

CSWS REVIEW

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CSWS REVIEW

Center for the Study of Women in Society
University of Oregon 1992



*Women Speak to
Colonization
Conquest
Columbus*

CSWS REVIEW

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Cover: *La Malinche* (1985), Lynda Jasso-Thomas.

CSWS Review

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Quincentenary Implications in Women's Lives

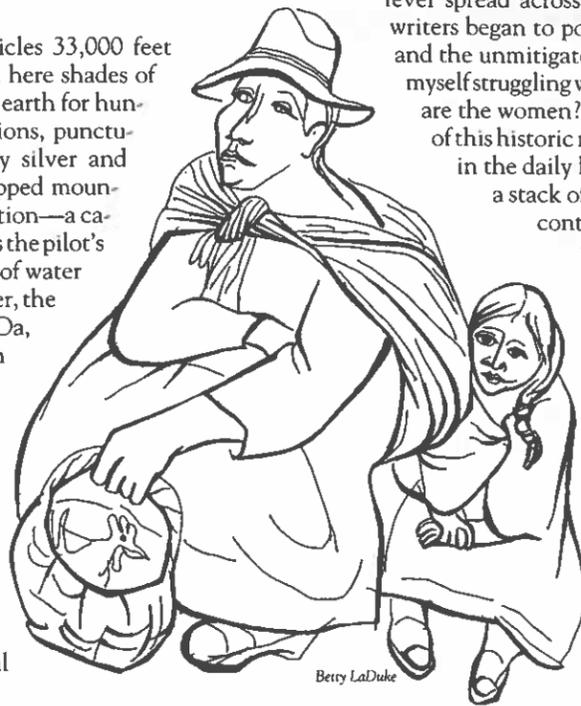
Sandra Morgen

I am reading these articles 33,000 feet above South Dakota. From here shades of browns and greys cover the earth for hundreds of miles in all directions, punctuated momentarily by shiny silver and then, relieved by white-capped mountains. Suddenly an interruption—a cacophony of perspectives—as the pilot's voice points out the bodies of water below. "The Cheyenne River, the Missouri River, and a lake, Oa, Oa, I can't pronounce it, an Indian name . . ." and he stammers on. (It is Lake Oahe. I find that out later when I look it up.) We continue west over South Dakota, over Montana. The faceless voice tells us we are travelling above Lewis and Clark's route and past the Custer Battlefield National Monument.

There is an inescapable irony in preparing an introduction to these deliberately revisionist articles from here, so high above it all. Is our attempt to look back five hundred years anything like this experience of seeing mountains appearing to have whiskers that, I know, are really huge pines? What does it mean to be able to see for hundreds of miles around me now when I, and most of us, are just beginning to understand how profoundly our own lives are implicated in this quincentennial, no matter how we choose to participate?

We—Sandi and Diana—introduce this issue of the CSWS *Review* together, but we have had different relationships to the creation and production of the articles, poetry, and graphic images. Diana, with Elizabeth's invaluable editorial assistance, conceived of the theme, commissioned the articles, and undertook the work of organizing. Sandi, as the new director of CSWS, added her perspective through this collaborative introduction. As white women, shaped by the Eurocentric civilization that persists in underwriting the Columbus story in poisonous terms of racial superiority and global hegemony, we are acutely conscious of our own location within a system of power relations that privileges some voices while negating others.

The Columbus quincentennial is an ideological battleground. What is contested is much more than the way Columbus is to be remembered—as hero or plunderer, valiant explorer or avaricious exploiter. Because this 500th anniversary is occurring at a time when indigenous peoples of the Americas and people of color around the world (women and men) are challenging Eurocentrism, androcentrism, and racism, we have the opportunity to recast the past as part of envisioning the future.



Betty LaDuke

Diana Sheridan

A year ago, as the early stages of quincentennial fever spread across the land, scholars and popular writers began to ponder the tragic paradox of 1492 and the unmitigated horrors that followed. I found myself struggling with an invidious question: Where are the women? What is it about the dimensions of this historic moment that continue to play out in the daily lives of women? Pouring through a stack of contemporary texts that expose contradictions, lacunas, and suspected fictions in the familiar legacy of Columbus, I found little that spoke of the lives and experiences of women descendents of the invaders and the invaded, the enslavers and the enslaved. In spite of the echoes of penitence in these revisionist works, I was troubled by the omission of a feminist interpretive-perceptual critique. Had these writers who have worked toward reconceptualization of this epochal event, unwittingly perhaps, succumbed to the modes of thought prescribed by five centuries of Western ideology—an ideology that devalues and usually negates the vernacular culture of women?

We women who inhabit this part of the earth where Columbus landed, and who are consequently of indigenous, European, African, Asian, and other origins, must look back and interpret this event of dominance and submission; and at the same time, look forward beyond the genocide, the slavery, the exploitation, and the ecocide to a revised destiny founded on reciprocal relations.

Columbus Day 1992 promises to be a gala event for some, surrounded by conferences, public forums, and probably some monument-building to the "proud" legacy of the "West" and its expansion throughout the Americas. For others, this is a time of mourning; a time to recall the genocide and displacement of the indigenous peoples of this continent, and the subsequent five centuries of humiliation forced upon the peoples of Africa and the descendents of that diaspora. This issue of the CSWS *Review*, therefore, is part of a different kind of monument. We are looking backward—not to valorize, but to scrutinize the meaning of exploration as it has been intimately tied to the conquest, subjugation, and muting of the voices and experiences of the Americas, especially those of women.

The authors and artists whose work is gathered in this issue are creating alternative readings for the quincentennial. Their work speaks eloquently of self-knowledge and integrity, of risk and commitment, and of feminist incursions and insights into the strangling Western paradigm that continues to define our world today. Beginning with Lynda Jasso-Thomas's mask on the cover and continuing through the pages of the *Review*, each of these alternative images humanize and make relative the historical myth of Columbus.

The weaving of insightful academic scholarship with the richly imaginative work of a variety of artists, distinguishes this *Review* from previous issues. In the pages that follow, articles by a literary critic, an historian, an anthropologist, and sociologists and educators are intermingled with works of fiction, poetry, and the visual arts. We believe this multidisciplinary endeavor is necessitated by the fact that the quincentennial has become a contest, wrestling with images and historical and cultural meaning. At the same time, the inclusion of creative work mirrors a more expansive vision of the future direction of CSWS. During the next several years, we hope to become even more interdisciplinary, maintaining our involvement in the social sciences and the humanities while reaching out to include scholars in the creative arts, scientists, and those in the professional schools.

The inclusion of these multiple genres also demonstrates and emphasizes the importance of a breadth of perspective across race, ethnicity, class, and gender. The authors themselves are Chicana, African American, Native American, Asian American, and European American. They have very specific cultural and historical heritages; and these specific heritages shape both their experiences of and resistance to European and male hegemony. This focus on women has not led to a sacrificing of analyses of race, ethnicity, and class, but it has allowed these authors to identify and

examine ways the experiences and knowledge of women differ from men's among both the conquering and the conquered groups. For example, a number of the articles discuss how women's bodies were used by explorers, slave owners, and pioneers, as well as by their "own" men. The story of Columbus and his legacy is far from complete without attending to the use of rape as a tool of subjugation—the rape of women whose faces we will never see, as well as those immortalized, for example, in the image of La Malinche.

In recalling the impact of the past 500 years, this issue of the *Review* provides a vehicle for envisioning a very different kind of future, a future that fulfills the promises of multiculturalism and the liberation of women. The collective voice of these authors and artists is less about how we remember Columbus the man, and more about how we use revised readings of the past to chart new futures. This looking backwards as an integral part of re-claiming the future, so central to the quincentennial, has also been a crucial part of the work of CSWS this past year. As we approach our tenth anniversary (1993), and with Sandi assuming the role of director last fall, we have plotted a new course for the future. These initiatives distinctly build on or take off from the center's accomplishments over the past decade.

Some of these new or strengthened initiatives are signalled on the pages of this issue. For example, CSWS is committed to invigorating the interdisciplinary scholarship on gender, most especially in supporting collaborative research, requiring radically different ways of thinking about research and working together. Collaborative work is viewed with suspicion by some in the academy, in part because the distinctions between the contributions of those who work together are often blurred. While this may be a sign of work well done on a team, it is often frustrating or worrisome within the university as



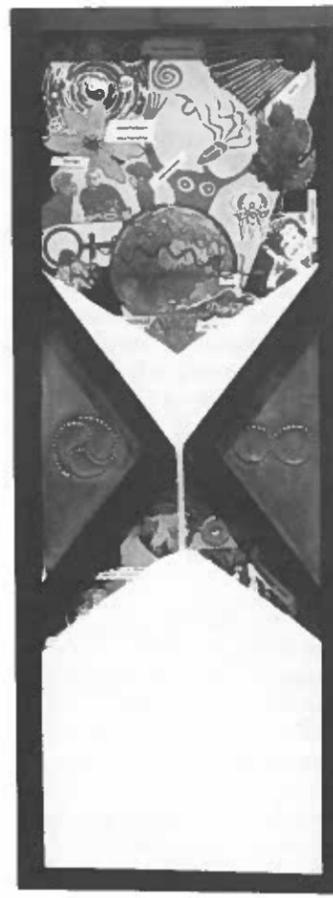
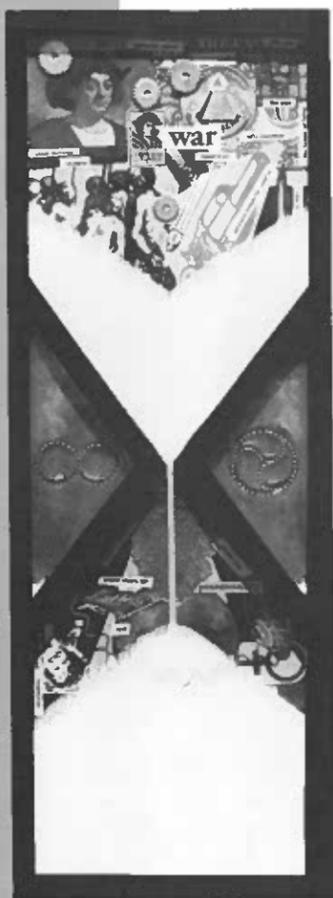
Sandra Morgen



Diana Sheridan



Elizabeth Archers



Shifting Paradigm by Julie Ament

deans, department heads, and personnel committees privilege the goal of assessing individual achievement for the purposes of awarding tenure, promotions, raises, or other, more intangible signs of worth. This year, CSWS has shaped a long-term strategy of supporting collaborative work with research "conversations" and a new grant category (CSWS Development Awards). Our goal is to underscore our dedication to facilitating collaborative research and to improving the climate for such work in the larger university.

A second new initiative is to foster and highlight work on women in the northwestern United States and the Pacific West of Canada. While only one of the articles focuses specifically on women in the Northwest, we at the center hope to stimulate a heightened interest in this region. Our approach does not constitute regionalism for its own sake. On the contrary, we seek to state a research agenda that recognizes and redresses the fact that research on women in this region is less fully developed than research on women and gender in the Northeast, the South, and the Southwest. There is a crucial need to understand the historical and cultural specificity of women's lives. Such research will not only add to the knowledge we are accumulating about women's lives, but it also will allow more informed theorizing about the ways gender, race, and class shape women's experiences. One of the exciting steps towards achieving this long-term goal is the creation of a new

research consortium in our region. The Pacific West University Network for Research on Women joins several research centers in the northwestern United States and several in southwestern Canada. Another ambitious step is CSWS's announcement that we will host a major conference on research on women in the Pacific West in 1993 or early 1994.

The third initiative is not new, but it may be that the center will be more vigilant about it over the coming years. The excellent work on women and gender produced here at the University of Oregon must be disseminated in a variety of ways beyond the university, and beyond academic audiences. The *CSWS Review* is one way to share the insights of scholarly research in a way that is broadly accessible. All the authors whose work is represented in this issue are affiliated with the university in one capacity or another, as faculty members, graduate students, staff, visiting scholars, and alumnae. We see the *Review* as one of a number of vehicles supporting the production of excellent research, and distributing the results of that work.

Fourth, this issue of the *Review* represents a particular commitment of the center to scholarship on and by women of color. Having said this, we must acknowledge the humbling and harsh reality that the University of Oregon, like many other predominantly white institutions, has a long way to go in fulfilling its goal of being a multi-racial and multi-ethnic institution. CSWS, as a feminist research center, has a responsibility to move past tokenism. If we are to develop beyond conventional, monocultural institutions, if this issue of the *Review* is to be an articulation—not lip-service—then we must make recruiting women of color as faculty members, staff members, students, visiting scholars, speakers, and consultants one of our most important goals.

This issue of the *CSWS Review* is part of a process of questioning, challenging, and revising the heroic image of "the West" that cannot be bound artificially by the beginning and end of 1992. We realize we have not covered all the important issues that could be addressed. For example, we had originally planned to include an article about another crucial event in Spain in 1492—the expulsion of the Jews, an event that bore the imprint of an anti-Semitism that would reverberate throughout Europe and the Americas over the next five hundred years. Unfortunately, that article could not be completed in time to be part of the issue.

