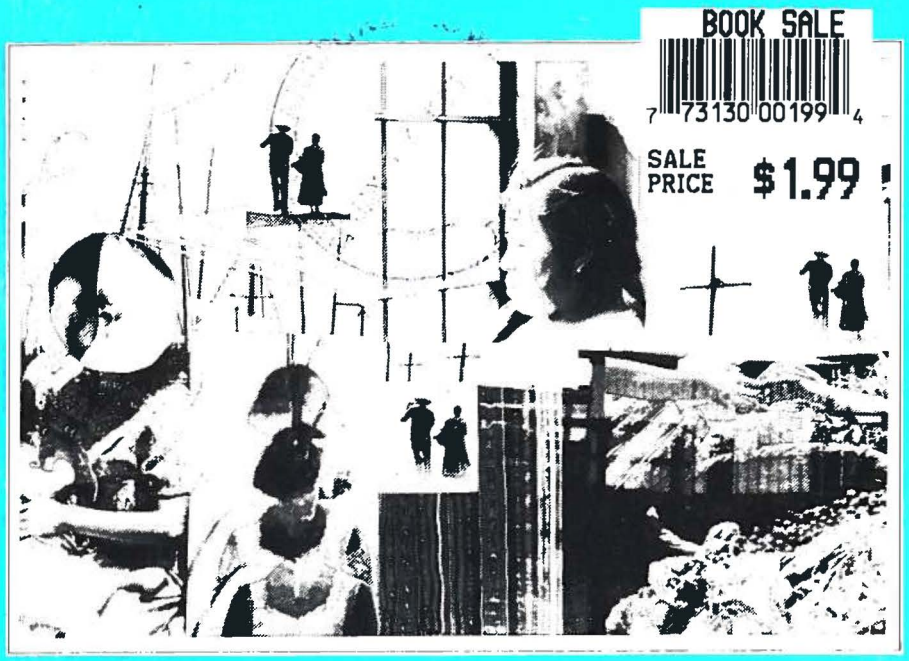
TIGER LILY

JOURNAL BY WOMEN OF COLOUR



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Our Words

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TIGER LILY

Journal by Women of Colour

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In 1945, the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to a poet from Chile, Gabriela Mistral. Monica Riutort's essay, *The Unknown Gabriela*, explores the life of this deeply complex writer and the power of her poems. In a paper which was given in 1884 on *The Social and Political Position of Women Among The Huron-Iroquois Tribes* by Lucien Carr, we are introduced to the rich and powerful leadership that Native women once had and how these women sustained their clans. In an essay by Regina Cortina, *Women in Dissident Movements*, we learn about the other side of the coin, where Mexican women teachers fight both unions and government officials for better working conditions and how they have adopted the radical postures of a guerrilla movement to survive both physical and mental abuses. Marjorie Agosin's essay on *A Challenge to Silence—Latin American Women Write*, the courage it takes to write about the inequities in societies and the heavy price that women writers pay for such an act. *The Function of the Dance*, by Leah Creque-Harris sums up precisely the importance of nurturing one's culture.

Our fiction writers use humour to examine discrimination and alienation and how it affects us. *Yer Belly Full* by Theresa Lewis and *A Journal Entry* by Marguerite Alfred speak to the humanity within all of us. The poetry of Ana Julia Monteiro de Macedo Sanca who is from Cape Verde write of her rich heritage and culture.

We at *Tiger Lily Journal* hope you—our readers—will arm yourself with knowledge (it's a lasting treasure), and help to educate those in your family and community who have not had the opportunities you have had. Always embrace life with joy and gratitude and remember to extend a helping hand to those in need.

We wish to thank our contributors, subscribers, family and friends for their continued support.

If life is love, blessed be it!
I want more life to love! Today I feel
a thousand years of ideas are worth nothing
next to one azure minute of feeling.

Explosion.....Delmira Agustini

Ann Wallace

The Unknown Gabriela

by Monica Riutort

El poeta es a su tierra lo que el alma es el cuerpo

The poet is to her land what the soul is to the body

Gabriela Mistral

When Gabriela Mistral died in 1957, I was eight years old and I had finished grade 4. I knew her already, as did most children in Chile, through her "rondas" and children's poetry. I remember my mother taking my sister and I to see her body laid out at the Salon of Honour in the University of Chile. She had recently died of cancer in Hempstead Hospital in Long Island, New York. We waited for hours with thousands of other Chileans, to be able to see her, my mother raised my little sister and slowly we walked past her casket.

Her face was white and she seemed asleep, part of her white hair covered her forehead. I have never forgotten that day. I have much love and admiration for Gabriela Mistral, the only Hispano-American woman to ever win the Nobel prize, for literature.

Gabriela Mistral and I were born in Chile, a long and narrow country in the South part of Latin America, a country that prided itself on its

democratic system and a well-developed educational structure. Chile also gave to the world another Nobel prize winner Pablo Neruda. But our country, Chile, has been torn by class struggle and gender inequalities that have fluctuated in intensity over the years. Gabriela lived the contradictions of the country within Chile and in her many travels all over the world.

I have based this article on an autobiography of Gabriela Mistral written by Matilde Ladron de Guevara, a Chilean-woman writer, a contemporary of Mistral's and a person that knew Gabriela very well. As well as contributing to the knowledge already available on Mistral's life she unveiled a previously undisclosed event in Gabriela's life. It is in this book, that for the first time, the fact that Gabriela was raped at seven years of age by a close family friend, is made public.

I believe that this event, as well as many other painful ones in her life, have significantly marked her work. She was a woman with an extraordinary sensitivity whose work must have been influenced by this intense experience. However, the book written by Ladron de Guevara mentions the rape and never comes back to it with further analysis about the effects on Gabriela's life and writing.

Thirty years after her death Gabriela Mistral has become unknown to the world. Her life is a constant reminder to women of how difficult and painful the struggle is for women writers.

Let me take you now through her life. Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, known as Gabriela Mistral, was born on April 7, 1889, in Vicuña, in the small Elqui Valley of Northern Chile. Her father, Jeronimo Godoy Villanueva, married the widow Petronila Alcayaga de Molina, who had a fifteen year-old daughter, Emelina, by her first marriage. Jeronimo Godoy was a vagabond, poet and former theological student. Her mother and her older sister were teachers and when she was three years old, her father deserted their family and never returned.

Her mother and sister gave her primary instruction and supported the household with what they earned. Her grandmother, from her father's side, used to read passages from the bible to Lucila on Sundays. Later on, her sister Emelina, sent her to study at La Serena, a larger city in the northern part of Chile. One of her teachers accused her of stealing and she was expelled from the school. Her classmates, waiting outside, threw stones at her as she passed. This experience left a lingering, painful imprint on her memory and sensitivity.

Even before she reached puberty Gabriela had suffered a great deal. First, there was her father's desertion which left her mother with little financial support. They were also exposed to the criticism and gossip of

people living in a small town. The desertion of her father had multiple effects on Lucila's life, because as we will see later on, she was constantly deserted by the men she loved.

Lucila was brought up by women, and women teachers in a small village that in those years were known by their austerity, religious beliefs and strict moral principles which were passed on to their students. All these characteristics were passed on to Lucila through her mother, sister and grandmother. Sexuality was never discussed by women in those days. So Lucila did not have anybody to talk to when she was raped and she hid it for many years as a secret and a shame. This aspect of her life is the one that has been most overlooked by her biographies and critics.

Matilde Ladron de Guevara tells about Gabriela's confession to her which follows: "We were both walking at the seashore, in Rapallo, Italy, when the dialogue occurred:

> *Gabriela: There are so many things to tell Matilde, before I die.*
> *Matilde: You, my dear, are in too good health to be talking about dying.*
> *Gabriela: But, there are secrets that consume, secrets that can kill you. Because I was strong, I did not die then, but I have to tell this secret to someone, of this fatality. Sister, I have been criticized many times by Raul Silva Castro (Chilean literary critic), because my poetry evokes blood and guts and that I am not afraid to expose my passions and bare feelings. But this gentleman should know my life to be able to censor me... There is a reason, a very powerful reason... He was a young man that used to visit the house, it seems, he was considered part of the family, and because I was a well-developed child, one day he found me alone in the home, and a bestial instinct erupted in him... It was horrible, I still see him now... Did I know what that was? Then, Matilde, everything seems finished for me, nothing has meaning any more. I was seven years old."*

There are two specific examples of her writing that reflect some of this experience. One of them is *Letters of Love* written to Manuel Magallanes Moure, where in one of the letters she said:

"Truth is, Manuel, that I have from the physical union, brutal images in my mind that make me hate it...but I believe you capable of erasing from my spirit, this brutal concept, because you have, Manuel, a marvellous power to exalt beauty where there is little and to create beauty where there is none..."

The second is from *Felling*,

Parecio Lirio	*It seemed a Lily*
o pez-espada	*or sword-fish to me*
subio los aires	*it scaled the airs*
hondeada,	*pulling free*
de ciclo abierto	*Devoured by open sky*
devorada,	*hungrily*
y en un momento	*and in a moment*
fui nonada.	*a mere speck to see*
Quede temblando	*I stood trembling*
en la quebrada	*In the ravine*
Albucia mia!	*Oh, joy of Mine!*
arrebatada!	*Torn from me!*

This poem which has been considered the lyrical peak of her work, has been interpreted as an echo of Saint John of the Cross. If we take into account her experience with rape this poem can also read as her loss of virginity which was suddenly torn from her.

Many other painful events marked her life; the death of her first fiancé, Romelio Ureta, who committed suicide. In 1914, she met a young poet Manuel Magallanes Moure. For him she felt a passion much deeper than her first love. A short while later, however, he married a wealthy young lady of the Capital's high social circles. The most moving and impassioned poems of *Desolation (Desolacion)* express with ardent eloquence her heartbreaking disillusion. Gabriela Mistral never married or had children, she adopted her nephew, Juan Mighel Godoy, who she called Yu, and raised him as a son. Juan Manuel committed suicide. She always believed that he was killed by somebody and he appeared to her frequently after his death. From the date of that final desertion her physical health began to fail.

As a single woman without children Gabriela dedicated her life to her work. While living in La Serena, Gabriela began to write for the local newspaper. She published poems and prose articles in which she freely expounded her socialist philosophy. She was rejected at the teacher's school because her ideas might harm the other students. She continued her studies under the supervision of her sister and by 1904, at fifteen years old, she started to work as a teacher-assistant. In 1910 she finally was able to hold a position in high school. As a high school teacher she was constantly transferred from one city to the next all across the country. Gabriela was never able to obtain her teacher's diploma. This brought her much criticism during all her life.

Her constant travelling across the country allowed her to get to know first-hand the suffering and the struggle of poor people. Opportunities to choose places to reside were not available to her. As a teacher, a profession predominantly held by women, she earned a meagre salary and a refusal on her part to transfer would have jeopardized her job.

