socializing their children to be compliant, good citizens, rather than fully-human beings. She placed her hope in developing feminist models of parenting, based on equal partnerships with one's spouse.

Moments of sweetness came during the discussion when older women in the group shared memories of the joys of mothering and grandmothering, the poignancy and vividness of new life. It was a happy note to end on.

Labour of Love—Feminist Perspectives On Motherhood, was a group exhibition featuring work by Reni Packer, Pam Patterson, Terri Whetstone, and b.h. Yael.

Carol Watson

Healing Images: Discussing Ritual Abuse

WARC has initiated a series of talks by women artists exhibiting at various galleries in the Toronto area. The public discussions presented on these pages have been sponsored by WARC. *Healing Images* was co-sponsored by "Bunch Of Feminists".

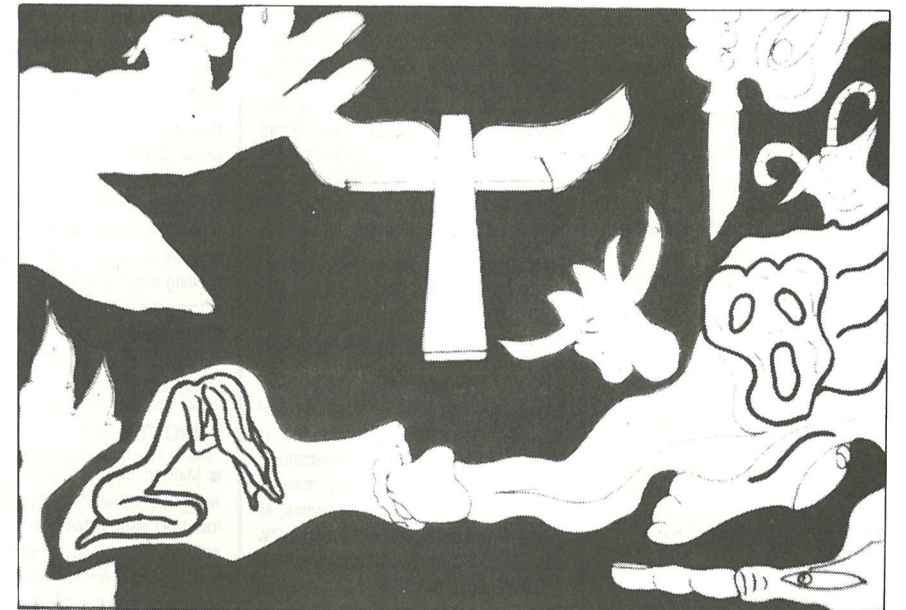
Mary Anne began her discussion of ritual abuse with the statement that "much of this information may be somewhat difficult to listen to and take in."

She challenged typical shock and disbelief reactions to ritual abuse by reminding us how long it took society to believe reports of child sexual abuse. She referred to such official documentation as the 1989 Los Angeles County Commission for Women Task Force Report of Ritual Abuse. Still, she assured the audience that she understood that most people could not begin to fathom what she had endured from infancy to age 14.

Mary Anne described living, during those years, with her stepfather and stepmother who were members of a Satanic Cult. The abuse she suffered included: repeated rape, forced participation in child pornography films that often ended in murder, forced participation in ritual murders of animals, adults and children, being locked in closets with only human flesh, faeces and urine to eat, being buried in order to be reborn as "satan's child", being married to satanic figures in order to simulate being married to the "devil himself", being impregnated for the purposes of having an abortion and having cannibalism inflicted upon her. "Pain is a measure of my own existence," Mary Anne wrote in a poem that she read to the audience.

How did she survive to become such an articulate and composed woman? "I simply imagined it was happening to someone else," she explained. The severity and frequency of abuse required her to create many other selves or "alters". Each alter would separate and protect the others from the knowledge of the abuse that they endured. Alters also preserved emotions such as love, faith and need.

Mary Anne escaped from the Satanic Cult when she was 14, carrying her multiple personality disorder (MPD) into a world she had



Mary Anne, *Mourn For Amanda*, 1989

never been prepared to deal with. People with multiple personalities are known to be extremely intelligent and creative in forming persons to deal with the different facets of their lives. Nevertheless, after ten years of increasing struggle, Mary Anne realized that the coping mechanism of MPD was dysfunctional to her desired life. She turned to therapy to help unravel the tangle of flashbacks, nightmares and alters.