Rather than seeing these articles as representing even a fraction of what is important to know about women as part of the quincentennial, we see them as raising important questions and beginning to articulate insights about how women's experiences and individual and collective resistance must be woven into the tapestry that depicts what is to be

remembered, honored, and mourned about 1492 and the history that has followed.

That so much revisionist scholarship is available to be used in universities and other public forums in this quincentennial is due in large part to the exciting work conducted by researchers in, or inspired by, interdisciplinary work in the "new" fields of women's studies, African American studies, ethnic studies, Chicano studies, Native American studies, Asian American studies, and international studies. Even as we celebrate this work in the *Review*, a cultural battle is being waged around the concept of "political correctness." Those who have adopted this "cause" see the kind of work represented in this *Review* as contributing to a degradation of the idea of "the West" and fostering dogmatism about multiculturalism.

It is important to be clear that there is nothing dogmatic about recognizing the significance of listening to voices and peoples who have been muted. While there is certain to be anger and bitterness in those voices, there is also hope, and a clarity from which we can all benefit. The concern about the "rising tide of PC" on American university campuses may emerge in part from a dedication to freedom of speech and pluralism. But there is little question in our minds that much of the handwringing about "PC" is defensive and misguided.

There is so much to be gained from opening up new avenues of inquiry, as well as from including the perspectives so long missing or marginalized in the academy and the seats of power in this country. CSWS is committed to supporting and disseminating research that is part of this vital process. As the articles in this issue demonstrate, until we reexamine all of the foundations upon which Western society was built (including slavery, racism, the subjugation of women and indigenous peoples, the rape of women and the land), we have only partial stories, and we blind ourselves to the possibilities of more just, more humane communities and social relations.

Sincere thanks to Katharine Gorham at New Zone Gallery and James Fox at Special Collections, UO Knight Library for their invaluable assistance.

Artwork on pages 1, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16–22, 25, 28, 32, 33, 35–37, and 40 is from *1492: What Is It Like to Be Discovered?* by Deborah Small with Maggie Jaffe, and can be ordered from Monthly Review Press, 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001, for \$15.00 plus \$2.00 postage and handling.



CSWS Executive Committee, left to right: Geraldine Moreno-Blatt, Jennifer Freyd, Julia Lesage, Sandra Morgen, Diana Sheridan, Marie Harvey, Marsha Ritzdorf, Suzanne Clark, Mary Romero.



CSWS Staff, left to right: Elizabeth Archers, Lousie Osterman, Sandra Morgen, Agnes Curland, Diana Sheridan.

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by Mary Romero



I know I should be used to this by now but I still have

trouble accepting the fact that although I earned a Ph.D., taught at six universities, published in refereed journals, and served as a dean and a department head, my most sought out attributes are those that I inherited at birth from my *mestizo* parents. When I was hired, for instance, the cover story on the university's new faculty members required a photo of a representative group of new hires. The group posed included a white woman, an African American man, and a Chicana—me; a group not the least bit representative of the faculty on most campuses.

This was by no means the first time I have been asked to serve up my ethnicity for an institution with few faculty members of color, and I do not want to seem too critical. Students of color so rarely see persons who look like them that we forget how hungry they are for role models. I was reminded of that fact a few years ago when an undergraduate Chicana at Yale told me that she had decided not to cut her hair or change her hairdo. She said that it was alright not to have hair like the other Yale undergraduates because "Dean Romero's hair was frizzy." Nevertheless, "celebrating their diversity" is part of a cultural pattern experienced by people of color in academia, a pattern that would be funny if it were not so painful. In this society, people of color remain invisible unless their ethnicity is needed; the experience of faculty members of color is no different.

The "other," "diverse," or "different" perspective that people of color might bring to a predominantly monocultural institution of higher education remains in large part invisible because their contributions are ghettoized in ethnic studies depart-

ments or "race and gender" courses. These shanty towns of higher education are strategically located to reduce challenges to traditional disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Take job announcements for example—we all know how to read them: if a job is described as a joint position in ethnic studies or requires the candidate to teach Chicano, African American, or another ethnic studies course, then whites need not apply. I am astounded when white colleagues complain that these jobs are protected as "affirmative action positions" and express resentment that they are not open to all candidates. This seems particularly greedy when these are basically the only jobs available to us!

The current fad of quincentennial celebrations emphasizes the contradictory situation of affirmative action hires in academia: once again we are being rallied from obscurity because our ethnicity is needed. Letters, memos, and advertisements are going out and phone calls are being made in search of indigenous participation—"Indians, Mestizos, and Hispanics Wanted! Ph.D. required." Throughout *Aztlán* and our ancestral homelands, Euro-American academics and administrators are searching for noble savages—once again our "exotic" difference is to be celebrated. After five hundred years of rape and genocide, if we still can be identified physically as the "other," our phenotype is in demand for photo opportunities, posters, panels, guest speakers. On the one hand, we are asked to provide "indigenous input" for quincentennial events, the main goal of which is to highlight the fundamentally monocultural institution's "diversity," cultural sensitivity, and liberalism. On the other hand, if we point out that we are treated differently, or not availed the same privileges as Euro-American faculty, we are accused by our colleagues of "playing the race card."

While some have argued that the quincentennial is an opportunity, an affirmative action program to increase diversity, I am uneasy. Past experience cautions me against institutional sup-

port for the "other's" culture. All too often ethnic cultures have been appropriated and converted into a commodity serving the dominant culture. For example, as a college student in the 1970s, I recall *Cinco de Mayo* demonstrations and workshops where my community celebrated *Chicanismo* and renewed our commitment to the struggle for a better future. Today, *Cinco de Mayo* has frequently devolved into an excuse to party and "celebrate diversity" by advertising margaritas and Mexican food at the local pub.

Despite the fact that conservative critics like Dinesh D'Souza and Alan Bloom view Chicanos dancing to mariachi music at a campus function as threatening to Western Civilization and the Western canon, a more sophisticated view suggests that the appropriation of culture is just another tactic of social control. Liberal universities that speak so eloquently of multiculturalism and diversity all too often strip culture of political content. From the institutional perspective, the singing of Chicano folk songs is far better than shouts of protest. Dancing is less threatening than demands for increased recruitment and retention efforts, more faculty of color, courses reflecting the Chicano experience, and responsible action toward racial harassment.

Memories of my experiences at Martin Luther King, Jr., events haunt me. Given the scarcity of African American faculty members, I am frequently recruited to participate on panels. I find that the dominant theme of the activities surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, birthday has degenerated into the celebration (or self-aggrandizement) of various individuals' past contributions to the Civil Rights movement. It has become an opportunity for middle-class and pre-

dominantly white academics to get together once a year and remember their activism of the 1960s. I am astonished that the "war stories" suggest that the war was won.

The mythology that the Civil Rights movement eliminated racism from the university is perpetuated by ghettoizing the issue of race to one lecture, one committee, one requirement and one academic program. Professors who do not teach in ethnic studies do not have to deal with issues of racism on a daily basis. They can overlook the sea of white faces and console themselves that the few African American, Latino, and Native American students they see in their classroom reflect an (unfortunate) national trend in college to-

day. I suppose if one only thinks about racism one day or one week a year, it might be possible to convince oneself that the Civil Rights movement was an historic event and the "good guys" won. Yet the enrollment of students of color seems to be declining in proportion to the increasing lip service paid to diversity. For more than a decade we have watched the escalation of judicial assaults on affirmative action,

conservative attacks within academia on multicultural and bilingual education, and the adoption of English-only legislation in California and other states. During this period, Republican candidates have played on racial stereotypes, a Klansman received 40 percent of the vote for governor of Louisiana, white supremacists executed a Denver radio personality, and skinheads stomped a black man to death in Portland.



Mary Romero, CSWS affiliate, is an associate professor of sociology and director of ethnic studies.

Quincentennial fever manifests the same contradictions as Martin Luther King, Jr., Day; it is a one-shot cathartic ritual featuring pride, guilt, and shame, and will do little to address inequality. We read that, in some parts of the quincentennial "Salebration," people have totally disappeared: the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History is spending \$2.5 million on an exhibition called "Seeds of Change" (sugar, corn, the potato, disease, and the horse) and the U.S. Jubilee Commission is spending \$53 million on the "AmeriFlora" exhibit in Columbus, Ohio. One of the more farcical events will take place in the City of Brotherly Love—Philadelphia: in 1985, you'll remember, Mayor Wilson Goode ordered the bombing of a residential area to rid the city of the dissident group called "MOVE." In 1992, Philadelphia plans a year-long schedule of events around the theme of "Neighbors in the New World."

Some of my colleagues of color argue optimistically that the quincentennial provides an opportunity to advance our perspective from the ghetto of ethnic studies into the halls and classrooms of traditional disciplines. And certainly, revisionist quincentennial programs are planned to celebrate pre-Columbian cultures of indigenous Americans and to correct the historical myths to reflect the vicious, racist conquest that the Western canon refers to as the "discovery" of the New World. In fact, much of this scholarship is only possible because of decades of unrewarded labor. In our little homeland in academia, scholars in ethnic studies have been conducting detailed studies for the last three decades. Frequently, these works have been published in obscure journals devoted to African Ameri-

can or Latino concerns. (And just as frequently, our "failure" to publish in mainstream journals has been held against us in tenure and promotion decisions.) It is now faddish for mainstream academicians to "discover" the "others" perspective and plan special journal issues, conferences, and lecture series. The work of scholars of color in ethnic studies are being appropriated, cited, and passed over.

Facts do not speak for themselves. As usual, we are caught up in an argument about the interpretation of the facts. Conservatives do not deny the atrocities of the conquest or the specific acts of violence attributed to Columbus, but instead shrug their shoulders and yawn, as if to say, "All great fortunes are founded on crime." The benefit claimed, the creation of a "great modern civilization," outweighed the "totalitarian barbarism" of the Incas or the Aztecs. Progressives question the Eurocentric characterization of the "great modern civilization" and ponder possible alternatives to the greedy raping, pollution, and policies of genocide, economic exploitation, and

The current fad of quincentennial celebrations emphasizes the contradictory situation of affirmative action hires in academia: once again we are being rallied from obscurity because our ethnicity is needed.

institutional racism that destroyed or impoverished all of the indigenous population.

Actually, intellectual debate over whether Europeans or indigenous Americans were morally superior is anachronistic. In 1492, people on the European continent did not identify as

"Europeans;" even the Spanish national identity we know today did not exist. Prior to the unification of northern and southern Spain, the Moors occupied Spain for eight hundred years. Before the Moors, the Visigoths, Romans, Greeks, Celts, and Iberians conquered, settled, and contributed to what is now called European/white culture. The year that Columbus arrived in the "New World," Queen Isabella expelled the Jews and Moors from Spain and the Spanish were more likely to think of themselves as Christian vassals than as "Europeans" or "whites." Today, even though one of the first Spanish explorers was the Christianized Moor, Estevancio, the terms "Spanish" and "Hispanic" are used in the Americas to mean white as opposed to Mexican or Mestizo.

La Raza is the term Mexicanos use to acknowledge the richness and diversity of our mixed heritage—it is a term that unites rather than divides people. However, Mexico and the United States have systematically discouraged us from identifying with our indigenous roots. Being *indio*, being *mestizo*, traditionally meant inferior to Anglos, to Europeans. As a people of mixed heritage and as a conquered people choosing to remain in occupied territory, Chicanos were expected to identify with the conquerors. Anglos politely called us Spanish, Spanish-American, or Spanish-speaking, and more recently, Hispanic.

In recent years, the political category "Hispanics" was employed by the census and other government bureaus to group people with diverse cultural,



historical, and political experiences. The new minority group, "Hispanics," served to bury our indigenous roots one more time, covering up the unique history of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans and submerging our Indian and African heritage, and our alliance to other oppressed minorities in the U.S. Much to the delight of the Reagan and Bush administrations, middle-class Latinos of European descent fleeing leftist revolutions were now in a position to alter the civil rights agenda. Organizations, including universities, could fulfill their affirmative action obligations by hiring upper- and middle-class immigrants rather than indigenous U.S. racial minorities. The politicalization of ethnicity experienced during the *El Movimiento Chicano* was depoliticized. Class differences were obscured. After a decade of appropriation and manipulation of the movement's cultural symbols, we have arrived at a peculiar historical juncture redefining race and ethnicity. A recent example is provided by a Hispanic leader quoted in *Time* magazine denouncing the National Council of Churches' definition of 1492 as an "invasion" rather than the discovery of the Americas. In his rush to deny our Indian and African heritage, the leader called the resolution "a racist depreciation of the heritages of most of today's American peoples, especially Hispanics."

Like the Martin Luther King, Jr., celebrations, much of the revisionist approach to the quincentennial is merely a catharsis producing a sense of contentment. We collectively burn Columbus's effigy decrying it as an icon of Eurocentrism, phallogentrism, imperialism, elitism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Sure it feels good to bond with other politically correct

people, but my problem is that I do not feel better. I feel used. I feel angry that thousands of dollars are spent to pay speakers, give awards, and promote cultural exchanges. At the same time, business goes on as usual. Community members are still expected to render bilingual services on a voluntary basis. No commitment has been made by any department on this campus to hire additional Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, or Chicanos. None of the events are structured to attract, retain, or to create scholarships for students of color. Instead, we limit our activities to lec-



tures that make us feel good in our outrage at what took place five hundred years ago, and celebrate our depoliticized diversity.