By 1912 she was well settled in Santiago. She had then the encouragement of her friends like Fidela Perez and Pedro Aguirre Cerda, who was later to become president of Chile. The culmination of her teaching career was in June 1922, when she was officially invited by Mexico to work on its educational reform. She accepted the post in Mexico also because she wanted to be away from Chile to recover from her broken love for Manuel Magallanes. She retired as a teacher in 1925 after twenty-five years of service. Chile awarded her the title of "Teacher of the Nation".

In Gabriela's work we find a vocabulary that has an extraordinary force and intensity, through the constant use of certain words suggestive of bodily suffering and pain; of burning, of piercing, of cutting, of bleeding. Yet, in spite of all this verbal violence there are few poets more tender than her. This softness and tenderness is expressed through her great love for children and motherhood. One of the most beautiful poems about poor children is *"Little Feet"*.

LITTLE FEET

Little feet of children
blue with cold,
how can they see
you and not cover
you
dear God!

PIECECITOS

Piececitos de niño,
azulosòs de frío,
! cómo os ven y no
os cubren,
Dios mío!

Little wounded feet
cut by every stone
hurt by snow
and more.

Man, blind, does not
know
that where you pass,
you leave a flower
of living light.

! Piececitos heridos
por los guijarros
todos,
ultrajados de nieves
y lodos!

El hombre ciego
ignora
que por donde
pasáis,
una flor de luz viva
dejáis;

During all these years as a teacher she was constantly writing. In 1914 at the Floral Games of Santiago she won the gold medal for poetry. During these years she adopted her pseudonym which revealed something of her conception of a world and of humanity: "Gabriela" for the Archangel Gabriel, divine messenger of good news; "Mistral" for the strong hot wind of Provence. Both components contained spiritual symbols.

In 1922, the Hispanic Institute of New York published the first edition of *Desolation (Desolacion)*. After *Desolation* there were long intervals between the publication of her books. The other books published were: *Tenderness (Ternura)*, 1924; *Felling (Tala)*, 1938. Her final publication of *Wine Press (Lagar)* was published in 1954.

She was given a Chilean consular post in 1922. She was appointed Consul in Naples. She was refused the Exaquatur by Mussolini because of some anti-fascist articles she had written. As a consul she could not reside in Chile and she was given a different post. Again because of her poverty and need to earn her living she had no other option but to live outside her country which she loved and missed greatly.

She won the Nobel prize for literature which was presented to her in Sweden, on November 15, 1945. She was the first Nobel prize winner after World War II. She was also both the first woman and the first Hispanic-American writer to receive this high universal recognition. It is interesting to note that after the war years with death and destruction the Nobel prize was given to a woman whose entire life talked about justice, peace and the love of children. In 1951, while in Rapallo, Italy, she received the National Award for Chilean literature. She was preparing a *"Song to Chile" (Canto a Chile)* when she died. This book remains partially unpublished.

Gabriela's life was marked by the patriarchal world in which she lived. Abandoned by her father, raped at early age, with little or no option to choose a career, a place to live and without financial support to do her writing, she was still able to create the most powerful, honest and passionate poetry of Hispanic-America.

Gabriela lived in a time of extraordinary changes throughout the world. She saw and lived the awakening of the feminist movement in Chile. During 1913, while she was a teacher, Chilean women of different social status started fighting for the right to vote.

In Santiago There were several "reading Groups" of professional women at the time she was teaching in this city.

The history of the women's movement in Chile was lost for many years. Only recently feminist organizations in the country have come to request it.

There is no mention of Gabriela's involvement in the women's right to vote organization. Gabriela was a woman who fought for the rights of all individuals so I can infer that she must have committed herself to the cause of women.

Matilde Ladron de Guevara and other of her biographers mention the great importance that she gave to women's work. She wrote about peasant women in Chile, the women teachers, and women labourers. Today most of her work is still unknown. In Canada we are able to find only a few copies of some of her writing.

It is impossible to write about Gabriela Mistral without mentioning Doris Dana. Doris lived with Gabriela until her death and they loved each other. Gabriela bequeathed all her work to her. Doris Dana donated it to the United States Library of Congress where it remains.

Gabriela lost everything she loved. As many other women artists, recognition to her work came only after many rejections and criticisms. Loneliness accompanied her for most of her life. Others probably would have become paralysed by the pain; Gabriela did not. She offered to the world her art. The most passionate, honest, realistic, direct and vigorous of the Hispanic-American language.

She deserves to be rescued from the silence and obscurity that covers her work today. Only then can we learn from this extraordinary poet.

Monica Riutort is from Chile and lives in Toronto. She is currently working on the biography of Gabriela Mistral.

On The Social and Political Position of Women Among The Huron–Iroquois Tribes

by Lucien Carr
(Published in 1884)
An Excerpt

(16th and 17th Annual Report of the Trustees of the Peabody Museum, presented in 1884)

That the Indian woman was not the overworked drudge she is usually represented to have been, has been shown in the course of an investigation I have, elsewhere, had occasion to make into the agricultural habits of our tribes:[10] and it is, therefore, unnecessary, in this connection, to do more than refer to that paper and to give a qualified approval to the statement of Mary Jemison, who passed her life among the Iroquois and who tells us that the task of an Indian woman was not harder than that of her white sister, while her cares "were not half as numerous nor as great."[11] Certainly, if her duties be compared with those that generally fell to the share of the wives and daughters of our early pioneers, her lot cannot, in any sense, be regarded as exceptionally hard. Indeed, on *a priori* grounds, it is scarcely possible that it could have been so, since she possessed and used the right of divorce[12] equally with her husband; and it would be too great a tax upon our credulity to ask us to believe that

she would have submitted to any very unequal distribution of the labour necessary to the support of the family, when she held the remedy for such an injustice in her own hands. But it is not of this phase of Indian life that I propose to speak, though it has an evident bearing upon my subject and has been very generally overlooked. Neither do I intend to refer, except incidentally, to those cases in which individual women have risen to rank and influence in their respective tribes by the possession of superior abilities, greater riches,[13] or by the ostentatious display of those peculiar powers that have made the name of Messalina forever infamous. Such instances are not uncommon, and they are not confined to any particular family of tribes; but except insofar as they show that, among our American Indians, there was no insuperable barrier to the acquisition of the highest tribal authority by a woman, they do not come within the pale of this investigation. For reasons that have been given, this field has been necessarily limited, and, for the present, my observations, except when the contrary is clearly indicated, will be confined to the tribes that belonged to the Huron-Iroquois family,[14] and to those customs which, springing from institutions that were generally prevalent east of the Mississippi, may be safely predicated of all the tribes, within that area, which can be shown to have reached the same stage of development, and in which the conditions necessary for the growth of these customs are known to have existed. As an instance of this method of procedure, let us recur to our illustration of a people of whom we know nothing save that they were divided into gentes, and add to it the additional facts that descent among them was in the female line, and that their highest expression of tribal authority was to be found in a council of chiefs and elders. In the sequence of institutions may be seen the two extremes of a singular phase of social and political organization; and with this fact clearly understood, it is believed to be perfectly legitimate to infer that in any tribe of which the two can be predicated, the intermediate states, connected as they must have been like the rounds of a ladder, did not differ from those that are known to have existed among the Iroquois, among whom the ideas peculiar to this stage of development had crystallized into a definite form. Regarded, then from this point of view, a study of the customs of this family of tribes possesses an added interest, since it not only offers a field for investigating a phase of civilization of which it is, perhaps, the best exemplar, but it supplies, at the same time, the necessary material for filling in the picture of the social and political institutions of tribes of whose organization we have nothing but the outline sketch.

Before, however, entering upon this branch of my subject, it may be well to premise that in the course of this investigation the two primary

facts of the division of our American tribes into gentes, with descent in the female line will be taken for granted. Morgan[15] has gone into these subjects very thoroughly, and though there may be instances, as among the Ojibwas, in which the rule of descent had been transferred to the male line, yet it is very evident from what Schoolcraft[16] has told us of customs that existed in this tribe, even in his day, that this change had taken place in the not very distant past. be this as it may, there can be no doubt that in the Huron-Iroquois family of tribes, as well as among those that lived south of the Ohio, the older form of descent prevailed; and even among the Algonquins of the north it was the exception to find a people among whom it had been changed. Assuming then these two fundamental facts, we are prepared to examine the accounts that have come down to us of the organization of the Iroquois and incidentally of the other American tribes, in order to find out exactly what the old chroniclers tell us of the social and political position held by the women.

Beginning with the domestic side of the question, as being the first in time as well as in importance, it will be found that everywhere east of the Mississippi and south of the great lakes, our American Indians, at the date of the discovery, lived in what for the want of a better name, may be termed barrack-houses.[17] Among the Iroquois, these houses were long, narrow cabins of bark, with a passage way through the centre; and along this, on each side, were arranged a series of compartments, each one of which was allotted to a family. These houses varied in size, being from twenty to thirty feet wide, and of a length proportionate to the number of families that were to be accommodated. Each household was made up on the principle of kin, i.e., the married women being usually sisters, own or collateral, were members of one and the same gens, to which of course, their children also belonged. The husbands, however, as also the wives of the sons, when the latter were brought to the cabin (which seems to have been but seldom), would necessarily be of different gentes, since marriage within the gens, even in cases of adoption, was never allowed. Over every such household a matron presided, whose duty it was to supervise its domestic economy. After the single daily meal had been cooked at the different fires within the house, it was her province to divide the food, from the kettle, to the several families according to their respective needs. What remained was placed in the custody of another person until she again required it. Within the house, all the stores seem to have been in common, and "whatever was gained by any member on hunting or fishing expeditions, or was raised by cultivation" was added to the general stock. This is, substantially, Morgan's[18] account of the interior arrangements of an Iroquois "long house," and from the system of descent and consanguinity that prevailed among them,

it is obvious that a majority of the inmates of such a household must have belonged to one and the same gens—that of the mothers. This preponderance would be increased and perpetuated by the fact that a young woman upon her marriage, did not leave her home,[19] but brought her husband into it; and so long as he remained in the cabin, and even after the young couple had gone to live with his relations or had a home of their own, he was obliged to give either the whole or a part of the game that he killed and the fish that he caught, to his mother-in-law.[20] If he proved lazy and failed to do his share of the providing, "woe be to him. No matter how many children, or whatever goods he might have in the house, he might at any time be ordered to pick up his blanket and budge; and after such orders it would not be healthful for him to disobey; the house would be too hot for him; and unless saved by the intercession of some aunt or grandmother, he must retreat to his own clan, or as was often done go and start a new matrimonial alliance in some other.... The female portion ruled the house, and were doubtless clannish enough about it."[21]