"I was not intact but none of the pieces were lost, only waiting like a puzzle for the right person to help me pick up each piece and look at it until we could put them all back into place again."

During therapy, Mary Anne and her alters began to draw and paint scenes of her childhood. The stark images of satanic symbols and rituals that she showed to the audience graphically depicted the dehumanizing horrors she had endured and survived. "It was in recovering my memory, that the healing process began," she told us.

She went on to describe a crisis she faced in recalling the abortion and the cannibalism inflicted upon her. This memory had plunged her into a paralysing grief and she had become catatonic. Her survival required reclaiming and protecting the memory of her child, Amanda-Lyn. With her voice at times shaking, she read the prayer-like eulogy created to accomplish this. We

then listened to a haunting song "All in All", written by Deb Montgomery, a friend of Mary Anne's.

During the question period that followed, Marsha Wiener, Mary Anne's therapist joined her. Marsha explained that the decision to speak publicly had involved serious consideration of the danger of retaliation by cult members. An abuse survivor in the audience expressed her gratitude to Mary Anne for the courage she displayed in sharing her experience.

One question from the audience dealt with whether any police action was taken against the cult. We learned that the cult had many members who held sophisticated positions in society and were well aware of how to avoid detection of their activities. "The police and military are riddled with satanists," Mary Anne said.

The audience struggled in shock to understand the reality of ritual abuse, multiple personalities and Mary Anne's extraordinary healing process. That *Healing Images* and Mary Anne presented us with the opportunity to do this was empowering to all.

Linda Abrahams

Mary Anne is a pseudonym assumed by the artist for her protection.

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magazine

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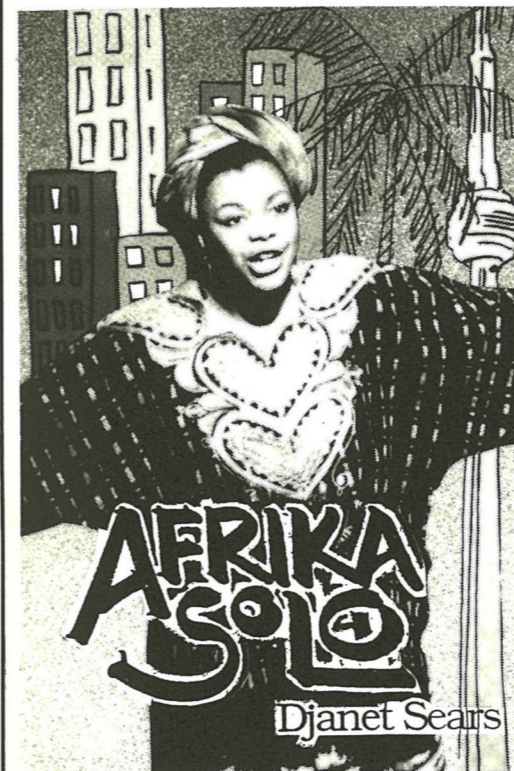
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RECENT RELEASE

A book by Djanet Sears



Afrika Solo is a one-woman show that humorously chronicles a young black woman's voyage of self-discovery. The story of Afrika Solo begins in a world where black people are seen via the media as slaves, servants or man-eating savage tribesmen: where beauty is judged by the fairness on one's skin or hair and the straightness of one's nose.

The heroine (of Caribbean parentage and of North American/British upbringing) has a severe case of TV-itis and only when confronted with the "nigger" or when screamed at by her best friend to "go back where you come from" does she begin to question where that might be and her relationship to the image of black people as portrayed on the screen. In her search of an answer she takes the audience on a journey through Africa.

This moving play resonates with the essential nature of the 'quest' and expresses a contemporary perspective on African people in the diaspora.

Afrika Solo is published by Sister Vision, Black Women and Women of Colour Press. It is distributed by University of Toronto Press and is available at The Women's Bookstore, Third World Books, Dec, and others.

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THURSDAY

dENISE bENSON