Quincentennial fever encourages us to escape into a further romanticizing of the past. We cannot undo the atrocities of the Spanish conquest. We cannot recreate the culture and people destroyed by Western civilization. Moreover, we have yet to come to grips with the fact that we still desire and consume the fruits of the conquest. The United States captured the Spanish Main. We control its destiny, exploit its resources, and dominate its peoples. This was evident in the Monroe Doctrine and continues in the decades-long boycott of Castro's Cuba, in the creation and arming of the Contras and the government in El

Salvador, and in the endless corporate expropriation of the resources of the Caribbean and Central and South America. I am not even convinced that Columbus should be the focus of our criticism. Who killed more people, Columbus or Bush? Who destroyed more of the world's environment, Columbus or Bush? Who is still destroying the indigenous population and their cultures through domestic and foreign policy?

So please don't call me for the quincentennial if the only time my phone will ring is when you need a Mexican to celebrate your diversity. Call me only if you are serious about recruiting and creating more scholarships for students of color, hiring another woman faculty member of color, or placing the experiences of people of color in the center of the curriculum.

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ENGENDERING NATIVE AMERICA

BEFORE COLUMBUS

An Archaeological Perspective on Women of the Northwest Coast

by Madonna Moss
photographs by Edward S. Curtis

DRUDGE OR MATRIARCH?

Dressed in woven cedar-bark skirt and cape to cut the chill, and with a watertight spruce root basketry hat protecting her from the steady drizzle of rain, the woman probed the patches of muddy gravel with her wooden digging stick. Winter had seemed exceptionally long and dark this year, and this was one of the few daylight low tides. Her kin surely would appreciate a supply of fresh clams. . . .

This is the stereotypical picture of women we have from ethnographies of Northwest Coast Indians. We see several such portraits of Northwest Coast women in the photographs of Edward Curtis's monumental *The North American Indian*. While men were hunting whales, fishing for halibut, or tracking mountain goats or grizzly bears, the women stayed close to their village where they dug shellfish and gathered roots and berries. Men's activities took them out on the open sea, while women were tethered to the village by the demands of childbearing and rearing. Men's activities were adventurous and demanded great courage and bravery, while women were burdened with gathering firewood and hauling water. Why does this sound so familiar?

Most Northwest Coast ethnographies date from the late nineteenth century, when anthropological museums were competing to expand their collections of American Indian art. Ethnographers tried to describe "traditional" cultures, but

ture how we "read" the archaeological record.

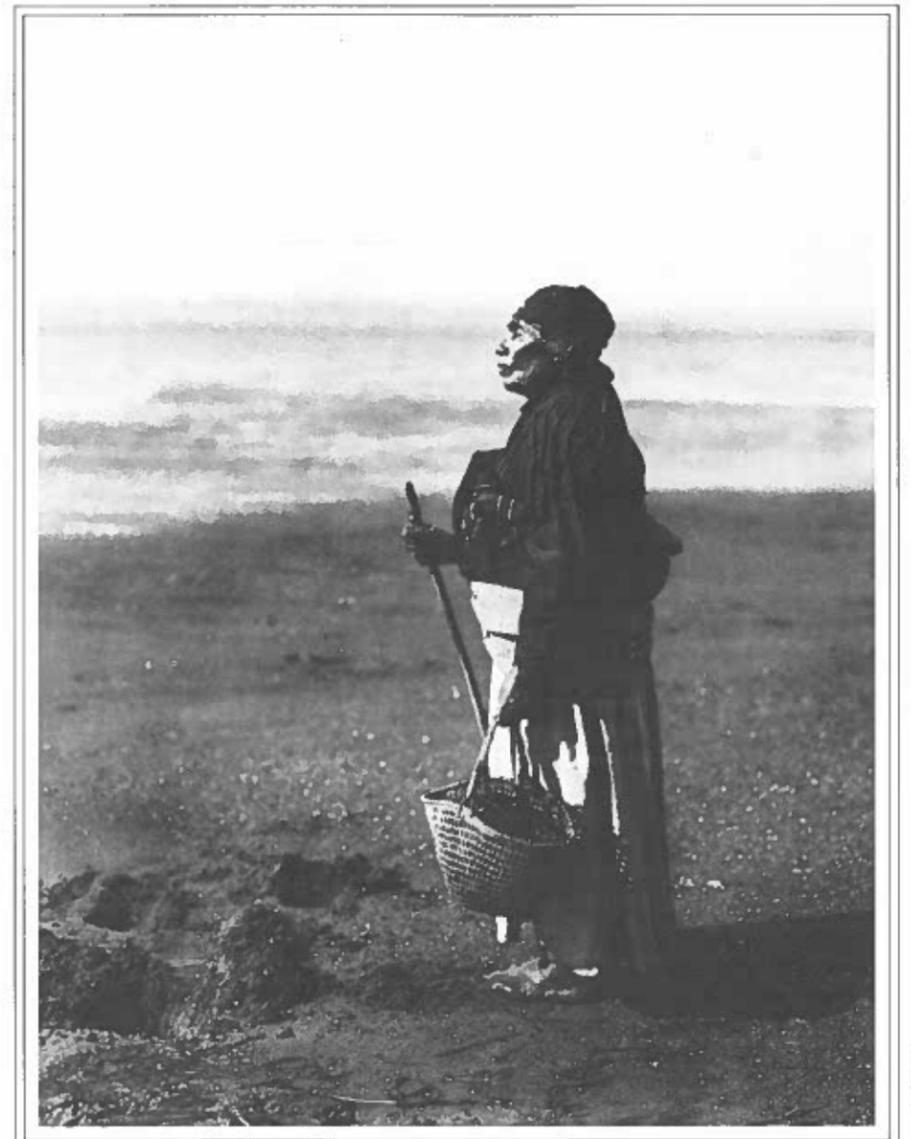
Some misconceptions about prehistory derive from the ethnocentric bias of contemporary Western culture, while others stem from the portrait of Native peoples we have inherited from historical and ethnographic sources. Most written sources were produced by outsiders, and all were made after the forces of accelerated culture change had been set in motion. The experience of "contact," the meeting of people with disparate cultural traditions, profoundly changed the lives of both Europeans and Native Americans. But the impact of contact on indigenous life was incomparably destructive.

The earliest face-to-face encounters between Northwest Coast Indians and Europeans began in the 1700s, substantially later than the voyage of Columbus. As did Columbus, the European explorers "discovered" what they considered "new"

lands, mapping coastlines and waterways, laying claims for distant monarchs. This period of Northwest Coast exploration and colonization is reflected in the places Europeans named for themselves and their leaders: Cook, Vancouver, Whidbey, Dixon, Fraser, Puget, Heceta, Juan de Fuca, Queen Charlotte, Prince of Wales, Frederick, Chatham, Victoria, Baranof, Chichagof, Etolin, and Kupreanof. In contrast, Native American place names are recorded in obscure texts or remembered by a few elders, but most have been lost. While the colonial period is readily apparent in the region's place names, despite over 10,000 years of occupation, relatively few Native American place names have made it onto today's maps. Such names typically survive in Anglicized form, such as Seattle or Sitka. The upshot of this is that it is nearly impossible to refer to the geography of the indigenous peoples' homeland without using words which call to mind the history of Euro-American "discovery." The people called Northwest Coast "Indians" were comprised of at least forty-five different ethnic groups who spoke their own languages.

The First Americans came to this land long before Columbus. They "discovered" these continents we now call the Americas sometime before 12,000 years ago. The evidence of their early occupations is scattered, fragmentary, and the subject of great competition and controversy among contemporary archaeologists. As Native American populations grew and expanded into new territories, the sites they left behind became more numerous. By investigating the physical remains of their activities on the landscape, archaeologists try to reconstruct what life was like during the past.

Yet stones and bones do not speak for those who left them. Most people think archaeologists dig up self-evident facts, that prehistory can be read from the artifacts contained in layers of sediment in archaeological deposits. This is not possible. Training and convention dictate that if we find large spearpoints, we have evidence of "Man the Hunter." But what if we consider these same points as knives used to process hides, "clear" evidence of women's work? Only recently have feminist scholars shown us how our preconceptions about such issues as the sexual division of labor struc-



these had already undergone irreversible transformations begun more than one hundred years earlier. Usually, ethnographers perceived a rigid division of labor between the sexes. In addition to the food-getting activities mentioned above, men manufactured tools of stone and copper; they carved totem poles and built canoes. Women dressed skins and wove baskets and blankets. Men traveled on long-distance trading excursions and waged war, while women stayed at home and followed strict rules of behavior to guarantee their husbands' success.

When we turn to older documents, those written by the explorers and fur traders themselves, we find less separation between women's and men's economic, social, and political roles. The androcentric bias of the eighteenth-century accounts is often easier to recognize than that of the nineteenth-century ethnographers who were trying to be "scientific." For example, with some surprise, Vancouver remarked upon the high level of skill with which a group of women paddled their canoe, "without the assistance of a single man." He also commented on the principal role women played in



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commercial transactions with his trading party. With a hint of astonishment, he wrote of women:

Nor did it appear, that . . . they were inferior to the men; on the contrary, it should rather seem that they are looked up to as the superior sex, for they appeared in general to keep the men in awe, and under subjection. . . . Amongst the party there did not appear to be any chief, or other person of importance, unless such authority was vested in some of the females.

The possibility that women held positions of authority seems to have been just barely within the bounds of Vancouver's imagination. I expect that many traders and virtually all colonial administrators would have been intimidated by women leaders like those described by Vancouver. Euro-American males were much more comfortable dealing with Native American leaders who were male, and over time, this served to consolidate power into the hands of Native American men.

COOPERATIVE LABOR AND SOCIAL RANK

Probably the most important subsistence resource on the Northwest Coast was salmon because large quantities could be caught and stored as surplus. Sources suggest that this activity was shared by women and men, with men catching fish while women processed them. However, scrutiny of ethnographic and historic accounts indicate that women did fish, and that men and women cooperated in drying and smoking the fish. Labor was not as rigidly divided along gender lines as the nineteenth-century ethnographers would have us believe. Perhaps ethnographers were projecting their own society's views about sex roles onto the indigenous groups they observed.

To address the division of labor, I believe we should consider differences in social status. Northwest Coast Indian societies were not egalitarian; individuals were ranked according to age and their relationships to leaders who had achieved high status. Anthropologists usually describe their social organizations as composed of elites, commoners, and slaves, although this is an over-simplification. Nevertheless, throughout the region, slaves of both sexes performed much of the heavy work, and were tokens of their masters' great

wealth and high status. Not unexpectedly, slaves were usually acquired during wars between ethnic groups. The elite represented the "ideal" person, and the few women and men of high status wielded a great deal of economic and political power.

So far, I have pieced together an incomplete mosaic of Northwest Coast Indian life drawn from the ethnographic record. But what do we really know about prehistory? What was life like for the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast before Columbus?

PREHISTORIC CONNECTIONS WITH THE OLD WORLD

Native North America was not isolated from Old World influences before the first documented contact between Europeans and Northwest Coast Indians. In fact, through far-reaching systems of regional exchange, recent evidence suggests that indigenous societies across the Bering Straits maintained regular contact over at least the past 2,000 years. Northwest Coast Indians were in contact with neighboring Pacific Eskimos who in turn interacted with the Chukchi and Koryak of northeast Siberia. Shared patterns of culture across this large region were well illustrated in a recent Smithsonian Institution exhibit, "Crossroads of Continents."

Several of the earliest explorers to the Northwest Coast including Cook, Malaspina, and Vancouver, were amazed to find that Tlingit, Haida, Nootka, and other Northwest Coast Indians already owned European and Asian iron, firearms, and glass beads. Such articles made their way to the Northwest at least (and perhaps more than), seventy-five years before face-to-face contacts between Europeans and Northwest Coast Indians.

Old World diseases also spread across indigenous trade routes, in some cases before direct contact occurred between Europeans and particular Northwest Coast Indian groups. There is scattered evidence of a smallpox epidemic during the 1770s across the northern Northwest Coast, although its severity and impact are poorly known. However, Robert Boyd has estimated that subsequent smallpox outbreaks (1836, 1862) reduced populations of Northwest Coast Indians by one-third. I suspect that the earliest epidemics were equally disastrous, causing some groups to die out completely as remnants of other groups forged new alliances. Patterns of land and resource use changed, and the old social order was torn apart. The influx of new goods revolutionized their technology as Northwest Coast Indians became tied to the world economy. All these changes occurred before ethnographers came to the coast, to record "dying" American Indian cultures.

A NEW ARCHAEOLOGY

In some ways, the ethnographic record is a burden to archaeologists trying to reconstruct American prehistory because it incorporates so much historic change. As we have seen, it also reflects the cultural and personal biases of ethnographers themselves, the most obvious being ethnocentrism and androcentrism. Ethnographic versions of a wide range of gender-related phenomena may say more about Euro-American attitudes than traditional American Indian life.

Our current knowledge of Northwest Coast prehistory is deficient in many ways. Often, we uncritically extrapolate problematical ethnographic information onto the past. At the other extreme, we "de-gender" the past, by simply ignoring gender issues when reporting our data. This is extremely unfortunate because archaeology has enormous potential for reaching beyond prevailing stereotypes of women and men in prehistory.