When a young couple felt brave enough to leave the maternal roof and "set up for themselves, the husband had to make a mattress for his wife and build her a cabin or repair the one in which they were to live.[22] It was also a point of honor with him to see that his wife and children were well fed and well clothed.[23] Of this cabin the wife was the absolute mistress;[24] and not only was this true of the cabin and all that it contained, but she seems also to have owned the fields and the harvests. In fact, we are told that the whole of the land occupied by the tribe belonged to her.[25] This statement is made without the least qualification by the author from whom I quote, and as an evidence of its truth we find that it was distinctly asserted at a council held in 1791. At that council, the women told Col. Proctor, the American Commissioner, "...you ought to hear and listen to what we, women, shall speak, as well as the sachems; *for we are the owners of this land*—and it is ours. It is we that plant it for our and their use. Hear us, therefore, for we speak of things that concern us and our children, and you must not think hard of us while our men shall say more to you; for we have told them." This statement, as to the ownership of the land, was not denied, and on the re-opening of the council, Red Jacket, through whose instrumentality it had, at a previous session, been most unceremoniously closed, was made spokesman for the women, and in that capacity was obliged to yield to demands which he had previously bitterly opposed. This he did in the following emphatic language: "Now, listen, Brother: you know what we have been doing so long, and what trouble we have been at; and you know that it has been the request of our head warrior (Cornplanter) that

we are left to answer for our women, who are to conclude what ought to be done by both sachems and warriors. So hear what is their conclusion." "Brother: the business you have come on is very troublesome, and we have been a long time considering on it, ever since you came here, and now the elders of our women considering the greatness of your business, have said that our sachems and warriors must help you over your difficulties for the good of them and their children."[26] From the above extracts it will be seen, that the claim of the women was made under the most solemn circumstances, and in the most positive manner—there is no possibility of mistaking it—and as it was not disputed, we are justified in inferring that it was recognized as valid by those who took part in the council. It is true that there was no mention, at this time, of a sale of land, and that hence, under the circumstances, the assertion of this right of ownership by the women, may seem like a work of supererogation, or a mere rhetorical flourish unworthy of serious consideration. Such, however, can hardly have been the case, for some years later, at a council held in 1797, this very question did come up, and the women, having received a number of presents from Mr. Morris," are said to have fallen back on their reserved rights," and in conjunction with the warriors, to have obliged the chiefs to reopen a council that had been declared closed, and to make a sale of lands upon terms which had been previously rejected. Upon this occasion, Cornplanter seems to have been selected as their spokesman, for in reopening the deliberations, he said, among other things, "that the women and warriors had seen with regret the misconduct of their sachems;" and Farmer's Brother, himself a chief, was constrained to admit that the course of the women and warriors, in thus nullifying the proceedings of a council, "was in perfect accordance with their customs."[27] These two instances—in one of which the women assert, without contradiction, that they owned the land, and in the other they take a negotiation out of the hands of a council, and in conjunction with the warriors, oblige the chiefs against their wishes, actually to sell a part of that land—if they do not confirm the statement of the old chronicler in every detail, at least justify us in concluding that, either wholly or in part, the land belonged to the women. Upon this point Morgan is very clear; and though it is evident from what he says that the claim of the women to exclusive ownership cannot be sustained, yet it is equally evident that their proprietary rights in the land were not less extensive nor less well defined than were those of the men. According to him the title was vested in all the people of the tribe,[28] including of course females as well as males; and of this there cannot be much doubt in view of the many deeds, receipts, and other official

documents that have come down to us, bearing the signatures, conjointly, of the principal women, the chiefs and the leading warriors.[29]

As the women appear thus far to have owned everything in the shape of private property except the clothes worn by the men, and their weapons, it will not surprise us to learn that "the children belonged entirely to the mother and acknowledged no authority but hers."[30] Charlevoix does, it is true, in a spirit of consolation, volunteer the information that the man "if not looked upon as the father was at least respected as the master of the cabin" but unfortunately he has to admit, at the same time, that he did not know how far this custom prevailed; and that his doubts in this respect were well founded, is evident from what we know of the practice of neighbouring tribes[31] as well as of the Iroquois themselves. Notwithstanding the disadvantage, to call it by no stronger name, under which the man laboured, it appears that sometimes, in cases of divorce after children had been born to the parties, the fathers did lay claim to the sons. On general principles this would seem to have been a very fair division of the children and with our ideas of right and wrong, it is difficult to understand upon what grounds this act of justice was refused; and yet we are told that the women never allowed the claim and did not hesitate to defeat it whenever made. The children, too, having grown up under the wing of the mother generally took her side in the quarrel and resented the affront which their father, by his desertion had put upon them not less than upon her.[32]

In the matter of marriage, their customs were very simple. Except that it could not take place between members of the same gens, there does not seem to have been any restrictions upon it. The matrons of the cabins took the affair in hand, and all the arrangements were made upon the basis of interest.[33] The young people did not have much to say in the matter; in fact so little were their tastes consulted,[34] that individuals were sometimes united in this relation without their knowledge or consent, and perhaps without even a previous acquaintance.[35] It was not, however, customary for the relations of a young woman to make the first advances, "unless she remained too long in the market when her family would act underhand in order to get her disposed of, but in this a great deal of caution was used."[36] This backwardness, among a people as natural in their manners as were the Indians, is a little strange, since it must have been an object with them to marry off their girls as early as possible, in order to increase the strength and prosperity of the gens by the addition of their husbands to its working force of hunters.[37] A partial explanation, however, of this seeming inconsistency can be found in the fact that the matrons or women who presided over the different households were great match-makers, and they never failed to

advise a young man to marry, even though they knew, that from the time that he did so, his services in the chase, etc., would no longer belong to them, but would appertain to the gens of his wife.[38] In spite, however, of the manifest advantage that would accrue to their families, the young women "do not seem to have been in any hurry to get themselves married," though this reluctance may have arisen from the fact that "in some places they were at full liberty to make trial of that state beforehand, and the ceremony of marriage made no change in their condition except to render it harder."[39] As a rule, however, it was not an affair in which they were allowed much choice, as the old women usually arranged the matter to suit themselves. Thus we are told that when a "matron" had a son or other male relative whom she wished to see married she looked about for a young woman "of good repute, laborious and possessed of a good temper;[40] and when she thought she had found such a person, she proposed the matter to the girl's friends, and after due deliberation and the exchange of a few presents the affair was settled.

FOOTNOTES

10 Mounds of the Mississippi Valley, historically considered" in Vol. II, of the Memoirs of the Kentucky Geological Survey.

11 Life of Mary Jemison, p. 70: New York, 1856.

12 "Amongst the Iroquois and Hurons they may part by mutual consent," Charlevoix, Letters, Vol. II, p. 50: London, 1761. "The right of voluntary separation was allowed to all:" Morgan, League of the Iroquois, p. 324. Compare Lafitau, Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains, Vol. I, pp. 581, *et seq.*: Paris, 1724. Hawkins' Sketch of the Creek Country, p. 73. Adair, p. 139. Bartram, p. 515.

13 The curious in such matters may refer to Drake's Indians of North America (chap. IV: fifteenth edition) for an account of the women who were conspicuous in King Philip's war. See also St. Cosme, in Seca's Early Voyages (p. 63: Albany, 1861), for an account of a woman among the Illinois, who was very influential on account of her talent and liberality, and because "having many sons and sons-in-law, all hunters, she often gives banquets," etc. Carver (Travels, pp. 41, 245 and 259: London, 1781) speaks of women who were chiefs among the Saukies, Dakotas and Winnebagoes. In the latter instance, however, descent being in the female line, she is said to have inherited the position. Besides these, we have the "Caciquess of Cofachiqui" mentioned repeatedly by the chroniclers of De Soto's expedition; the queen of Tuckabatchee (Creed) who proposed marriage to Hawkins, the Squaw sachems of new England, who were found so useful whenever the whites wanted to buy land, etc., etc.

14 Speaking of these tribes, Lafitau, Vol. I, p. 463, says: "On voit dans chacun la même distribution des familles, les mê Loix de police, le même ordre; en sorte que qui en voit un les voit tous." In the first volume of the Publications of the Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, 1881, Major Powell gives an account of the social and political organization of the Wyandots, a Huron tribe to which the reader is referred.

15 Ancient Society, Chap. VI: New York, 1877.

16 Indian in his Wigwam: New York, 1848.

17 Lafitau, Vol. II< p. q. Van der Donck, New Netherlands, in Vol. I, Coll. N.Y. Hist. Soc. p. 197. Joutel, Journal in Part I, Hist. Coll. of Louisiana, p. 148. La Vega, Conquête de la Floride. Part I, p. 103, and Part II, p. 19: Paris, 1709. Lawson, Carolina, p. 177: London, 1718.

18 Morgan, House and House-life of the American Aborigines, being Vol. IV of the Contributions to North American Ethnology, p. 64: Washington, 1881.

19 "Chez nos Sauvages les femmes sont maitresses, et ne sortent point de chez elles:" Lafitau, I, p. 568. Perrot, p. 30: Paris, 1864.

20 Charlevoix, Letters II, p. 54: London, 1761. Lafitau, I, p. 579, tells us that "toute sa chasse appartient de droit à la cabane de son epouse, la première année de son Mariage. Les années suivantes il est obligé de partager avec ell." See also Morgan, in House-life of the American Aborigines, p. 64. Perrot (Moeurs des Sauvages de l'Amerique, p. 25: Paris, 1864) says the same custom existed among the Algonquin tribes of the north and south. According to him, the young couple for the first two years after their marriage lived with the mother of the wife, and during that time it was the husband's duty to carry everything that he gained, either by hunting or fishing, home to her. Of this she gave him a part for his own mother. At the end of two years, he went with his wife to live with his mother "et quand il revient de la chasse ou de la pêche, sa belle-mère luy donne une partie de ce qu'il a porté pour sa mère. S'il rvient de traitte pareillement, c'est toujours aux voluntés de sa belle-mère qu'il doit avoir egard." Among the Sacs, Foxes, and Kickapoos, the young husband served his wife's parents "faithfully according to custom, which is till she has a child; after which he can take her to his own relations, or live with those of his wife. During the servitude of a young Indian, neither he nor his wife has anything at their disposal: he is to hunt, and that in the most industrious manner; his wife is continually at work, dressing skins, making mats, planting corn, etc.... Among the Chippewas, Ottawas and Potawatamies, a wife is sometimes purchased by the parents of the young man, when she becomes at once his own property; but the most common mode of procuring a wife in all these nations is by servitude." Morse Report, Appendix, p. 134. Among the Indians on the Gulf coast we are told that "From the time a daughter marries, all that he who takes her to wife kills in hunting or catches in fishing, the woman brings to the house of her father, without daring to eat or take any part of it and thence victuals are taken to the husband." Cabeca de Vaca, p. 76, translated by Buckingham Smith: New York, 1871.

21 Rev. Ashur Wright, quoted in Morgan, House and House-life of the American Aborigines, p. 64.

22 Charlevoix, Letters, Vol. II, p. 54.

23 Lafitau, Vol. I. p. 579: Paris, 1724.

24 See above, Note 19, and also Charlevoix, Letters, Vol. II, p. 54."The wigwam or lodge, and all articles of the household belong to the woman—the head of the household—and at her death are inherited by her eldest daughter, or nearest of female kin." Powell, Short study of Tribal Society among the Wyandots, *l. c.*, p. 65: Washington, 1881.

25 "C'est en elles que réside toute l'autorité réelle: le païs, les champs et toute leur récolte leur appartiennent:" Lafitau, I, p. 72. "The women councillors partition the gentile land among the householders and the household tracts are distinctly marked by them." Powell, *l. c.*, p. 65.

26 Stone, Life of Red Jacket, pp. 155 *et seq.* Albany, 1866.

27 Life and Times of Red Jacket, pp. 243, *et seq.*

28 Morgan, League of the Iroquois, p. 326: Rochester, 1851.

29 W. L. Stone. Life of Brant, Vol. I, pp. 62 and 499. and Vol. II, p. 575: Albany, 1865.

30 Charlevoix, Letters, Vol. II, p. 53.

31 Thus among the Ojibwas, among whom descent had been transferred to the male line, we are told that "The lodge itself with all its arrangements is the precinct of the rule and government of the wife. She assigns to each member his or her ordinary place to sleep and put their effects. These places are permanent and only changed at her will:... Husband has no voice in the matter:... In the lodge the man may be looked upon as the guest of his wife:" Schoolcraft, Indian in his Wigwam, pp. 73 and 77: New York, 1848. "Among the Wyandots the head of the family is a woman:" Powell, *l.c.* p. 59.

32 Lafitau, Vol. I, p. 569, Paris, 1724. "The children were of the tribe of their mother. No right in the father to the custody of their persons, or to their nurture was recognized. As after separation he gave himself no further trouble concerning them,...they became estranged as well as separated:" League of the Iroquois, p. 325. "Children irrespective of sex, belong to the gens of the mother:" Powell, Study of Wyandots, p. 63. For the prevalence of the same custom among other tribes see Lawson, Carolina, p. 185; Timberlake, memoir concerning the Cherokees, p. 66; Bartram's Travels through florida, p. 515; Archæologia Americana, p. 285.

33 Lafitau, Vol. I, p. 561.

34 Lafitau, I, pp. 564, 565, League of the Iroquois, pp. 321. *et seq.*

35 League of the Iroquois, p. 323.

36 Charlevoix, Letters II, p. 51.

37 Lafitau, II. p. 163.

38 Lafitau, I, pp. 562, 563.

39 Charlevoix, Letters, Vol. II, p. 51. Compare La Hontan, Voyages, Vol. II, pp 34 *et seq*: London, 1703.

40 Lafitau, Vol. I, p. 564.

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Poetas de Diáspora

by Ana Julia Monteiro de Macedo Sança

Mulher Negra

Mulher negra de olhos laços
Que trazes nas costas o teu menino
Conta-me porque tens
A tua alma vazia

Os teus soluços quebrados
Refletem o pranto pisado
Na voz ténue do teu menino
Que um dia será homem

Mas,...Mulher negra...
Mulher quitandeira
Que trazes à cabeça
O pão para o teu menino...

Teus olhos laços
Têm sentido profundo
E a tua alma incolor
Está cheia de um grande amor.

Junto Ao Mar

Na praia negra, o sol é dioiro
A areia é como diamante negro
Luz que luz
Sol a sol, brincam os meninos
Como caragueijos aos pinos
À volta dos coqueiros
Soltando gritos de alegria

As ondas em fúria
Fazem ecos aos assobios
E os meninos de pés descalços
Desenham com os dedos nús
Cavalinhos com crinas de areia

Joga que joga
Salta que salta
Uns que jogam na tacada
Outros à disputa na porrinha

E os meninos de pés descalços
Desenham com os dedos nús
Seus sonhos na areia molhada
E os cavalinhos de cristal
Pouco a pouco
Vão esbarrar no horizonte.

Cantiga Africana

O ió kalunga ua mu bangele....

Assim cantava denxo,
Ao som do pilão
Cantiga que aprendera
Nas roças de S. Tomé.

O ió kalunga ua mu bengele...

Denxo cantava e soluçava
Ao compasso ritmado
Do pó batendo no pilão
Para milho, fazer cachupa

Bangele—Lé Lelé

De balaio erguido na mão
Panela à espera do lume
Bolso sem um tostão
Denxo venteia seu milho...

Lé—Lelé...

Perdeu o alento
Sua canção desfeita em lágrima
Sobre o farelo caido no chão
Enquanto pensa no seu irmão
Que ficou na terra do café.

Emigrante

O drama começa no momento
em que nasce a ideia de "partir"
Aí param os sonhos
E começam os pesadelos.

Emigrante!

Esta é a alcunha que te deram.

A tragédia que isso acarreta
consome anos de existência
aniquilando lentamente
castelos edificados de ilusões
que dos sonhos ainda restam.

Emigrante!
Fantasia dos que ficam

Américas
Alemanhas
Franças
e outros mundos sempre iguais...

Emigrante!

Suportar esse título tão honradamente
ter que comer o pão que o diabo amassou
ser sempre forasteiro em porta alheia...

Sim, emigrante!

Emigrante—sobrevivência
Gritos de alma
ambição amordaçada
desejos frustados...

VITA BREVIS num copo de vinho
Esquecer as amarguras
<Da Terra Prometida>

Who Will Give Me The Gift To Be The Wind

Oh friendly wind that passes by
Riding on the Sea Waves
What news have you for me
Of the stony land that I left behind?
Any messages for me
Of the suffering people left there behind?

Sailor wind you alone know my weakness
Please, talk to me of my island
Of my dreams left behind
With sea gulls near the beach
Surf flooding the burning sand
Sailor wind, my friend
Enumerate to me my longings...
Lest I might forget them
The taste of the waves in my eyes
The silent sand on which I walked one day
There in the depth the sea is infinite

Wind...
You alone know the secret
The distant exile within me
The psychological imprisonment beyond the sea
This despair—oh wind!
You are the only one who knows
How lonely I am
Since the day in my chest was born
That ever burning flame
Which I call *saudade"*
Ah, who will give me the gift to be the wind!

The Life in The Space That Created Me

Here I contemplate undisturbed
The immense space that contains me
And I stand firm,
By the applause of "pater noster"
Upon the living land that gave me birth
Blood running in veins
Flesh moving in the body that gushes in
Proclaimed life stirs
With ebb and tide
Reunited in the dispersion of things.

In the memory, space triumphs
And nothing ever occupies me.
My voice is mute, in the breath of the word
I inhale the image of what I am made of
Edgy nerves, soberly
Cross over the moment where I start
And where I unceasingly search
The gesture to find myself.

Fixed and infinite
Is the inverted space
That brings my pulse to a standstill
At every light moment
My vague presence
In equilibrium of words
I find myself, silenced.

A body, a walking statue
A gesture, a talk and a feeling of things...
A man sleeps
Peacefully wandering in the infinity of his mind.

A door that opens
Another vacant look upon me
A profound silence
A void and soon a target.

Three initials and a catechism in hands
Pages turned in an idyll between God and conscience
The surface
Wrinkles half covered by a pair of glasses
Contemplating her spotty visage
Many look upon the latest fashion
Someone attentively goes through the newspaper
"Tunisia attacked"
Only misfortunes.
I deplore with all my heart
And I realize
Wandering among people.
The corrupt air in the space that engulfs me
Polluted and confused mind,
...
Who will ever understand?

Ana Julia Monteiro de Macedo Sanca was born in Cape Verde. She works at the Consulate General of Portugal in Toronto. The poems were reprinted with the permission of the Author from her book Arco Virus d Vibra Sois, published by Peregrinacao. Poems in English were published in New Canadian Review, Vol. 2 #1.

A Challenge to Silence: Latin American Women Write

by Marjorie Agosin

translated by Janice Molloy

Censorship has various masks and forms. It may be imposed indirectly by the ruling power, or may be self-imposed by the writer in anticipation of reaction. In the latter case, clandestine publications may become the vehicle for expression, or the writer may seek to veil her message under elaborate metaphors understandable only to an elite few who communicate with each other through such "double-talk." In either case, the effect is the same: to limit one's readers and thus, severely restrict the impact of one's message.

To write as a woman under the gag of authoritarian governments is a double challenge—a challenge to the silence imposed by the fury of the ruling power, and to the denial of a woman's identity as loyal daughter of the homeland. The woman who writes under such circumstances is a "muzzled mouth," for her access to speech, though not denied, is severely restricted. In general, dictatorships instill in a woman a feeling of belonging; they welcome her as a reproducer of the great human specie. Nevertheless, the woman who creates words and not just children does so in defiance of such governments.

The difficulty in being a woman writer in Latin America, as in any country censored by men, lies in the effort to speak through the muzzle imposed by those in power. In several conversations in Vermont between 1979 and 1980, Marta Traba told me that only from exile did she

contemplate her country and write about a forbidden theme: the disappeared. Elvira Orphee recalls that her novel, *The Angel's Last Conquest*, is scarcely known in her native country, Argentina, and that only with the overthrow of the dictatorship has it been published there.

Censorship attacks not only the woman who writes but also the woman who reads. Friends have told me that, during the years of repression in Argentina, carrying a book under one's arm was a mark of subversion. Also, the imposition by the government of which books we can or cannot read makes us muzzled beings, prisoners of decrees based on the values of caution, repression and torture.

The two novels analyzed in these pages were written by women who defy censorship by refusing to succumb to silence, women who dare to speak through their anger and intense pain. They risk their lives speaking out for those who have no voice. The Guatemalan Alaide Foppa disappeared in 1980; not a trace of her has been found. Cristina Peri Rossi, an Uruguayanh, had to abandon her country for daring to predict the advent of the military government. There are many stories of women who have suffered such a fate. Fortunately, their words remain—words thrown against walls, across continents and against the ears of those who do not want to listen. Beautiful words, words that caress and comfort. Sharp words, words that cut through the muzzle, ungagging the muted. Words like keys, secret codes that seek to open the doors of silenced cities and countries. This is the legacy of the woman who writes in Latin America.

Throughout history, sewing, weaving, knitting and embroidery have been considered to be the feminine legacy. Chatter, gossip and trivial speech from the ultimate stereotype of female discourse. To these assertions, instilled and encrusted in ancient tradition, one must add another category concerning the writings of women, which have traditionally been disdained by literary scholars.