As feminism begins to creep into archaeology, we are starting to realize just how limiting our conventional ways of approaching the past have been. For the Northwest Coast, only a few archaeologists including Kathryn Bernick, Sandra Zacharias, and I have begun to critique reconstructions of prehistory from a feminist perspective. We look forward to moving beyond reevaluation of old approaches as we pursue gender-specific behavioral data about the development of technology, the use of space, and the organization of economic tasks. We can track changes in these data through time, permitting a more complete understanding of the evolution of cultural systems. A key issue on the Northwest Coast will be how gender is related to the rise of social inequality that characterized Northwest Coast Indian groups at contact.

The best source of unambiguous archaeological data on gender issues is human burials. From human skeletal remains, we can learn about differences in the nutritional status, disease history, rates of injury, longevity, and overall health of prehistoric women, children, and men. The treatment of the dead is often a rich source of information about social relations; generally the nature of the artifacts buried with a person can reveal much about their social role and status. Burial populations dating from different time periods are invaluable for tracking the evolution of socio-cultural systems.

Ironically, while such burial data provide the most direct evidence of gender relations, they also pose the greatest philosophical problem for feminist scholars. What we call "human skeletal remains" are the bones of Native American ancestors. Although different indigenous groups have

different perspectives, and individual opinions differ as well, many Native American people understandably find excavation of their ancestors' remains to be deeply distressing. As feminists, we can clearly see how our pursuit of such "data" derives from our tradition of Western science whose imperialistic roots can be traced to Columbus and those before him.

The only way around this dilemma is to work with indigenous people of the Northwest to address their heritage concerns.



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Despite nineteenth-century predictions, American Indian cultures did not "die." Through great tenacity they survived, and many indigenous traditions have persisted, albeit in new forms. Industrial land and resource development is occurring on Native-owned and Native-claimed lands at an alarming pace, and while some archaeological sites can be protected, many more will be lost. In those cases, we hope to recover archaeological information that can serve the needs of a new archaeology free from androcentric bias. Through collaboration with the descendants of the First Americans, we hope to address their concerns as well.

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From Queen Mother to Breeder, from Beloved Woman to Squaw:

THE IMPACT OF COLUMBUS ON AFRICAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN



by Sharon Elise

any European Americans celebrate the chain of events beginning with Columbus's sighting of the Bahamas and culminating in the expansion of European destinies. However, for Native American women and women of the African diaspora, the national holiday commemorating the "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus summons bitter feelings at the outcome of that historic voyage. Columbus's "discovery" resulted in the reorganization of the "New World"—based on land dispossession, cultural attack, genocide, and enslavement.

The Columbian "discovery" marks a watershed in the herstories of enslaved African women and Native American women. In this essay, I examine the process of gender reconstruction that resulted in a new, subordinate status for these women, and against which they continue to struggle. For African women who became part of the diaspora, their status during the pre-Columbian years, while varied, was certainly higher than that following their enslavement.

QUEEN MOTHERS AND BELOVED WOMEN

In most African societies men, women, and children participated directly in subsistence production and shared in distribution as well. Production was organized by and for the community or the kin structure to which individuals belonged, rather than by individuals, and the focus was on cooperation, rather than competition. Women and men shared access to the land and autonomy over their labor. Women also enjoyed prestige for their ability to mother, and in some cases experienced their highest status during their active reproductive years and, later, as elders.

While productive and reproductive roles were generally organized by age and gender, reciprocity and complementarity characterize the division of labor. Some African women rose to prominence as Queen Mothers, queens, chiefs, and warriors, and those who did not still had a strong voice in community affairs and significant control over their own labor and distribution of resources.

To the extent that women's and men's lives were ordered, their position was determined by extended family relationships, not by conjugal, heterosexual relations. African women were daughters, wives and co-wives, mothers and co-mothers, farmers, craftspeople, and marketers, among other roles. The organization of these activities took shape through interlocking relations based primarily on lineage systems with both matrilineal and patrilineal forms. Whichever the lineage system, both women and men paid tribute, sharing the fruits of their labor with their larger kin network and sharing the resources of the network as well.

While gendered roles encompassed different, parallel productive and reproductive activities, in many African societies these roles could be carried out by either females or males. According to Niara Sudarkasa, this is demonstrated by the phenomenon of woman to woman marriages. In such marriages, each partner assumed a social role compatible with the sexual division of production, reproduction, and distribution. The apparent elasticity of sex roles then, lends credence to the idea that women in such societies enjoyed a greater range of expression and activity than those in the patriarchal, hierarchical societies of Europe.

Despite tremendous differences in the social organization of African societies, certain features held in common distinguished them from their

European counterpart. These include a relationship to land, where land was not alienated or commodified, and most often, asymmetrical relations between women and men. Asymmetrical relations, according to Mullings, describe a situation where separate spheres prevailed in decision making, production, and reproduction, though women and men may have equal access to the means of production. Overall, then, African women could rise to prominence in some cases, as did the Queen Mothers among the Ashanti. More generally, they enjoyed greater self-reliance and exercised more political power than women did in Europe. Furthermore, where patriarchy was the mode of social organization, it was far more limited than that which existed in European societies.

There is evidence that women paid deference to their husbands in some African societies. The Western assumption of the primacy of conjugal relations results in a focus on such relations and has obscured the significant differences seen in other aspects of social life. In fact, for colonial anthropologists, the status of women was viewed as universal, where women were "naturally" subordinate to men. This assumption, given contempo-

rary revisionist analyses, is a misrepresentation of the real position accorded women in African societies.

In many cases, women in such societies have played a role comparable to that of men in production and in many other aspects of social life. Not only is this significant for women, but

children often had significant roles in production and enjoyed greater autonomy and respect as well. Further, direct participation in subsistence production by women and children, as seen in precolonial African societies, is consistent with the greater degrees of autonomy, accord, and value given women and children.

Similar to women in African societies, women indigenous to pre-Columbian America were generally viewed as vital productive members of their societies. They, too, labored for the subsistence of the extended clan line to which they



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RANDY TOTTI (COURTESY)

belonged in a system of reciprocity. Women, men, and children worked together to secure subsistence for all. They considered themselves a part of the land that provided their sustenance; the concept of private ownership of land was alien to them. Access to the means of subsistence, then, was not something a person could give and take or accumulate.

Native American women were considered integral to the well-being of their clan societies. The value of women was incorporated into the spiritual practices of Native Americans. Contemporary author Paula Gunn Allen writes that this is exemplified by the worship of Corn Woman, Spider Woman, and Serpent Woman. In these societies, the gender roles assigned to women and men, while asymmetrical, did not reflect inequality in access to the means of subsistence production or distribution. Crossing gender roles was a matter of idiosyncratic choice, and seldom was the will of the individual controverted because of the principle of personal autonomy for each individual. Along with the crossing of gender roles, there was also woman to woman marriage in many tribes with no social stigma attached. In fact, as Allen explains, homosexuality was ritualized and honored by the many tribal peoples of North America.

The extended clan structure provided the significant base for social organization. Women were free, generally, to break their marriages with simple rituals such as placing their husband's belongings outside their abode. Sexual freedom, as discussed above, along with ease of divorce are both signs of regard for women as measured by the high degree of autonomy they symbolize.

Women were rulers along with men in many cases; just as the Queen Mothers in some African societies ruled alongside their sons, some tribes had both a male and a female chief with respective provinces for each. And, while not the rule throughout pre-Columbian Native American societies, many women earned their people's regard as warriors, as did the "beloved women" of the Cherokee Nation whom Allen describes. Furthermore, as seen in many African societies, Native American women held powerful women's councils that dictated important decisions such as whether or not to go to war and how to dispense with prisoners of war.

To summarize then, among both African and Native American women of the pre-Columbian era, evidence exists to document their relatively high status. These were women whose contributions to their extended family network—whether matrilineal or patrilineal—earned them high social esteem and an integral place in the community. These were women who had equal access to land, their means of

insidious "middle passage," contact meant death—by disease, by life-threatening conditions, by murder, and by suicide. But there was another ramification of enslavement and colonization—an attack upon the traditional cultural institutions and the imposition of a new social order based on the subordination of people of color and the debasement, in particular, of women.

hands. His crew committed further acts of unspeakable atrocity. When it became clear that little gold was available in the Caribbean, he rounded up "Indian" captives and took them, enslaved, to Europe where they perished. The objectification of women, who had been respected members of their communities and now were debased as naked savages in the eyes of Columbus and his fellow marauders, was

to the extent that they were forcibly prevented from cultural maintenance. Thus, communal and/or lineage systems were replaced with colonial systems, as religions based on female deities and ancestor worship were forbidden in favor of the white male god of the Christians. Neither women nor men were the heads of their families. The new head of the family was the colonial administrator, the master, or the

overseer. He decided the fate of a conjugal relationship or the duration of a parenthood and childhood. This was, of course, most advanced under chattel slavery, where even the "breeding" age was set by the master, as well as the partner.

As totalitarian as the systems spawned by colonialism were, there was and always has been measured resistance. Even as Columbus sought to round up Indians for enslavement, they escaped and hid in caves, attempting to elude his efforts. Explorers of the new lands, following Columbus's lead, also met with a hospitality and generosity they could not fathom.

When these explorers imposed colonial practices, they also met resistance from the indigenous peoples. And wherever Native Americans and enslaved Africans are found in resistance, women

On this occasion, when so many Americans rejoice and revel in the exploits of Christopher Columbus, we should reflect on how far this discovery has plummeted Native American and African American women from their place in traditional society. Rape, domestic violence, incest, and constant exposure to sexual harassment are now commonplace. Women raise their children on scant resources. The extended family network—once the site of support and shared resources—is now a site of oppression but, ironically, still the only source of support for many women. The asymmetrical division of labor has been exploited further to foster sexual inequality.

Despite the oppression encountered in the post-Columbian era, women have maintained one another through the kin network, through other domestic networks, through women's clubs and women's councils. Perhaps by telling these stories, of life before Columbus, we can controvert the contemporary assumptions that our current place on the bottom of society properly reflects our "nature" or our talents.

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1492, by Deborah Small and Maggie Jaffe

subsistence, and who had limited experiences of patriarchal control over their reproductive and productive labor.

So, Columbus and his successors were not coming into an empty wilderness, but into a world which in some places was as densely populated as Europe itself, where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women, and children were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world (Zinn 1980, 21).

BREEDERS AND SQUAWS

One result of the genocidal character of the European conquest was the reliance on enslavement of Africans to labor for the production of massive wealth, fueling the development of Western capitalism. For countless indigenous peoples of the Americas and Africans enslaved and imported via the

The colonization of Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans exposed the women of these communities to forms of objectification they had not previously encountered. The qualities they held as esteemed members of their societies were radically transformed. European assumptions of indigenous peoples were constructed to denote their new subordinated status as squaws and breeders, forming a powerful new ideology.

The processes of sexualization, denigration, and exploitation that accompanied the colonization of Native American women and the enslavement of African women were begun early in Columbus's travels to the Caribbean. In his first and second voyages, he killed, pushed into forced labor, and raped the peaceful, hospitable peoples he encountered. According to Howard Zinn, when they were unable to meet Columbus's insatiable demands for gold, he killed and tortured them by cutting off their

to become an integral part of the empires launched by Columbus's discovery.

Native American women were disparaged as drudges who walked behind their men; African women were to join men in supplying the wealth for European coffers. Both groups of women were to be ready sexual objects for the heinous pleasures of, first, the explorers, and then the settlers of the New World—America. Neither was permitted to benefit from the wealth they produced for this new society.

Native American and enslaved African women had never known alienation from the land. They respectively were placed in systems that commodified the land and dispossessed them from it, or commodified the land and them, and forced one object to work the other. No longer did their labor contribute to the well-being of their loved ones. They were only alienated from their traditional cultures

The objectification of women, who had been respected members of their communities and now were debased as naked savages in the eyes of Columbus and his fellow marauders, was to become an integral part of the empires launched by Columbus's discovery.

were integral to those struggles. An important part of that resistance has been to reclaim family as it was: a source of support, a target for our labor, a web of obligation and reciprocation, the site for cultural continuity through parenting.

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RAPE

as a Tool of Conquest in Early Latin America

by Stephanie Wood

"Biologically speaking, it was neither microbe nor sword nor mailed fist that conquered Mexico. It was the membrus febrilis." —R.C. Padden



eschewing the usual depiction of conquest as death and destruction, historian R.C. Padden heralds "love-making" between Spanish men and indigenous women (and their issue) for transforming Mexico into a European colony. He suspects "the Spaniards commonly left more pregnancies in their camps than they did casualties on the field of battle." Padden might extend that scenario to all of Latin America, raising the curtain on Christopher Columbus and his libidinous men in 1492.

But was that "feverish member" simply conjoined in an expression of love or was it also wielded as a weapon of conquest? Was rape not a major feature of early transatlantic encounters, beginning in the late fifteenth century? Should we not scrutinize the role of rape in warfare and its particularly repugnant expression, conquest, before we giddily salute the so-called civilization Europeans introduced in this hemisphere five hundred years ago? Because rape has gained notoriety as a feature of conflicts as recent as the Vietnam War, a critical examination of the topic has the potential not only for shedding light on the darker side of the Columbian quincentenary, but for illuminating resolutions for social change with the turn of the millennium.

As ridiculous as it seems, confusion still blurs the distinction between lovemaking and rape. Padden is reluctant to call the conqueror a rapist, likening the indigenous woman to Eve: "She sought that exquisite pain as avidly as He, and beneath the enveloping Christian heaven She also found guilt." Another historian, Magnus Mörner, also expresses concern lest rape be "overemphasized" in early Latin American history. His argument rests on the claim that premarital virginity was not prized by all tribes, making a major leap to suggest "Indian women very often docilely complied with the conquistadores' desires." Preserving the hymen may have been irrelevant for some, but how can we dismiss the fear and loathing that the vicious act of rape surely inspired?

Granted, some native women would, over time, accept intercourse (not rape) or even pursue unions with European men as colonization proceeded and advantages and power could be derived from such unions. But as Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock assert in *Women and Colonization*, the "recognition that women took advantage of available opportunities, eventually trading on their own sexuality, should not be interpreted as a denial of the brutal exploitation, both sexual and economic, that they were subjected to by the colonizer." Indigenous men of the conquest period, perhaps following traditional patterns, also occasionally sold women slaves to Europeans, provided them as tribute payments, and even offered them as "gifts" in the pursuit of peace or strategic alliances. Such practices, seen as a betrayal in one light, may also be considered acts of expediency by desperate people. They additionally reveal internal gender dynamics.

Just as historians will require more sensitivity for interpreting or imagining women's responses, greater realism is warranted in depicting the conquerors as warriors rather than lovers. It was literally in 1492 that the abduction of indigenous women began, on the very orders of Columbus. He immediately noticed the effect this had on the Arawak men, who began concealing the women of their communities. He was also nervous about the maintenance of "discipline" among the European men he left behind at the fort at Villa de Navidad, his first attempt at settlement, when he returned to Spain. It is little wonder he returned to the Caribbean in 1493 to find all his men dead and the fort burned in a retaliatory attack for the abduction of local women. Several of the garrison men had been living with three or four women each, holding them against their will and against the wishes of their families and community.

It was also as early as Columbus's second voyage that Michele de Cuneo, an Italian "noble," recorded his braggart's account of rape. Cuneo adds insult to injury by twisting the story into the seduction of a whore:

While I was in the boat, I captured a very beautiful Carib woman, whom the said Lord Admiral [Columbus] gave to me. When I had taken her to my cabin she was naked—as was their custom. I was filled with my desire to take my pleasure with her and attempted to satisfy my desire. She was

unwilling, and so treated me with her nails that I wished I had never begun. But—to cut a long story short—I then took a piece of rope and whipped her soundly, and she let forth such incredible screams that you would not have believed your ears. Eventually we came to such terms, I assure you, that you would have thought she had been brought up in a school for whores (Cohen 1969, 139).

Such candid confessions by raping conquerors are extremely rare. Rape, all-too-often a secret crime, defies historical synthesis. Its cause, execution, frequency, and long-range impact in distant times, as is often the case today, are the domain of guesswork. Even the appearance of mixed-race offspring does not prove that force was a part of the process of impregnation. But casual remarks by shipmates can speak volumes when they report such incidents as women jumping off Columbus's ships at night and swimming great distances endeavoring to gain their freedom, or taking up arms to resist initial capture. One heart-rending, possibly twisted account tells how, when Columbus released some slave women on Hispaniola, they were so frantic to put distance between themselves and the invaders that some of them inadvertently dropped and abandoned their nursing babies.

Other contemporary witnesses, particularly ecclesiastical chroniclers aghast at the abuses they observed, have also left telling, though scanty, details. For example, on the southern Chilean frontier of the Spanish conquest of the Araucanian people, one chronicler reports that during a single week sixty women gave birth to babies of mixed heritage. Soldiers recently arrived from Spain (presumably nine or ten months before) and some other resentful men assigned to the frontier had kidnapped the women for use as "servants" and "more shameful purposes." This occurred more than a century after Columbus's landfall, but in another similar trajectory of conquest. Atrocities on the Chilean frontier were also greater, but possibly not by a wide margin, than those committed by the "best soldiers" stationed in Santiago, including "robbery, murder, assault, rape, brawling, [and] fornication," according to historian Eugene Korth.

Few will contest that conquest is a form of warfare with features particularly conducive to the perpetration of rape. Perhaps some continuum can be

hypothesized, holding that greater offenses have been committed with higher frequency earlier in the conquest phase and farther from centers of society. In early Latin American expeditions, called *entradas*, most conquerors were not trained soldiers—they had little experience in formal warfare, and their supervision was limited. Justice was more likely to be suspended due to the relatively weak representation of government officials and courts. One might find in such conquests a higher degree of social disorganization, where the regulatory power of social mores was so distant as to have less sway, if any, in holding men accountable for their actions. Expedition members might even have perceived some encouragement for operating outside normal bounds when the very humanity of the "enemy" was being questioned, as it was with the Caribs and other Native American peoples, in the racist attitudes typical of conquerors.

Because payment for services rendered in conquest often involved booty rather than wages, as Susan Brownmiller notes for medieval foot soldiers in Europe, "to rape and loot

Preserving the hymen may have been irrelevant for some, but how can we dismiss the fear and loathing that the vicious act of rape surely inspired?

were among the few advantages open" to them. This was probably especially applicable in the raid and trade, or *rescate*, form practiced in the early Caribbean phase of Latin American conquest and illustrated so well by the men's conduct at the fort of La Navidad. It would also go hand in hand with the enslavement of the indigenous people that was a feature of that same early period and of expeditions into other Latin American frontiers as late as the nineteenth century. The conqueror's assumption of his right to take payment in the form of rape (as both sexual release and a violation of another man's property rights) and enslavement (an extension and perpetuation of the property violation) was likely character-

istic of these traditions.

Some may question the presentation of rape as an "advantage" or "reward" on the basis that it emphasizes the biological over the criminal or political nature of the violation. Taking sexual payment may suggest the pleasurable fulfillment of a frustrated need, diverting attention from the heinous, injurious method of domination and the violent expression of superiority it entailed. This discussion requires further inquiry, for the sex-ratio factor in rape theory has tempted many observers of Latin American conquests. After long voyages and with so few European women present in the Americas during the first phases of conquest, the invaders appear in modern histories as men inevitably scratching a sexual itch. Later, as colonial society began to resemble the metropolis and Iberian women came over in large numbers, rape diminished. However, the evolution from conquest to full-blown settlement entailed myriad social and political transformations, besides the growing presence of European women, that likely affected the frequency of sexual assault.

Sex-ratio proponents slight the role of rape as a tool both for terrorizing initially and for maintaining control over time. In the realm of terrorism, intruders may have used rape to provoke the rebellion of indigenous women and men, who could thereby be enslaved under the self-serving "laws" of "just war" observed on many early *entradas*. The capture and degradation of native women may have been one of several conscious and unconscious methods of picking a fight in order to justify the invasion and occupation of another people's territory. Then, across the generation or more that the conquest phase endured, the rape victim became a permanent slave assigned to the conqueror by his superior and was subjected to continual violation. Sometimes she became his virtual wife. The conqueror would also employ his sexual weapon against the female slaves of the work gangs in the gold fields, probably much as the overseers of southern U.S. plantations would later suppress African women and, by extension, men.

While European-American society might recognize and partly absorb the children of these violations in later years, and their descendants would even come to play major roles, in this period they were treated as further chattel, a

welcome expansion of the rapidly shrinking labor force succumbing to imported diseases—including some venereal ailments, another vile reality of sexual assault. Just as pregnancy largely "served to move the story line forward" in Greek myths, according to Brownmiller, *mestizaje* (the production of mixed offspring) has captured the attention of Latin American historians uncomfortable studying rape. This story line also appeals, understandably, to the modern descendants of the Spanish, Portuguese, indigenous, and African actors on the stage of conquest and colonization, now proudly pointing to their roots in two or more ancient civilizations. Some will assert apologetically that the Iberian conquerors may have raped, but they showed less racism toward Native American and African women in their willingness (and eagerness in the case of elite women) to form lasting unions and raise families with them, while English-American males, in contrast, with a different background and distinct colonial goals, largely shunned indigenous women.

The national character angle has long been a favorite, for better or worse, in comparisons of colonial situations across the hemisphere. More aptly approached as a study of cultural dimensions to cause and effect, this methodology may have validity for examining Iberian patriarchy and its significance for rape patterns. The strongly patriarchal nature of Spanish and Portuguese societies could have affected gender power relations to the extent that rape was both a greater likelihood in conquest and a serious concern after colonization, when wives and daughters needed "protection."

While the cultural, social, political, and economic context may have been ripe for rape in Latin American conquest expeditions, it remains to be explored whether sexual assault was a conscious tool. The monarchs practically advocated miscegenation, but nowhere did they recommend abuses, and, in fact, they legislated against them. Nor did leaders such as Columbus, Hernando Cortés, and Francisco Pizarro specify rape as a military strategy, although they personally distributed indigenous women to their captains, surely knowing the men were assaulting them. The leaders must also have watched (if not demonstrated) the ravishment of women on the battlefield, yet were more likely to call for curbing



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abuses such as trading worthless European trinkets for gold nuggets. This, coupled with their silence upon witnessing the destructive retaliation rape could bring (as in La Navidad), and the prolongation of conflict that postponed effective settlement and complicated trade, leads one to suspect that rape had become at least a spontaneous tactic. It served, literally, to advance a more thorough domination that entailed taking territorial possession and enslaving and controlling the labor force on a more permanent basis. Indeed, the *membra febrilis*, alongside sword and microbe, was a deadly serious implement of war.

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"SO MANY AND SUCH SIGNIFICANT WOMEN":

Testimony from the Convents of Colonial Mexico by Amanda Powell



iterary history maintains that, for several centuries after Columbus, few first-person narratives recounted daily life in the "new" world of colonial Mexico. If men wrote so few, we assume such writings by women must be

even scarcer. However, sources previously discounted—convent archives—surprise us with a wealth of women's information and insight. Secular thinking, which opposes "science" to "superstition," dominates our intellectual world. Modern feminism shares the heritage of this Enlightenment view. Much feminist thought, rightly insisting that women do exercise reason, has found it hard to credit certain spiritual paths and practices followed by women. These seem to lead away from full participation in the otherwise "masculine" sphere of intellectual and political engagement. However, central aspects of the lives of women throughout history and throughout the world today involve religious choices.

Two writers, María de San José and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, show the range of expression possible for women in seventeenth-century "New Spain," from the colloquial to the courtly, the enraptured to the intellectual. The convent offered these women a livelihood outside the strictures of marriage, as property of a man. In the "new" world of their time, place, and upper strata of social class, a woman could not support herself; no female careers or professions existed, save marriage or the convent. The only alternative, prostitution, removed a woman from her (social) world, and denied her any hope of the next.

Religious life was an attractive option to many women. In a religious culture and society, "taking the veil" did not remove women from experience central to their culture, but placed them at its heart. As "brides of Christ," many experienced a certain latitude—time, and either the encouragement or the requirement—to write, which they felt as both a privilege and an obligation. In religious life, women like María de San José (only recently considered worthy of attention) pursued and recorded the mystical experiences embedded in their



A Poisoned Root Bears Deadly Blooms, by Pam Cohen and Jon Garlinghouse. The inscription at the bottom reads: "In the same month of the same year that Columbus set sail, Ferdinand and Isabella signed a decree expelling all Jews and Moors from Spain."

daily lives. Though much has been destroyed, numerous writings survive. In the convent, Sor Juana established practices of study and writing that made her a prodigious literary and intellectual figure. Considering these authors together saves each from the erroneous and unjustly isolating concept of the “exceptional woman.” By restoring the well-known Sor Juana to the dignity and company of an entire context of writing women, her and their real achievements come to the fore. As a translator of their works, I am aware that the meanings of their words can only be conveyed by giving contemporary readers a sense of their lives within the social forces of their times. These women’s awarenesses of each other enter their very language in ways that have previously been ignored.