According to Rosario Castellanos, the Latin American woman writer picks up the pen in order to contemplate herself in the mirror of herself.[1] Pioneering women such as the Chilean María Luisa Bombal discovered themselves through their own writing: "Woman is no more than an extension of nature, of everything cosmic and primordial. My female characters possess long hair because hair is the vine that ties them to nature."[2] Along with Bombal, Teresa de la Parra, Norah Lange and Antonia Palacios represent women who unveiled themselves and their experiences through their works.

These women authors were ignored by patronizing editors, vain male writers and hostile literary critics until the 1980s to such a degree that it seemed that women did not write and that those who attempted to do so

did it from loneliness, neglect or despair. In this decade, the Latin American woman writer has begun to inscribe herself within a concrete tradition, transforming her particular situation and oppression into a broader perspective. Works such as Marta Traba's *Mothers and Shadows*, Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica*, Elvira Orphée's *The Angel's Last Conquest*, and Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits* and *Of Love and Shadows* are narratives that transcend the personal situation of the individual woman and take place in a wider socio-political context.[3]

These works parallel the acual experiences of the female resistance movements such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, the arpillera makers in Chile, and the Mutual Support Group in Guatemala. Like the activist, the Latin American woman writer renounces her status within a sexist society that exiles her from official power, and the ultimate extreme of that chauvinism: brutal, authoritarian dictatorship. The texts written by these women inquire as to the whereabouts of the missing and the tortured. They expose the bitter reality of women raped during torture sessions. In their writings, they address the triple issues of sex, patriarchy and the militaristic society that engenders violence. In this essay, we will examine the ways in which the woman writer denounces the conditions within her society.

Elvira Orphée, born in Argentina in 1930, is one of the first Latin American authors to write from the point of view of a torturer. This is the subject of *The Angel's Last Conquest*, a book that was originally banned in Argentina. It was published in Venezuela, and was only recently allowed in its country of irigin. The English translation was published in New York in 1985 by Bantam. Available Press.

The Angel's Last Stand exercises a strong, hypnotic power over the reader, as the author fades into the background and her characters begin to speak for themselves. The characters speak of torture using highly technological terms with a frightening and sinister precision. The banality of evil and its widespread infusion into society frighten the reader, as one is made aware that torture techniques can be used in varying degrees for different purposes. The novel leaves the reader without a doubt that torture is the dominant act in achieving the ultimate goal: maintaining order in the state at any cost.

Told by a torturer, the story captures his sense of nostalgia, of the mission that must be carried out, and of duty to the homeland. In the chapter entitled "Ceremony," the narrator passes through his own process of initiation. An ordered and perfect ritual is performed in the ceremony of torture: "Each step must be followed, each rule obeyed, each gesture known in advance" (page 92). In contrast, the victim's role is one of silence.

The relationship of the narrator to Winkel, one of his superiors in the torture centre, unifies the structure of the narrative. Winkel is the omnipotent and omnipresent master who is idealized by his apprentices. The novel progresses from the anrrator's initiation, in which a certain identification between victim and torturer is produced, until the moment when the narrator occupies the same position as Winkel. The torturer sinks into a world of an ordered and precise insanity, making his escape impossible.

A clear theme of the novel is the treatment of the female political prisoner, who is abused at two levels: as a prisoner and as a woman. Sexual violation is used again and again as a method of obtaining information and breaking her spirit for the sake of political gain. The narrator makes the following observation concerning a woman prisoner brought to the torture centre:

> *One day they brought a woman who must have been arrested with immense brutality, to judge by her appearance. It wouldn't have been a good idea to detain her in an accessible facility because the family lawyers would have tracked her down. Three of them fucked her. She was pretty. I didn't feel like touching her, not because I was a newlywed as they said, and not because I didn't feel like mixing business with pleasure, but because the relationship between the bodies we touch and our own should be different.*

The constant allusions to the woman's body as the property of the state and of the torturer is one of the jolting aspects of *The Angel's Last Conquest*, because it is through this recognition that we are distanced from the torturer whom we have come to know as an adolescent initiated in the ceremonies of insanity and fear. Each victim that he possesses is another advance in his prolific career, and only the reader's questions remain: How can this torturer live in the same city? How can he have a family? How can he return home after work? Can he possibly love and care for others? These questions float and remain unanswered for the perplexed reader who must attempt to reconcile these two worlds: the human world of love and caring, and the world of dictatorships, characterized by torture, rape and death.

Marta Traba's *Mothers and Shadows*, published in English in 1985 by Readers International, takes place in the spaces occupied by victims who roam through the cities, travelling like phantoms in countries populated by memories of the missing. Those who survive must live among the

torturers and the tortured. *Mothers and Shadows* is a dialogue between two women of different generations sharing memories of what the political repression in three countries of the Southern Cone has cost them. One recalls her lost son, missing in some part of Chile since the beginning of the military coup in 1973. The other remembers her period of political activism in Buenos Aires. her subsequent imprisonment and the loss of her child while she was in jail. *Mothers and Shadows* sums up the feelings of these silent victims, humiliated in the torture chambers for having committed the crime of being different or of having the name of someone "subversive" in their address books.

Each woman has chosen a different path: one suffered imprisonment while the other chose retreat and absence. The nausea of surviving the hell of torture is contrasted with the nausea of living in a place where so many have disappeared. Each of the women has suffered from the grief caused by the disappearance of a loved one, by the fact that there is no body to bury, only the aching void of an unexplained absence. One character says: "For a moment, I convinced myself that hell was better than limbo. Anything better than limbo." The other woman adds: The worst part of coming back to Montevideo is to ask about people who surely are dead, have been tortured or have disappeared" (page 30).

The novel's power lies in its revelation of the total usurpation of one's personal life by the dictatorship. In an atmosphere of asphyxia and terror where the individual exists or does not exist according to the whim of the state, the ultimate question becomes: How to survive the menace one more day? The fascination and wonder in the world is constricted, cut off for those under dictatorship, those who must live every day facing menace, pain and, too often, death.

The protagonists of *Mothers and Shadows* are linked by their solitude, their common suffering, and the intense desire to communicate in an empty country inhabited by the ghosts of the disappeared. They share a world of terror and a desire to create; they are not satisfied to be mere witnesses of a passing world. "Ah," says one, "The brief time we spent together isn't important. The intensity is what counts. The world we glimpsed, the fear we shared. And I don't mind telling you that my hands are perpetually frozen and that they'd gladly, gladly reach out to you for warmth. Let's take things one at a time, sister' let's see if we create or are merely witnesses" (page 102). Herein lies an essential characteristic of the writing of Latin American women: they take up the pen not merely to observe, but to vindicate the silence and to act, to use the power of the word to denounce the plight of their people and their countries.

This denunciation occurs in the two texts studied above from different perspectives, reflected in the narrators' point of view. The narrator of *The Angel's Last Conquest* elaborates the masculine ceremonies of a patriarchal world that involve the pain and humiliation of the victims. In defiance of this world, the narrators of *Mothers and Daughters* create a universe of female voices absorbed in the process of healing and finding a sense of sisterhood amidst the death and destruction. Both novels have as their central theme the victimizing nature of a system that enslaves the torturer as well as the tortured.

The Angel's Last Conquest and *Mothers and Daughters* represent two instances of the same coordinate. Each novel reveals the infrastructure of societies that use torture as a means of control. They expose the repression taking place under Latin American dictatorships by breaking the silence of their victims. By telling their stories, these writers themselves create the possibility of life and hope amidst the horror, evil and cruelty.[4]

FOOTNOTES

1 Rosario Castellanos has been one of the Latin American women writers who has contributed toward a school of thought on and a theoretical definition of women's writing. These ideas originate from *Women Who Know Latin* (Mexico: Septentas, 1973).

2 From an interview with Lucia Guerra in *The Narrative of María Luisa Bombal: A Vision of the Feminine Existence* (Madrid: Playor, 1984, p. 67). María Luisa Bombal was one of the most innovative Latin American women writers of the 1940s. Her most famous work in English is *The Final Mist* (New York: Farrar and Strauss, 1984).

3 The two books analyzed in this study are *Conversación al Sur* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo XXI) and its English translation, *Mothers and Shadows* (London: Readers International, 1985); and *La última tortura del Angel* (Venezuela: Monteavila, 1977), in English, *The Angel's Last Conquest* (New York: B. Available Press, 1985).

4 For general information on the bibliographies of Traba and Orphee see Evelyn Picon Garfield, *Women's Voices from Latin America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985).

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Caribbean Carnival
The Function of the Dance

Part III

by Leah Creque-Harris

(Parts I and II appeared in Tiger Lily Journal Issues 9/10 and 11.)

The element of freedom that characterizes Carnival is not only achieved by the comedy and satire of the lyrics and compelling rhythms of the music previously discussed, but also by the synchronization of the fever-pitched Caribbean dances that move the crowds from one point to the other. In striking contrast to the parades of other cultures in which marching moves the procession, in Caribbean Festivals, dancing is the chief mode of movement. Not limited to a short parade route, the Carnival "jump-up" route extends for miles throughout the island. Informally, in the absence of the official Carnival parade, dancing lasts for days and nights during the Carnival season. People dance through the streets until they drop. There is no urgency to return to one's home to eat, sleep and freshen up because the revelers stop by the homes of friends along the way. Food, drink and hospitality abound in caribbean households during the Carnival season and one need not worry about practical matters.

The cathartic effect of Carnival is chiefly derived from the dance arts. Though most of Carnival dancing cannot be readily identified by name,

they are remnants of various secular and religious African slave dances set to drums. Characterized by hip gyrations, shoulder shaking and lively steps, Caribbean festival dances are casually rhythmic and sensuous and are easily danced by both young and old. Although the observer may think that the Carnival dancers are working very hard, the movements in Carnival dances are relaxed, yet continuous and rhythmic because the dancing must be prolonged for extended periods of time.

In Jamaica, the John Canoe dance was accompanied by the African *goombay* drum. The term *goombay* was used to describe the festivals in Bermuda and the Bahamas that were similar to the Jamaican John Canoe festival. Though there is no record of what kind of dancing occurred during these festivals, they are called *goombay* dances. Festival dances in Jamaica are derived from the African Koromantee dances practiced by the Maroons for obeah and ceremonial dances which, like Carnival, lasted for days. In response to the compelling rhythms of the drum, dances such as the *Pocomania*, and the *Macabreta* were used to invoke a trance-like state so that the initiate could obtain the gift of prophecy or be given such physical strength to actually break the chains of slavery (Leaf 59-60). In Trinidad the dances of the Shango cult had a hypnotic effect on their practitioners. Not only was dance used to obtain spiritual powers, but also to express the erotic as the Jamaican social dance, *Mento*, exemplifies. Throughout the Caribbean islands the dances of the slaves were used to overcome their oppression such as the legendary *Bamboula* of the Virgin Islands that the slaves danced into such a frenzy that they launched a successful revolt against their Danish masters (Leaf 136).