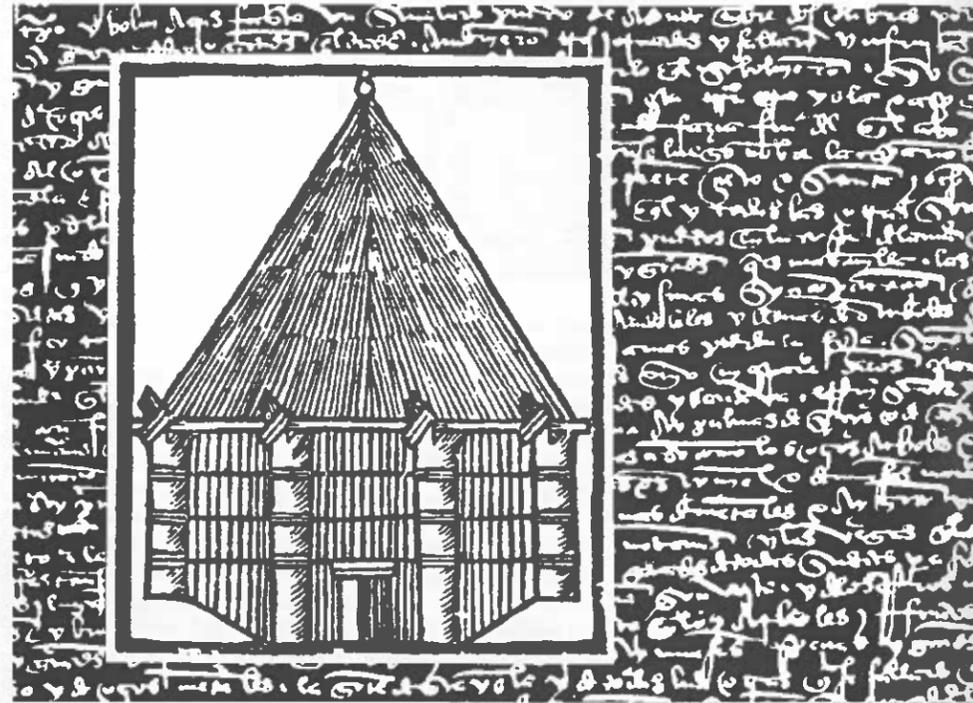
“New Spain” was an intricate society, truly multicultural, both highly formalized and turbulent. Official protocol and affairs of state exceeded their European religious and legal models. The highly elaborated hierarchies bespeak the degree of control that the colonial state (always linked, but sometimes at odds, with the church) exercised over its recently subjugated and diverse communities: various indigenous “Indian” peoples; African slaves; growing mixed-race populations; and the surging number of white, Mexican-born *criollos/as* of Spanish parentage. This juncture of experiences, caused by conquest, was giving rise to “mexicanidad” or Mexicanness. Even the *criollos* were set increasingly apart from, and at times against, their Spanish rulers.

The women who had the chance to write, and whose writings were preserved, were either of the Old World aristocracy, or the New World *criollo* bourgeoisie. From the latter came Madre María de San José and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. In one sense, these nuns served the patriarchal state and church: their lives and works promoted the sanctity and high culture of the newly dominant colonizers. But in another, they resisted such co-optation, both by recording the rift-driven complexities of their society, and by representing their own conflicts with prevailing powers.

The young María de San José (1656–1719) “made mischief,” as she says, until the age of eleven. At that time, the devil appeared to tell her “you are mine.” A change of heart ensued, and she set herself stringent spiritual

practices of prayer, contemplation, and self-discipline, eventually entering a convent in Puebla, Mexico. There her confessor, who feared for the orthodoxy of her ecstasies, ordered her to record her years with her family on the hacienda and her experiences upon

founder, teacher of novices, and celebrated mystic. In the passage that follows, we see the determination of a young woman who sought physical space and autonomy—“a room of her own”—within, yet in opposition to the bustle and demands of family life.



entering the convent. To our benefit, the journal continued, into twelve volumes, throughout her more than thirty years of religious life.

María was relatively uneducated; she recounts wryly that, when her confessor required it, God miraculously enabled her to write, yet saw to it that she should take no undue pleasure from the ability. Her spirited and colloquial prose details the complex power relations—in which she participated—of a large and rather isolated seventeenth-century household that included her parents, eight siblings, and numerous Indian servants and farmhands.

Post-Freudian and secular in our values, we tend to recoil at the religious path, with its self-mortifications and rapturous passions. However, María’s vivid and determined account moves us to respect the empowerment she found in her faith. By it, she succeeded in fleeing the economic insecurities, sibling rivalries, and provincialism of the hacienda to become a convent

My mother’s house was very fine but quite small, because it had only three rooms, a parlor and two bedrooms. And so I had no place where I might retire to be alone, save with great discomfort and effort, in the way I shall now tell. There was a very large garden where many trees and other plants grew. One had to enter this garden through a shed that was set against the garden wall. This shed was thatched with straw or hay, as is the way in the countryside on the working haciendas. The shed was used to store old castoffs and at other times it had served as a hencoop. Now it will be under-

stood how uncomfortable it was to stay there! Well, there I would seat myself, filthy as it was, because I had no other more decent place to go. That garden was my only consolation, although I was exposed to all the rough weather under heaven, having no place to go that wasn’t out in the sun, and the wind, and the rain.

I saw these inconveniences and a great many other obstacles and hindrances that stood in my way to keep me from carrying out what I had proposed, yet none of these held me back or weakened my determination to fulfill the intentions to which the Lord had set me. And the greater the obstacles I encountered, the greater grew my inward sense of effectiveness, together with an eagerness so great it seemed given by Our Lord, with a sure confidence and faith that His Majesty would certainly assist me and help me in all things. . . .

Well then, as I was saying about the nuisance of having no chamber or nook anywhere in the house where I might go to be alone and away from the noise and hubbub of all the family in the house—for it was quite large—I decided to make a hut of wooden planks propped against a tree, in that garden I mentioned. I couldn’t build it all alone. I called Polonia, the Indian woman, for as I have said, my mother allowed me to take her with me on this and other occasions when I was unable to do what I wanted all by myself. Between the two of us we built the little hut, with planks that were so narrow that I could not fit inside

unless I knelt down, and in order to get in through the door it was necessary to bend double or go in on my knees. This little hut served just for the times when there were people in the shed of which I spoke, for then I could not stay in it, or do my spiritual exercises there. At those times I could retreat to the little hut and use it to say my prayers and perform other exercises that I had set myself.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648/51–1695) also tells of “obstacles and hindrances” that threatened to prevent her “carrying out what she proposed.” In like manner, the religious life afforded her a choice to pursue her great passion, which was not mystical union with God but intellectual study. Her most famous prose work, the *Answer to Sister Philothea de la Cruz*, argues eloquently and theoretically for this choice.

Sor Juana spent her early life in the rural home of her unmarried mother; then with relatives in Mexico City; and next, as lady-in-waiting and favored “curiosity,” in the court of the Viceroy and Vicereine. None of these situations could ensure her livelihood or security, let alone autonomy. She entered the convent. There, her wide reading, ready wit, and keen ear for the music of language found expression in great numbers of poems, songs, and verse dramas. These were performed on official occasions and published in her lifetime, making her from then until now a major figure in Hispanic letters. Among these works, the *Answer to Sor Philothea* stands out with its sharp defense of women’s right to study and to teach. It encases an acutely feminist understanding of women’s strengths and vulnerabilities as “intellectual agents” in a world in which such endeavors are defined by and reserved for men.

Sor Juana asserts theology to be the highest of all branches of humane letters, the ultimate object of her study. The claim was doubly radical: first, she includes herself, a woman, among those fit to apply reason to the sacred. And second, she declares that arts, letters, and what would be known later as

natural sciences necessarily contribute to knowledge of sacred texts. Thus she—excluded because of her sex from the university—challenged the premises of Scholastic thought dominating Mexican intellectual life.

Critics frequently describe the *Answer* as an “autobiographical” narrative. That description misapprehends its elaborate, studied links to rhetorical, epistolary, scholarly, and scriptural models. The complex relationship of the *Answer* to the *vidas* or “lives” written by so many nuns of the period also deserves further exploration. Sor Juana mustered all her learning, and a canny political discernment of her vulnerable position as an “outstanding” nun, to compose this intellectual self-defense, written when she found herself under pressure from the church hierarchy to curtail her intellectual and literary activities.

A small sample of Sor Juana’s brilliant and knotty text follows. The first paragraph excerpted here has usually been read “straight,” as a charming autobiographical account of a young girl bent on reading before all else. However, familiarity with texts by many nuns suggests that she is cleverly and consciously echoing the sort of story we hear from María de San José. The older María—following models set by Saint Teresa—tells how she as a young girl would undergo any hardship to fulfill her determination to pray and meditate. Sor Juana relates with mock seriousness how the young Juana went to great lengths (forgoing treats, cutting her hair) to fulfill her all-powerful “inclination” to study. Her humor takes in the simple nature of these trials. With seeming modesty, she pokes fun at herself in relating her “sufferings” for the cause of learning—surely, they cannot be taken as seriously as other nuns’ self-privations in imitation of Christ. However, at a deeper level, the implicit comparison subtly elevates her studious “inclination.”

In the subsequent excerpt, Sor Juana states her adult preference of scholarly activities to any other, and her belief that theology can be reached only by ascending “the ladder of the humane arts and sciences.” Finally, one of Sor Juana’s most famous passages defends a woman’s right to study and to teach, by showing women central to the whole body of religious, cultural, and historical letters inherited by her society.

I remember that in those days, though I was as greedy for dainties as children usually are at that age, I would abstain from eating cheese, because I had heard tell that it made one stupid, and the desire for knowledge held more sway with me than the desire for food, although the latter is so powerful in children. Later, when I was six or seven years old and already knew how to read and write, along with all the other skills such as embroidery and sewing that women learn, I heard that in Mexico City there were a university and schools where they studied the sciences. No sooner had I heard this than I began to torture my poor mother with insistent and annoying pleas that she dress me in men's clothing and send me to the capital, to the home of some relatives she had there, so that I could enter the university and study. She refused, and was right in doing so; but I slaked this desire by reading a great variety of books that belonged to my grandfather, and neither punishments nor scoldings could prevent me, so that when I did go to the City of Mexico, people marvelled not so much at my intelligence, as at my memory and the facts I knew at an age when it seemed I had scarcely had time to learn to speak.

... I became a nun because, although I knew I should find in that condition certain things that would be distasteful to my mind (I speak of accessory rather than essential or formal matters), it would, in view of my absolute refusal to marry, be the least unfitting and the most decent state I could choose, with regard to the assurance I desired of my salvation. For before this first concern (which is, at the last, the most important), all the impertinent little follies of my nature gave way and bowed to the yoke. These were

that I had wished to live alone and to avoid obligations that would disturb my freedom to study, as well as the noise of a community that might interrupt the tranquil silence of my books. . . .

... Nevertheless I did my best to elevate these studies and direct them to His service, for the goal to which I aspired was the study of Theology. . . . but it seemed to me necessary to ascend by the ladder of the humane arts and sciences in order to reach it; for who could fathom the style of the Queen of Sciences without knowing that of her handmaidens? . . .

... I confess also that . . . the many books that I have read have not failed to help me, both in sacred as well as secular letters. For there I see a Deborah issuing laws, military as well as political, and governing the people among whom there were so many learned men. I see the exceedingly knowledgeable Queen of Sheba, so learned she dares to test the wisdom of the greatest of the wise with riddles, without being rebuked for it; indeed, on this account she shall be judge of the unbelievers. I see so many and such significant women: some adorned with the gift of prophecy, like an Abigail; others, of persuasion, like Esther; others, of piety, like Rahab; others, of perseverance, like Anna the mother of Samuel; and others, infinitely more, with other kinds of qualities and virtues.

Sor Juana places herself and her sisters in a venerable tradition of notable women. So doing, she recasts knowledge itself as her culture knows it, making visible women who were obscured and suggesting that the silenced might speak. This determination binds her project to our late-twentieth-century inquiry into women's



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pasts and presences. However, the religious world of Sor Juana and her sisters can seem remote from ours; more than linguistic differences impede the translation of their texts into our cultural understandings. Fortunately their writings survive, if we are willing to listen, and can find ways to hear.

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Excerpts from the writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 1648/51?-1695.

Translations by Amanda Powell

(forthcoming in *The Answer to Sister Philothea*, translation, annotation, and introduction by Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell, to be published by the Feminist Press.)

Sonnet [No. 164]

[In which she answers a suspicion with the eloquence of tears.]

This afternoon, my darling, when we spoke,
and in your face and gestures I could see
that I was not persuading you with words,
I wished you might look straight into my heart;
and Love, who was assisting my designs,
succeeded in what seemed impossible:
for in the stream of tears which anguish loosed
my heart itself, dissolved, dropped slowly down.

Enough unkindness now, my love, enough;
don't let these tyrant jealousies torment you
nor base suspicions shatter your repose
with foolish shadows, empty evidence:
in liquid humor you have seen and touched
my heart undone and passing through your hands.

"Philosophical Satire" [Poem 92]

[The poet proves illogical both the whim and the censure of men who accuse, in women, that which they cause.]

You foolish and unreasoning men
who cast all blame on women,
not seeing that yourselves are cause
of the same faults you accuse:

if, with eagerness unequalled,
you plead against women's disdain,
why require them to do well
when you inspire them to fall?

You combat their firm resistance,
and then solemnly pronounce
that what you've won through diligence
is proof of women's flightiness.

What do we see, when we see you
madly determined to see us so,
but the child who makes a monster appear
and then goes trembling with fear?

With ridiculous conceit
you insist that woman be
a true Thais while you woo her,
and a Lucretia once she's won.

Whose behavior could be odder
than that of a stubborn man
who himself breathes on the mirror,
and then laments it is not clear?

Women's good favor, women's scorn
you hold in equal disregard:

complaining, if they treat you badly;
mocking, if they love you well.

Not one can gain your good opinion,
for she who modestly withdraws,
failing to admit you, is ungrateful;
and if she admits you, too easily won.
. . . .

But who has carried greater blame
in a passion gone astray:
she who falls to constant pleading,
or he who pleads with her to fall?

Or which more greatly must be faulted,
though either may have done a wrong:
she who sins for need of pay,
or he who pays for sinning?