Dances that were actually incorporated into the early Carnival observances include the Martiniquan *Beguine*, and the Trinidadian *Belair*, which are both flirtation dances. However, the *Belaire*, unlike other festival dances is known for its cool sensuality and modesty. Dances exhibiting male prowess and competition that were used in early festivals include the *L'Ag Ya* fighting dance from Martinique that Katherine Dunham made famous and the Trinidadian *Calenda* or stick-fighting dance that was an essential part of the early Canboulay Festival. The Calenda dance in which the men wield large sticks of sugar cane against their opponent greatly resembles the Ashanti war dance *Ashabakor* danced with spears. The *Calenda* also involves the chanting of death threats to frighten the opponent such as "Mooma, mooma, you son he dead a'ready." As the drums heighten in intensity, the fight begins and the dancers display extraordinary acrobatics. There is another form of

Calinda dancing that does not involve stick-fighting. This form which originated in Guinea, involved both men and women in a circle who moved rhythmically by shuffling their feet and writhing their hips. First cited in the late eighteenth century this dance was criticized for its immodesty (Emery 21).

Caribbean festival dances have also been influenced by their European counterparts. Elements of the French quadrille dances, the mazurka, and the minuet are liberally combined with the African dance pattern. The *Quadrille* dances are frequently featured during stage performances prior to Caribbean Festivals.

The preservation of these dances have been secured through the work of such anthropologists/choreographers as Beryl M^{c}Burnie, Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus who documented indigenous dances on their numerous field trips. Beryl M^{c}Burnie is largely responsible for introducing the native dances of Trinidad and Tobago to Pearly Primus and Katherine Dunham. In Jamaica, Rex Nettleford who is both a scholar and a choreographer has preserved Jamaican dance traditions in his writings and through the performances of his dance theatre. Under the tutelage of Beryl M^{c}Burnie's "Little Carib Theatre" of Trinidad, many Carnival kings and queens have been trained to dance the authentic Trinidadian folk dances for Carnival. Molly Ahye, a student of Beryl M^{c}Burnie continues to pass on the legacy. In Trinidad, the Kings and Queens of the Bands are not only judged for the innovativeness of their elaborate costumes. Because the costumes take on a personage themselves, they thoo, must dance. Therefore, the Kings and Queens must become adept at maintaining a dance pattern for themselves while making the costumes dance. For this reasonb. "mas designers" hire choreographers to orchestrate the movements of their Kings and Queens and band participants. The role of the Kings and Queens is to outperform any other bands they might meet. Their professional level of dancing is to inspire the crowd, heighten the drama and lead their band into the fantasy of carnival.

Dance has played an important role in caribbean culture. Its function and meaning as it relates to Carnival is profound.

> *The Carnival band is motivated by distinctly different psychophysical impulses from those of the sacred dance groups, despite the elements of self-hypnotism*

> *present in both. Indeed, mass hypnotism and catharsis might be said to be the strongest elements of organization in these bands (Dunham 35).*

Dunham's observations of Haiti's secular dances for the cArnival season are applicable throughout the Caribbean. Dancing in cAribbean Festivals is the uniting of the body and the soul to achieve the escape and freedom from conventional realities that is Carnival's promise. Moreover, the dancing in such close, crowded conditions creates what Dunham refers to as an *esprit du carnaval* and promotes a high level of social cohesion.

> *The psychological functions of the secular seasonal crowd dance are, in summary, the fulfillments of a play need, the externalization of energy, and the stimulus and release of sexual impulse, this last having been defined as sexual catharsis. The sociological function is to create social cohesion and solidarity, furthering social integration and, for society as a whole (most particularly for the government), releasing from tension a people living under rigid economic, political, and (for the peasant) social pressures (Dunham 45).*

Dance is yet another way for the populace to express the profane. Through the satire and wit of the lyrics one is able to laugh and put down their sociological condition; the costumes and the mask provide the individual with another identity and anonymity — a labourer could be a king. They music may put you in a trance, but it is the dance that takes away the last vestige of conservativism and tradition and allows for the relase from staid sexual convention. Men and women are free to embrace publicly and dancing with members of the same sex or dancing alone is not cause for comment. The dance of Carnival not only logistically moves the crowd from one part of the island to another, it psychophysically transports them to a transcendent state of temporary euphoria to conjure the spirit of the masque, usually a strong and powerful presence, who enacts (through dance) the history of the past.

Conclusion

Carnival is a unique cultural "life form" borne from the most curious of historical circumstances and replicated throughout the diaspora. Since the beginning of time Carnival has satisfied the human urge for group ritual and revelry. In the case of West Indian carnival celebrations, the need for and the meaning of Carnival is a complex manifestation of the capability of the human race to adapt to changing societal and environmental conditions.

The replications of these festivals throughout the Caribbean and now in the metropolitan cities of the West is evidence of the need for Caribbean people to ritualistically re-enact the drama of their rich and diverse cultural history. There is a growing fondness on the part of non-Caribbean people for Carnival because it symbolizes for all of humanity the sentiments of the global village and the commonalities of the human condition.

The artistry that has evolved in the caribbean is recognized throughout the world for its superior quality. The leading international recording artists are calypso and reggae musicians who formerly were only regarded as folk musicians. Costume-making and Carnival artifacts are celebrated in museums throughout the world for their artistry. The social scientists, humanists and art theorists are studying and analyzing Carnival for its meaning and function in society. Although its practice has not always been respected, carnival has served to legitimize the Caribbean experience as something more than just sun, surf, sand and sea.

Most important is its meaning to the people of the Caribbean who were trapped on small islands in the most cruel of circumstances with the cultures of others imposed upon them while their culture was restricted. The true meaning of Caribbean Carnival to its people is best portrayed in Earl Lovelace's novel, *The Dragon Can't Dance*. Through "artistic resistance" the carnival ritual annually uplifts the protagonists from the reality of their hopelessness (Reyes 62). Miss Cleothilds, whose beauty has faded, nevertheless, becomes a queen every year and calls everyone to unity with her carnical chant, "All O' We is One." Philo, the calypsonian, a wimpish, "ne'er do well," realizes his dream to become a wealthy calypso king by writing a popular song that ironically tells his exploits as a "lady killer." Aldrick, who has political aspirations of leading a people's revolt transforms himself into the spirit of the dragon masque for carnival to play out his urge for rebellion against the government. Metaphorically, the real rebellion that they feebly attempt is more like "playin' mas." Through this conclusion we see the true meaning of

carnival as a time for a resolution of conflict through the use of cultural devices. In the caribbean context, a real revolution may not necessarily yield the level of social change that is needed.

That the people of the Caribbean survived and fashioned a new world for themselves is the ultimate exaltation of the human spirit and the mark of creative genius. The creation of Caribbean Carnival as a means of spiritual escape from oppression, as a balm of healing for broken hearts is a medicine that we all need to take. Carnival is not only an art; it is a science. In the words of a popular calypso, "Carnival is the Answer."

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When you dance,
the whole universe dances.
What wonder!
I've looked,
and now I cannot look away.
Take me, or do not take me,
both are the same,
As long as there is life in this body,
I am here to serve you.

Jalauddin Rumi

A Journal Entry

by Marguerite Alfred

I had been looking forward to going to the play. The last few months were particularly trying as nearly every free moment of my time was taken up with 'nursing' my brother. My anxiety started long before his botched up trip from Antigua via New York. It started a year and a half earlier actually when my mother was visiting us for Christmas.

She had been here for at least a week. Everything seemed to be fine. Then we got a call from Annie in Sudbury. She was up from Trinidad visiting her sister. I can't recall how it came up but I can hear her right now, as clearly as ever, on the telephone, saying, "Didn't your mother tell you? Isn't Eileen there? The police had to get him down from the top of the lighthouse. He was threatening to jump. He ended up in Bellevue." Shock and disbelief went through my sister Natasha and me as we realised what Annie was telling us. Shock to learn of the culmination of my brother's increasingly strange behaviour, and disbelief that our mother could not, did not tell us herself. She had repressed it. Apparently, it was too painful for her to speak the words. She had gone to Trinidad. She had seen him cooped up in the jail-like hospital for the insane that was Bellevue and she could not talk about it. As we looked at her, tears streaming down our eyes, the significance of Annie's words sinking in, my mother just kept saying, "They put something on him. People told me they put something on him." what was she talking about? Who put what on him? Why? "Obeah."

"Mommy! What are you talking about?!!"

"They put something on him. That's why it happened." she repeated softly, refusing to see the absurdity of what she was saying, grasping for a way to understand what he had done. Later her way of explaining it to herself would change to his use of ganja. She would say that was what did 'it' to him.

Well, she went back to Antigua and got Tommy to join her there. Then she sent him to me. We were in inner turmoil as we anticipated his arrival. The churning in our stomachs only got worse when he called from New York, but he got to Toronto in one piece the following day.

We found ourselves sneaking inquiring looks at him, paying close attention to his every action and word. As I did this and that in the apartment the next day though, I was distressed that he did not seem to hear me when I spoke to him, that he sat watching T.V. with the SOUND down completely and that, even though he was sitting in front of the T.V., supposedly watching it, he wasn't. The T.V. images were not registering. It was as if he were looking right through the T.V.

Later that night, he could not sleep. He kept pacing back and forth in the small apartment, finally deciding around midnight that he needed to go out for a walk. Naturally, that threw us into a state. We did not want him to. We were afraid of what he might do. But he insisted. natasha and I went with him. He walked up busy Lawrence Avenue towards Victoria Park Avenue then back down a few times, mumbling sort of, to himself, with us trying to convince him to come back home. It was when he started insisting on walking in the path of the on-coming cars that our worse fears were confirmed and we started panicking. Here we were struggling to restrain our six-foot brother from killing himself. That night, or should I say morning, we got him to hospital and I witnessed him crying, making loud guttural sounds, disturbing the other patients, begging me not to leave him there. He was tormented it seems by the memories of his hospitalization in Trinidad.

And so began my/our ordeal. Repeated trips to hospitals, doctors, support groups, looking for help. My nursing entailed monitoring closely his taking his medication, hearing him say to me, "The pills don't help you know, I can still hear voices in my head." Seeing his hands shake, knowing that his mouth would be dry, all side-effects from the drugs, I felt anguished at what had happened to my brother. But I remained stalwart in setting up appointments and in accompanying him to the shrinks. I got angry on discovering ganja in the house and in realising that he was smoking up again. I felt relieved when he got a job and upset when he would refuse to come with me to the support group or not go to the doctors on his own, or not take the medication on his own. There was also deep fear. I remember one evening coming home and hearing

him in the shower having a heated 'conversation' with someone...in harsh language, unusual for our family, "Fuck! What're you talking about? Fuck! No way! I'm not doing that!....You do it...Fuck!" I could only stand on the stairs, shaking, afraid. Then there was the time he bought himself a used car, around Christmas, and promptly crashed it on his way home from his work's Christmas party. He was charged with impaired driving though he insisted that he had only had one glass of wine...maybe the combination of the medication and the alcohol did him in. Then going to court with him.