Why then are you so alarmed
by the fault that is your own?
Wish women to be as you make them,
or make them as you wish to find them.

Leave off soliciting her fall,
and then indeed, more justified,
you might accuse the eagerness
of the woman who lays siege to you.

Thus I prove, with all my forces,
that your arrogance does battle:
for in your offers and your demands
we have devil, flesh, and world: a man.

Betty LaDuke



Latin America: Homage to the Disappeared



Nest: #3



Betty LaDuke, CSWS affiliate, painter, printmaker, is a professor of art at Southern Oregon State College.



Bolivia: Pachamama and El Tio



In Bolivia, *El Tio* is a jolly Santa Claus type, his pack full of trinkets representative of the good life, such as kitchen utensils, shoes, etc. He is a characterization of the European colonizer, here seen in the shape of a teardrop, a burden on the back of a woman. From that perspective, he witnesses with the others *Pachamama's* regenerative powers that are symbolized by the magic leaves being handed to her, by the branches throughout the body of the child, and by the couple within the bird at her head (as wings). With this piece, Oregon artist Betty LaDuke acknowledges Latin American women, nature as woman, and transcendence beyond colonization, beyond death.

Mothers, caregivers, wives experience colonization utterly. It is in the claiming of our bodies by another whose needs/demands dominate all aspects of existence: physical, personal, familial, political, relational. The experience of colonization is the most intimate connection, the most sisterly identification we can make with one another. An awareness of, a sensitivity to this experience and attendant cultural symbolisms must be fostered and encouraged between us; woven into the way we train our children—girls and boys.

LaDuke is always invoking the feminine: her vivid symbols within symbols, like the layers of meaning in each woman's life; curving, rounded forms pulling the female into each image, suggest the fluidity, the sensuality of dreams and the power of connection.

In her words, "I hope that my visual impressions of Latin America will reach out beyond the confines of national boundaries to reveal that, in spite of our cultural differences, human survival is dependent on our ability to connect with one another through understanding and compassion."

—Elizabeth Archers

The following is an excerpt from a forthcoming novel, *Face of an Angel*, by Denise Chávez. The protagonist, Soveida Dosamantes, is a career waitress in a Mexican restaurant. She is currently taking a course in Chicano studies called "The Chicano in Culture and Society."

"Mothers, Teach Your Sons," is one of Soveida's first-term papers for her professor, J.V. Velásquez, Ph.D.

Face of an Angel ultimately deals with the issues of what it means to serve and to be served, and how and why that service is different for women and for men.

A Paper Submitted to Professor J.V. Velásquez,
Chicano Studies, Section 14

by Soveida Dosamantes



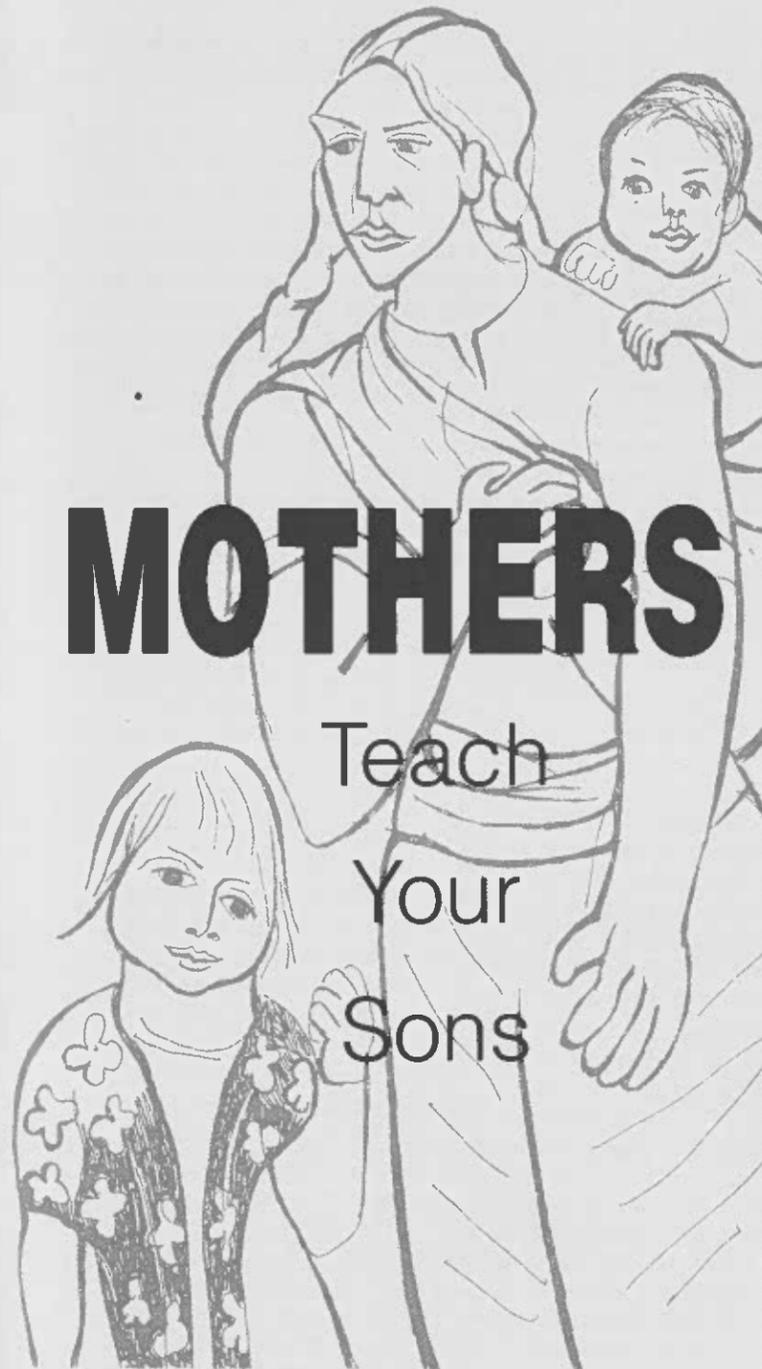
hat homeland have our men? Born to women divided between worlds, Mexico to the south, the United States to the north, our men were born in bondage. Robbed of their legacy by conquest, it is no wonder that on this Anniversary of Columbus' encounter with the New

World we commemorate the dark history of our men and women's service.

We continue to be a generation who has never known the freedom of their ancestors. Our men have been disenfranchised since their birth. They were conceived in anger and frustration and born to mothers who knew no real home, no real peace. Their fathers were the lowest of laborers, they were not men. They were animals who were expected to toil in the fields of others. They were disposable servants who only begat more broken children to perpetuate a cycle of pain and inequality and unmitigated loss.

This developed country we call the United States, this new world, founded in hopeful gain and based on material success, this battle zone of those who have and have not, this cultural melange of people was always out of reach for most of my family. We were the servants. We were the workers. We were never the landowners or the landlords. We were the ones who labored in the fields and in the houses. We were the ones who built whatever stands a testimony to the American Dream. Our scars prove it. We were the ones who, with our own hands and backs and souls, made this country what it is. *Braceros*, we were called, then "wet backs," now *pachucos*, *chukes*, *cholos*, *spics*, *greasers*, *indios*, and *browners*.

Our fathers were punished for speaking Spanish in the school yard. They were chastised for being behind in their lessons in a language that was not their own, a language that did not sound of home, shared life. Our fathers and mothers brought to those schools a meal unfamiliar to others: tortillas and beans, no sandwiches of white bread eaten in the sunlight, but dark food, tasting of earth, hard work, and clay pots, boiled over wood stoves in that one big room where many children scampered and then later slept four or more to a bed.



Drawings by Betty LaDuke

Our men once had a voice, could speak. How long ago was it? They did not raise their charged, heavy voices to complain or belittle or reprimand anyone. Our men, now downtrodden and overburdened, and unhappy with the way things are, beat and abuse the women around them, women they feel mirror their own terror, rage, and inconsolable grief.

Our men could once speak. But not with the angry words that have now become slurred and thick with saliva. Not with the mindless cries buried so deeply inside their bodies that no one can hear them.

The voices of our men are those of tragic characters in a play, unable to change their lines.

Our men could once speak, they had a voice. They had words, words full of mercy and love. They were not words loosened by alcohol, or slowed by drugs, or masked by insecurity. They weren't seemingly brave words bolstered by bravado coming from empty hearts. They were not the *rancheras* and *corridos* full of longing pierced by hopelessness and sorrow: that common despair of men lost to themselves, not knowing who they are or someday might become.

The broken voice of our men is our beginning to understand.

Macho men, from where have you come? From the sierras and *mesas* of our homeland, Mexico. Let us know that this world of borders is ours, that it flows in our blood, that it is the place of our ancestors' birth and that we are a *mestizaje* or *mezcla*, a mixture of culture and race. We are the Mexican, the Indian, the Spaniard, the Anglo, the European, the Asian, the Black. We have been so combined. Who would ever know where or when our dreams leapt to life? What does it matter? Aren't we all still hungry with wanting to know the span of our breath?

In the past our men had power. The women couldn't speak. When she did, it was with the Malinche voice, called the voice of the betrayer. That's where it all began. What do we know of Malinche, anyway? That she was the translator for Cortéz, that she became his mistress, that she betrayed a race, a culture. That is what men say. Malinche is Eve again, or any number of other women, so-called betrayers, evil ones. Why must the snake have convinced the woman of eternal life? It is because men would have us believe that the Father God created Adam and that He took Eve from that man's ribs? The first woman, we are told, came from a man. And why didn't he, instead, come out of her vagina, a small speck of holy, living juice, self-originated in the sex of the Mother God?

Who wrote the words that would betray all women? Men. And who allowed that betrayal? Women. Who perpetuated that betrayal? Mothers. Well-meaning, surely, who have taught their sons. Sons who bring war and death and imprisonment to the human heart. Why are the women silent? Why do they continue to fail to teach their sons?

In India, the bride burnings and torture continue for women who do not measure up, or comply, or please. Girls in Mexico have no childhood, says a friend; women in Honduras eat the leftovers in the kitchen, standing. Patriarchy, another woman says, is just one more privilege that oppresses.

Isn't it time for women to break those chains of oppression? Isn't it time for that endless cycle of self-hatred to cease?

We teach our children to be strong, we teach them self-sufficiency, we teach them independence by oppressing others, disregarding human life, by promoting waste and corruption and making sure that love includes deception and delusion.

My ex-husband was angry because one day he had to help me clean the house, saying later that he hadn't done anything that day, all he did was clean. Where, then is the validity of women's work? Daily, uneventful, monotonous, universal work? How heavy is the burden of women who "only clean," who do it all, the picking up, the lifting, the folding, the sorting, the bending, the laying out, the cleaning, the cooking, the wiping, the child rearing, the caring for the old?

Who is the macho man but our father, our brother, our husband, our cousin, our friend?

Our fathers, brothers, cousins, and friends feel themselves of lower caste, they've lost their dignity. To feel powerful, they must oppress others.

My great-grandfather, Manuel Dosamantes, was born in Mexico. He felt impotent in his native land, already a land of the oppressed. He came to the United States and married a woman like himself, part Mexican, part American. He became a foreman, an overseer of men, and though he loved and revered his wife, Elena, she did not have a voice. Not the way I know my voice to be.

My grandmother, Mama Lupita, spoke up, but she deferred to her husband, Profetario. When she was younger she went to school with the Holy Sisters, as she called them; her father was a special man and he saw the need for education, up to a point. He thought that if she learned to sew and cook she would make a good wife. My mother, too, had no voice. Her grandmother and mother and father had all robbed her of her voice. She was a woman, not a man. Both my grandmother and mother did not finish high school, but they taught themselves about life through living, cleaning up.

Male children are treated differently. Anyone can see this. I recall seeing how my mother, Dolores, deferred to my younger brother, Hector. My father too, treated my brother as someone special, not a mature adult, but a magical child. My mother also allowed him his excesses (a manly thing), his tantrums (expected), his free time (we were there to pick up for him), and his own way (he's the one to carry our name).

Always women have felt that their voice didn't count, or at least, in the way a man's voice counted. We have been sterile despite the fecundity of our wombs. The children we bring into this world are monsters who create more monsters who would oppress and destroy and defile the generations of children they will never see.

I grew up, then, a woman in a long line of battered women. Abuse was rampant, and it was mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual. What does it mean to live under the sexual yoke, the harness of the sexual myth, a sentence not laid down by strangers, but by one's own family members? Male and female.

This yoke was fashioned by the fathers, refined by the sons, continued by their brothers, and unconsciously carried into other generations by the uncles, brothers-in-law, handed down from person to person, through the ages, family to family, women partaking in the cycle, by looking the other way, in their obvious deferment to the male, the assuming of responsibility for both father and son, and in the seemingly loving act of "mothering."

Abuse was not uncommon among people I knew. My father Luardo's goal in life was to keep a score card of all the women he had been with. My brother Hector's goal in life was to become the best lover of the most women. And so he tried to impregnate every woman he came into contact with, though he probably would never admit to that. He married

someone who was pregnant with his child and got her maid pregnant as well. Oppressor of the oppressed. That is the Macho Man. I know him well. He is my father. My brother. My cousin. But he will not be my son.