Ejike and I had agreed to go to a play at the Royal Alex., with a former student of mine. Because we lived downtown now, we decided not to take the car. Got home late. Woke up, as usual, early. Got ready for school. Keys. Keys. Keys? Car keys? Where were the damn keys? I never did this. My keys were always findable. O.K. check the garage. I never locked it. See if I left them, unlikely, but see if I left them in the car. Bolt down the stairs. Out the front door. Open up the garage, aware as usual that my nosy co-op neighbours in the fishbowl that was our short street of two rows of townhouses, in their kitchens that overlooked the street, were probably watching me, just as I would have been watching any one of them. Aware of that, garage door...opened up....

"My God!!!! my God!!!! No!!!"

My voice...responding to what my eyes were seeing.... Legs...long legs...sticking out of the front door of my car.

"No no no..."

My voice...responding to what my eyes were seeing.... Legs...long legs...sticking out of the front door of my car.

"No no no..."

Front door...open...mad blind scramble up the two! flights of stairs to the bedrooms, "Ejike! Natasha! Ejike! Natasha! Tommy! Tommy! In the garage!" They both emerge/stumble out of the bedrooms. Ejike from ours; Natasha from hers. Mouths open...what am I talking about!?! Call the police. Police come. Neighbours come. Gas masks are put on. Out on the street. With gas masks. Shaking shaking. Bright bright sunny day in April. Sitting on a low wall at the top of Albert Franck Place on a bright sunny day. Breathing from a gas mask. How to call Antigua to tell my mother? Get a friend there to tell her. Not me. Not on the telephone. Wow! How could this happen? How? Why did this happen? Imcomprehensible. People gawking. Police coming and going. Back upstairs. In the kitchen overlooking the street. Phone calls...here, there and every where. Father in Jamaica. Mother and step-father in Antigua. School/work friends of his. Phone calls. Tears pain agony. The end of turmoil for him. The end of who knows what for me. Totally incompre-

hensible... Call the doctor. Did he not see this? Did he agree with Tommy that ganja relieved him? Did ganja do this? Did his disappointment in the reception he received from our father in Jamaica do this? More questions than answers. Pounding head. Agony. Dry mouth, swollen eyes. Heaviness. Helpless pain. Meaningless beautiful sunny day; dark gloomy awful wordless feelings. Emptiness. Why our family? What about this family? One pain or another one pain after another. Is this the biggest pain? Poppy seed bread from Mary across the street....

That was Thursday April 24, 1980. He was only 27. He had been talking of school on the Tuesday. Now it all seems so inconceivable, so incredible. We will never get over it. Sometimes I wonder what my role was in it...whether I should have/could have done more.... I think though that we all kind of knew that it was a possibility but the reality is still hard to process. As I continue to try to analyze my own feelings about it...as well as Tommy's, I feel numb. This makes me question my love for my brother.... I know deep down in the recesses of my being that I do/did love him. Of course, there were things he did which I disliked but I can separate his actions from him...the essential Tommy. He was a good person. Ejike, the most taciturn of men, said to me one day while he was alive: "Tommy is good." And, he was. Ganja and his chemical disposition may have destroyed him. Perhaps too, he felt terribly scared and angry about what was going on in his head. Perhaps *he* didn't want to die but it was all beyond his control. Who knows? We can only hope that he is resting in peace...pray that he is finally in total peace.

What are my pleasant memories? Vaguely...my mind's eye reaches back to our childhood...the baby brother, five years my junior whom I loved so much...a chubby baby boy...round face...big dark brown eyes.... The four-year old who was in a car accident...the brother who enjoyed sewing and playing hockey and disliked cleaning his room.... The tall handsome young man who seemed to have everything going for him in the seventies; the father of beautiful Aisha. The young man who, in his search for self, became a Black Muslim selling newspapers and fish on street corners in downtown Toronto. The young man, who in August, 1979, did not 'want to be a burden'; the young man, who a few days before his death was concerned about my being upset.... "Is it because of me, Dixie? Did I do something wrong?" he asked. (Ejike reassured him that it was not because of him. But...it was. I was worried, as usual, about him. He had not taken his meds.) The young man, independent of spirit, who, according to one doctor, one of the many consulted for help, sought to help himself with the one thing that he should perhaps have

avoided...ganja. The young man who disliked the fact that making 'progress' by returning to school, was going to be difficult for him.

And so, here we all are in our pain at our loss. As far as we can see, he had our support and our guidance...Keith's Natasha's, Ejike's, Mom's and mine...but he never really shared himself with us. No one really knew his innermost thoughts. Mom says he did not want to die. *He* probably did not...but he did.

Marguerite Alfred is a high school teacher living in Toronto.

How many wise men and heroes
have survived the dust and dirt
of the world?
How many beautiful women have been heroines?
There were the novel and famous women
generals
Ch'in Liang-Yu and Shen Yun-yin.
Though tears stained their dresses
Their hearts were full of blood.....

"To the Tune 'The River is Red'"
Ch'iu Chin (1879–1907)
Translated from Chinese ;by
Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung

Yer Belly Full?

by Theresa Lewis

Recently I heard this phrase voiced by a West Indian on the television. She was accompanied by two young children and the question was posed to one of them: a little white boy. I never discovered what his relationship was to her or the others in the program. They were outdoors—a picnic perhaps. The child understood.

I had not heard this terminology for a long time. It seemed almost new to me. Repeating it to a friend made us both aware of the uniqueness of the phrase. It evoked memories of our young days. We commented on the amusing aspect of the question.

But...as time passed I could not get it out of my mind, realizing that such comments contributed greatly to the style of our West Indian Language, thus creating some of its superbness.

Had the woman in question been English she would most likely have asked the child: "Do you like it?", intimating, perhaps that he was not eating as quickly as expected of him and therefore he was not enjoying it completely.

Or she may have asked "Would you like some more?"—meaning that if he were too polite or afraid to ask she was doing it for him. He would then be free to acquiesce or deny. She was, at the same time, giving him the option of requesting more—or stalling.

Or she may have volunteered: "It's good, isn't it?" And he may have nodded his reply. A nod could mean anything; is open to interpretation. Basically the question means "I think it's good; am not sure that you do. Enlighten me."

Had she been Canadian or American, she may have said: "This is good, eh, like it?"—Question/Answer combination. Or two questions if you like. This necessitates two distinct replies. One can either accept that it is good, while replying at the same time to the "eh" suffix. Then admit liking it, or otherwise.

Or, if American, she may have gone a step further: "Man, this sure is good". Or perhaps "G..oo..oood (let's say, Cracker, like in the Andy Griffith commercial?).

Or just plain "Good cookie, eh..?" while noting the child's reaction.

The West Indian covered all aspects of any reply which could be forthcoming. Her statement was complete. Any reply, no matter how abbreviated, would be part of this completeness.

"Yer belly full?"—if you nod affirmatively (and a nod is all that is required), you have had enough. It must have been good (at least in your view) or you would not have filled up on it.

If you nod negatively, there is either something wrong with the chow, or your taste and the cook's are not compatible; or AS SHE MOST LIKELY EXPECTS, you would like some more. You are on the way to becoming "full". If this is not the case some gesture will indicate otherwise and a halt can be called.

The completeness of the terminology is fascinating. It invites comments if this is thought necessary. At the same time a nod is enough to convey the fact that the food in question is fulfilling its purpose as implied by the question. It was enjoyable, therefore, one has "filled up" on it. One's belly is full.

Had the questioner been Indian she may have voiced.....* If Oriental, perhaps something along the same lines.

"Yer Belly full?" encompasses all replies; negates lengthy explanations; fulfils its purpose implicitly. In this case the child in question seems well on his way to learning a new language.

Today my family was about to rise from the dinner table. Embracing all with a solicitous look I announced "Yer belly full?" Astonished expressions, blank stares, total incomprehension was all I got. No one could understand why I left the table amused.

Theresa Lewis is a poet, fiction writer and journalist. She lives in Toronto, Ontario. She is the author of Caribbean Folk Legends and Things Elusive. Her latest book, The Yarn Spinner, will be published in 1992.

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* I don't know what it means either, I saw it on TV.

Gender and Power in the Teachers' Union of Mexico

Women in Dissident Movements

by Regina Cortina

(Part I, appeared in Tiger Lily Journal, Issue #11, which discusses Women's Work in Mexican Education).

Part II

The officially sanctioned participation of women in SNTE (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación) is only one component of their participation. Because of the historical conditions under which the union emerged in the 1940s and the fact that it was an organization created from the top down, there always has been a wide gulf between the rank-and-file and the leadership. As in other unions in Mexico, rank-and-file participation in the life of the organization is limited.[1] Women have always participated from below, from the rank-and-file, and they have shown great solidarity with dissident movements even when there has been little direct participation by women in the leadership of these movements.

In the late 1950s, a movement arose among elementary school teachers in Mexico City to democratize the life of the union. Organized by Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio, the insurgent faction

fought for the leadership of SNTE's powerful Ninth Section. Under the leadership of Othón Salazar, teachers mobilized against the union leadership, its anti-democratic forms of control, its close relationship to the party, and its corruption. Most of the teachers in the section went on strike for more than one month and a half, closing schools in Mexico City, followed by a sit-in on the patio of the SEP building. As a result, their wages were increased. But the leadership of this opposition group, though strongly supported by the rank-and-file, did not manage to become part of the executive committee of the Ninth Section. Othón Salazar, the insurgent leader, was incarcerated on grounds of subversion. Since that time, the members of Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio have chosen to make their voice heard within the existing structure of the union and to seek positions in the section and national committees.

During those years, when teachers demonstrated in favour of a democratization of the leadership of SNTE, women participated actively. A leader at that time described the vehemence with which women participated and the central role they had in launching the movement. "The movement of 1958," he explained:

> *...had a strong moral overtone. We were seeking to purify the ruling body, not to change the political structure. This had a special effect on the female rank-and-file, which was fighting against the abuses of the 'gun-slingers'* (casta pistoleril) *who used women, who gave them permanent jobs in exchange for going out with them, against all the disdain and ill treatment heaped upon women. We had important and decisive participation by women and enthusiasm of women in the struggle, in the brigades, even though it was more difficult for women because of their family responsibilities. During the sit-in of 1958, the female teachers went even with their children and their families.*[2]

The opposition movement of the late 1970s emerged from the rank-and-file in the less developed and more rural states of Mexico. Between June 1979 and February 1981 there were teacher strikes of 30 days on the average in several different states: Chiapas, Oaxaca, México, Hidalgo and Guerrero. The initial reason for the movement was a delay in teachers' pay checks. These protests then snowballed into a movement for democratization of the union, producing the most massive protest demonstrations by teachers since the creation of SNTE in 1943. Protesting teachers created a parallel organization, the Coordinadora

Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, to mediate between themselves, SEP and SNTE. This popular struggle has developed new and varied ways of showing its opposition—such as sit-ins, demonstrations, political advertisements, control of the work place—that are similar to those used by other independent unions at the moment.

The Coordinadora is quite possibly the strongest reaction against the union leadership during the entire history of the teachers' union. It has called into question the ways in which the relationship between union leadership and rank-and-file is structured for the educational profession in Mexico. The Coordinadora has become a powerful, if still somewhat fragile, organization in its own right, with at least 200,000 members. Two sections of the union, Oaxaca and Chiapas, are in control of the Coordinadora. Its delegates were allowed to attend SNTE's national congress in February of 1983, and as a result one of its leaders now sits on the national executive committee. The leadership was, then, at least partly incorporated into the power structure that controls SNTE.

As the leadership of the union sees it, if there has not been any more broadly based protest movement in the Ninth Section it is because of the work that the union does in each school to minimize tension. In the view of the dissident leaders it is because of the tight control that is placed upon teachers by the union. One of the sections where greatest mobilization has occurred is in the north of Mexico City—Section 36 of Valle de México. This section is located in the working-class neighbourhoods surrounding Mexico City. A teacher relates her history of participation in the movements taking place there:

> *There is much fear...but a large majority of women are participating in politics now...I have had intense political participation...although not openly because I think I don't have enough knowledge to do it.... I see other fellow teachers standing up in meetings and speaking...they can be strongly criticized. You need to have a very clear mind, be articulated and have a good knowledge of the situation, and I do not have enough time to prepare myself for that.... I have been a political dissident because I see it is necessary...because those are my ideals. As a working-class person, I have suffered in my own skin all the injustices, the wages of hunger.... This is what has led me to participate in politics...in order to defend my rights. In the school where I work, we are all dissidents for those same reasons.... We have been struggling and fighting for years to secure a permanent job that was opened up to us by SEP*

and then was taken away by the union because they said we were not worthy of it. One problem after another has led us to keep on with the struggle.... I have been in demonstrations, meetings, brigades and sit-ins. Last November (1981) we sat down in the street, right in front of the riot police for three days and two nights. I told my mother that if something happens to me, please take care of my children. I know it is dangerous, but I am defending my rights and I am struggling for them.[3]

In the past, the role of women as rank-and-file members of the union was kept in silence. But as the preceding paragraphs have suggested by reviewing the two most important dissenting movements that have arisen from the rank-and-file, women have had a central if yet not fully documented role. There are marked differences between their opposition in the 1950s and more recently. In the 1950s women were organized from the top down by a political party, while in the latter case a popular mobilization that resembles other urban popular movements sweeping across Latin America.[4] In both cases, immediate circumstances such as the deterioration of wages and threats to their standard of living prompt women to action. When they act in times of crisis, women in the dissident movements confront both the political structure and the institutional culture that devalue their worth and frustrate their aspirations throughout their careers.

Conclusion: Women in Power and Politics

In the 1930s female teachers mobilized to incorporate women into the organized structure of power in the Mexican State. In the decades that followed, women moved in small numbers to positions of authority inside the government, PRI and all its related organizations, such as labour unions. Beyond offering a particular case study of SNTE—one of the mainstays of PRI—this chapter has attempted to illuminate both the achievements and the hopes of women after half a century of active participation. A few women do hold positions of power within the political structure. Nevertheless, the dominant male leadership typecasts the participation of women in union life, reverting to stereotypes when dealing with the aspirations of women. Women are seen as inferior, less capable of holding power, more suited to supporting—in culturally acceptable ways—the men who hold power within the union. In reaction to this image of women used in the union culture, female educators make choices that have the effect of excluding them from leadership

positions, since women do not identify themselves with the stereotypical image imposed on them by the culture of the union.

It is revealing that the officially sanctioned participation of women in the union occurs primarily through social events organized by the leadership. In an organization numerically dominated by women, the emphasis on social activities has resulted in restricted rank-and-file participation in union decisions and policies. A major outcome of anti-democratic processes within the union is that workers have lost their bargaining position as a collective group. They have been atomized and must approach the union leadership as individuals seeking benefits and favours. The policies of the male leadership and the demands they place on SEP and PRI on behalf of rank-and-file teachers do not address the obvious and pressing needs of women as workers. There is, for example, no union support to increase the availability of day-care, to expand preschool education, or to develop more adequate health care services. Reflecting the extreme atomization of collective power in bargaining with the male-dominated union leadership, none of the women who have achieved leadership positions expresses feminist ideals or shows a clear concern for mobilizing to expand women's opportunities. For the many more women who constitute the majority of the teaching profession, the success of those few who have become part of the leadership has not changed the constraints that shape their professional lives.

Women as a group are not organized, and at best they play a carefully circumscribed role in union life. As this chapter has argued, the union leadership draws upon cultural stereotypes about women when promoting their participation in leadership roles. The few women who have advanced to such roles have been promoted because of their traditionally female image of honesty and devotion, and as a way of legitimizing the leadership in front of the rank-and-file. But if union culture accounts for the non-participation of women in union politics, their active participation in dissident movements shows their countervailing interest in changing the institution that controls them as professional teachers. Their quest serves as a constant reminder that legal equality for women marks only the starting point of further efforts to remake the institutions that shape the work of women.

The analysis of gender and power within the teachers' union shows that in spite of the fact that gender has frequently not been included in the study of labour organizations in Mexico and Latin America, gender as a system of power relations plays a crucial role in the maintenance of existing political structures and the social inequality they help to perpetuate.

FOOTNOTES

1 For an analysis of the history of unions in relation to that of PRI see Luis Javier Garrido, *El partido de la revolución institucionalizada*.

2 Interview A-5 Mexico City, August 1982. For an account of teacher mobilization in 1958, see Aurora Loyo Brambila, *El movimiento magisterial de 1958 en México*.

3 Interview A-5, Mexico City, August 1982. For an account of teacher mobilization in 1958, see Aurora Loyo Brambila, *El movimiento magisterial de 1958 en México*.

4 See Jelin, *Ciudadanía e Identidad*.

5 All interviews used in this article are from my Ph.D. dissertation, "Power, Gender and Education: Unionized Teachers, in Mexico City," School of education, Stanford University, May 1985. Unless otherwise indicated all translations from Spanish are my own. The dissertation uses interviews, union materials and publications, government documents, direct observation of activities, newspapers and secondary literature. To complement traditional sources of documentation, I conducted interviews in 1981–1983; in all, there were 43 interviews: eleven of male and female teachers, nine of past and present labour leaders, three of principals and supervisors, thirteen of past and present officials from the Secretaría de Educación Pública, and five other informed sources. My 43 interviews are complemented by 32 life history oral history interviews of teachers made by the Centro de Estudios Contempor neos of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. An additional source of evidence was the direct observation of activities that came along with the interviews, such as daily activities in the union, the interaction between rank-and-file and leaders in the union, and visits to the schools.

6 Interview C-1, Mexico City, July 1982.

7 Interview with Professor Gaudencio Peraza, general secretary of the national executive committee of SNTE, 1945–1949. Departamento de Estudios Contemporáneo, INAH, interview PHO/3/21 by Marcela Tostada, June–August 1979, p. 395.

8 Interview C-2, Mexico City, July 1982.

9 Interview D-12, Mexico City, September 1982.

10 Interview A-3, Mexico City, August 1982.

11 Interview D-13, Mexico City, July 1982.

12 Interview A-e, Mexico City, August 1982.

13 Interview C-2, Mexico City, July 1982.

14 For a review article on the topic see Jane S. Jaquette, "Female Political Participation in Latin America: Raising Feminist Issues," in Lynn B. Iglitzin and Ruth Ross, eds., *Women in the World: 1975–1985, The Women's Decade*, (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO Press. 1986), pp. 243-71. One of the few detailed studies on the political participation of women in Latin America is Elsa M. Chaney, *Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

15 Interview A-e, Mexico City, July 1982.

16 See Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); especially in Chapter 9, "the Rules of the Game," see pp. 249-50; and Roderic A. Camp, *The Making of a Government: Political Leaders in Modern Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984).

17 Interview A-3, Mexico City, July 1982.

18 Interview A-2, mexico City, August 1982. This point was confirmed in other words by Interview A-4, Mexico City, August 1982.

19 Interview E-4, Mexico City, September 1982.

20 Interview A-3, Mexico City, July 1982.

21 Interview A-5, Mexico City, August 1982.

22 Interview A-5, Mexico City, August 1982.

23 Interview A-3, Mexico City, July 1982.

24 To identify discrimination in union activities, two union publications were closely examined to evaluate the image of women that is projected through these media: *Reivindicación* and *Magisterio*. *Reivindicación* served as the house organ for SNTE from the founding of the union until the teachers' conflict of 1958, at which time it was discontinued and the new magazine *Magisterio* emerged.

25 Interview D-3, Mexico City, August 1982.

26 For an analysis of the history of unions in relation to that of PRI see Luis Javier Garrido, *El partido de la revolución institucionalizada*.

27 Interview A-5, Mexico City, August 1982. For an account of teacher mobilization in 1958, see Aurora Loyo Brambila, *El movimiento magisterial de 1958 en México*.

28 Interview D-8, Mexico City, August 1982. On the movement since 1979 see Luis Hernández, comp., *Las luchas magisteriales 1979–1981* (Mexico City: Macehual, 1981).

29 See Jelin, *Ciudadanía e Identidad*.

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SHE

by Ann Wallace

She

She sits in the garden—
her make-believe sanctuary
a wide-brimmed panama
conceals her face
her hands move restlessly
picking imaginary petals
A soft moan escapes her lips
she stares at her flattened stomach
the child she so longed for
flushed away

A voice yells in anger
a look of fear
in her eyes
she stiffens
then sits
back rebelliously
he could not hurt her any more

Angrily he clenches his fist
she whimpers
he slaps her, she falls to the ground
he kicks her, she begs for mercy

incensed
he throttles her
grabbing widly
her fingers
fasten on the garden shears
she plunges into his side
blood spills
a look of wonder on his ashen face
and he lurches towards her
screaming she plunges again and again and again
a cold hand grabs at her
she stares into a stranger's face
and sees her reflection

horrified
the shears fall
from her hands
she sinks to the ground
burying her head
in her blood-stained dress
she sings softly
"Rock a bye baby, rock a bye baby...."

Ann Wallace is publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Tiger Lily.

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