Today what we see in the Latino families are these broken men: children of only more broken men, the alcoholics; their sons the drug users and abusers. The women, their hands in the dishwater, call out: "Mi'jo, my son, come and eat, your supper's getting cold. I ironed your shirts the way you like them. Are you going out again? Don't come home late! Be careful. Have you applied for that job, yet? You got up so late! What time did you get in? I waited for you last night. I'm sorry your food isn't the way you like it. I forgot to do that, son, I'm sorry. What can I get you, mi'jo?"

It is for women who have sadly helped to propel the myth forward, into each age, victims of their own supposed mercy. Conquered men need to conquer. Conquered women know no other way.

Our fathers, our brothers, the men in our families—we carry the burden of their remarks, their whispers, their looks. The cycle has not been broken, not yet, not even in my own lifetime.

We are maimed creatures, struggling for wholeness, not knowing when we will release our physical, sexual, mental, psychic, and emotional burdens.

Despite this, we are survivors. We have to be. Now, on the eve of woman's great awakening, we turn to each other and to those who would take our hands, and hold them. For too long we have been afraid, desperate creatures in the darkness, not knowing yet that we are blind.

Soveida Dosamantes

P.S. Dear Dr. Velásquez:

I have begun working with an organization called F.O.S.A. (Family of Survivors of Abuse—Sexual, Emotional, Physical). We meet the first Wednesday of each month at the Library at 7:00 p.m. Perhaps your other classes would be interested in attending these meetings. Would you mind letting them know? Unfortunately, many Latinos are unaware or unwilling to admit the abuse that goes on in their own families. Sincerely, S.D.

(IN RED INK!)

Midterm grade C-
J.V. Velásquez, Ph.D.

What was this? Something attached to Dosamantes term paper?

Dear Ms. Dosamantes:

You have an impassioned flair for words. You argue with great emotion and sensitivity, but you have no footnotes. This is a college class. I suggest you study the *Harbrace Handbook*. Have you written other term papers? I would be happy to help you formulate an outline for next paper. Heated feelings alone do not warrant an A. Check your grammar, syntax, and use of the possessive. They are all awful. You have a feel for your topic. The idea is interesting, but it does not fully succeed. You jump from idea to idea, your thesis is never clearly identified, and the whole lacks an organized cohesion. You may set up a meeting with me to discuss future papers. In summary: your scholarship is appalling!

Content C/Presentation C—



Denise Chávez, CSWS affiliate, 1991 University for Everyone visiting scholar, is a performance writer from Las Cruces, New Mexico.



TWENTY THINGS TO TEACH YOUR SON

(from the F.O.S.A. handbook)

MOTHERS, TEACH YOUR SONS

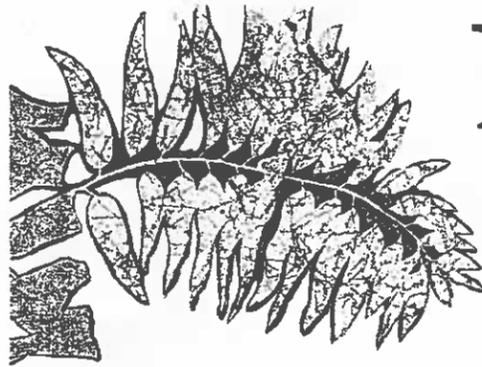
1. To do dishes, not only throw out the garbage.
2. To revere all women, not only those close to them.
3. To cook, do laundry, to clean up after not only themselves, but others.
4. To pay attention to the details of living, not only to superficially attack a problem or task, but to do the best they can by giving the answer time and care.
5. To trust women and their ability to communicate, not to laugh at emotion or any heartfelt feelings.
6. To talk out their grievances, not letting feelings build up until they explode.
7. To see women's injustices toward other women, and men's injustices toward other men, and to see the perpetuation of this cycle and to see that it stops and is not passed on through the generations.
8. To love and nurture children, plants, animals, all life, to see in them a microcosm of all blessed existence.
9. To praise small comforts, delicate, fragile encounters between people that quickly are gone and yet mirror truth.
10. To have pride in a home, a yard, a car, possessions, to keep them tended and in order.
11. To be considerate at all levels, with all people, sexually, emotionally, physically, spiritually.
12. To never take anything for granted.
13. To be grateful and never presumptuous toward women, not to expect to be followed, picked up after, sheltered, coddled, or shielded.
14. To be honest, never to lie, not only to themselves, but others.
15. To be gentle and loving in all actions, a calm demeanor underlying strength.
16. To admit error and correct it.
17. To not complain when change is not effected quickly enough.
18. To not hold grudges, to admit failure, to forgive.
19. To allow women their space and solitude to be themselves without crowding or feeling frightened or antagonistic.
20. To love unequivocally, and without restraint.

(IN RED INK!)

Ms. Dosamantes!

This is supposed to be your term paper, not a public forum! I will inform my classes of your "cause." However, don't expect me to continue to do so. I have an extra copy of *Harbrace* I could lend you. Please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

J.V.V., Ph.D.



De • my • thol • o • giz • ing

COLUMBUS *by* *Unlocking the Feminine*

from the *Prison of* *Western* *Thinking*



To be socially responsible, I must clearly state that I speak as only one Ojibwa-Winnebago woman sharing her views. I speak for no one else. I need to make this qualification because Euro-

American scholarly discourse makes certain requirements that are not culturally appropriate for me. Otherwise, this article would be culturally offensive to members of the Native American community. My cultural realities are experienced as more holistic, integrated, and relational than current Euro-American culture allows. The legacy of Christopher Columbus in Euro-American culture equates the "primitive" with the "feminine," meaning inferior to the "masculine" rational intellect of European cultures. By reclaiming the feminine as complementary to the masculine, as in an organic web, I examine the prison of language created in Western thought.

Why the continuing mythology of the discovery of America by this one man, Christopher Columbus? Myth-making as moral guide is an integral part of culture. Stories are told in all cultures to teach its members how to be, what to believe, what is of value, and what to expect in this life and after. In modern U.S. culture, not only do we still have the oral tradition, but we have it in new, more subtle and pervasive forms, which teach and maintain cultural identity and loyalty.

Underlying assumptions and expectations in contemporary Western thinking and language provide a framework or lens through which realities are viewed and subsequently

named as culture, class, or gender. Each of these realities must be reviewed and deconstructed. Ironically, at this same time that we are asked to celebrate the "discoverers'" bravery and accomplishments, New Science is beginning to bring Western cultures back full circle to the mystery of being (to use the language of the "feminine"). Instead of the Eurocentric language of objective separation and reduction perpetuated through the Cartesian Paradigm, the scientific revolution is returning to the earlier metaphors of connectedness, organic interdependence, and wholeness. Among feminist scholars and indigenous peoples, many are digging in the archives, recovering and reclaiming the "discontinuities" and stories that speak to their own organic and mythic underpinnings. What is being unearthed are the commonalities of experience and perception about the world that can be shared with many aboriginal/Third World communities. Members of these communities intuit and understand their own identity as historic, negotiated, and situated, not as separate and decontextualized—abstracted from the dailiness of their lives.

Let me personalize how I came to understand what I have read, heard, seen as an Ojibwa-Winnebago woman and educator. In my family, we were raised to be conscious of the diverse realities at play in our lives. As children, my brothers, sister, cousins, and I were brought up to be proud of being Indian. Our task was to disprove all the ugly stereotypes. We learned beyond the white man's education system and language, to excel, and through our example, to teach. Thus, all nineteen of



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us encountered the burden, paradox, and growing awareness of the multiple realities in proving our worth and equality as Native American Indian children. It was not just to save face and to honor our Winnebago-Ojibwa (Chippewa) family, but to stand up against the dishonoring of all Native American Indian nations.

Growing up, I spent considerable time with my grandfather and grandmother learning and hearing that we were more than what others called us. My grandmother, Elizabeth Bender Roe Cloud, called herself Ojibwa, not Chippewa. She was highly offended by the word squaw. I can see and hear her yet, as she would say in an angry voice, "That's a French word, that's not an Indian word!" My grandfather, Henry

out of school to go with my mother and grandmother to protest the federal government breaking yet another treaty with various Indian tribes in Oregon. One of the most poignant memories for me was the closing of Celilo Falls and the building of the Dalles dam. I remember loinclothed Indian men out in the middle of the roaring falls (seemingly suspended by the ropes around their waists) reaching out their big nets on long poles, catching salmon leaping up through the cascading falls. It remains a part of me even now.

Needless to say, we were all raised to stand up for and work for what we believe in. But so often it is still hard and painful. Native American Indians are too often not believed. We find ourselves in the midst of a different warrior culture whose mythology depends upon denying our existence in contemporary society, denying our truths, our religions, and our realities. The colonizers, to this day, deny their role in our continuing holocaust. It was and is the white man's justice at the expense of all peoples and Mother Earth herself.

Thus, at an early age, and without the words to name it, I realized that being alive was and continues to be political for all Indians who refuse to give up their identity as Indians; that in the white man's community and schools words were not and still are not neutral. I knew another side of the stories in the school books. My family never accepted those stereotypes, we knew they were lies. Consequently, our family stories tell me about different versions of the world. They tell who I am. They are why I ask the questions that I ask.



JACK LIU

Edward S. Curtis photograph, 1909

As an "enrolled" Native American Indian woman educator, I struggle with the adversarial language of this dominant masculine culture. Everything is placed in dualities and deficits. Normative standards are based upon the experiences of a privileged class within a particular racial group of men. Knowledge is reduced to replicable "fact" as the basis for Truths. I struggle with the necessity of categories and labels by which I, too, am named, even in the discourse of feminists and women of color. I struggle with definitions and the rules of power as they exist in mainstream society, as they exist in the

academy and in scholarship. How far must I abide, in order to have legitimacy, so that I may speak? I struggle with the form, language, and genre, that I may be heard. But how then will I be heard as a Native American Indian woman? I struggle to maintain my balance between what I consider the basis and language of my moral integrity as an Indian person/woman (and as a being of this planet), and the rules of the game for survival in mainstream U.S. society and academe. I also struggle with my embeddedness in the language I have learned through the white man's educational systems; and ultimately, I

struggle with the seductiveness of intellectual discourse.

Why are Native American Indian peoples' experiences still ignored? It is because Euro-American culture is still anthro-Eurocentric, colonial, and imperialistic in federal and corporate activities abroad and at home. Our oral histories tell us very different stories from the public white man's version. Our stories say we were already here. We welcomed the white man as a guest. But in the end we were made the villains. We are still named in school books as ignorant and savage, yet our people were the translators for the white man. It was our peoples who learned the second language. School books also do not mention that Squanto, the Indian leader who met the Plymouth colonists, already spoke English or that he earlier had been sold into slavery by the Spanish and survived. Today, Native American Indians continue to be spoken of in the past tense even in our presence. Yet, we are still here—some of us. Our children continue to face all the stereotypes, and the ignorance of well-meaning people (even among our own peoples), because of those school books, the media, and the "Great White Father's" silence and continued hidden agendas.

U.S. culture needs a continuing mythology of Western man's Manifest Destiny to conquer and colonize the "new frontiers" of outer space, of the Third World, and of our own tribal peoples. The language and power of war technology is still seen as necessary for the purpose of keeping the peace and preserving Western cultural identity. That identity is supported through team sports and the use of sports metaphors to enculturate children and their families for battle, for takeovers, for hardship and sacrifice for the team, the nation, the boss. How else can illusions be maintained about what is happening to people, other species, land masses, food, water, and air here within the United States, as well as around the world? Are such deceptions really for the protection and good of the citizens of the United States? Why are Americans so willing to ignore the relationships between the crumbling infrastructures upon which this society depends and the way basic

cultural beliefs play out in the dailiness of our lives? We all need the stories. Our reality is based upon them. But we must understand they are cultural constructs for making sense of the world. We must analyze their language and the contexts in which they are told and passed on.

An example of current popular literature on the Columbus saga is "As Worlds Collide," (1991) by Kenneth Auchincloss in a recent Columbus special edition of *Newsweek*. He describes Columbus as a larger-than-life heroic figure who must be forgiven his anthropocentric and racist world view. Auchincloss also implies that the holocaust of Earth is inevitable. We need to explore his argument further, and ask, "What are the underlying assumptions of contemporary, Western,

speaking from my own cultural/feminine perspective on the symbolism inherent in a quincentennial celebration of Christopher Columbus. Those of my friends who believe they construct their own knowledge and have autonomy also, thus, imply that language is neutral and objective. Language, words, and metaphors as cultural vehicles have both a historical context that should not be dismissed, and a social/negotiated context from which meaning is derived. When I suggest reclamation of the feminine in their own organic roots, some of my colleagues reply, "That was too long ago." I disagree. We are all embedded in the past in multiple ways. I believe we need to bring diverse thinking into small groups where all voices can be heard. We need forums in which diverse "experts" can come

Perhaps, the way feminine and masculine are interbalanced in traditional Native American cultures can suggest patterns for mediating the anthro-Eurocentrism of Western thought.

technocratic culture which we must deconstruct? What themes will emerge from that deconstruction? How will we implement what we have learned?"

We are still enmeshed in the same ideological mind-sets of conquest, domination, and imperialism. The trappings are different, but for all the rhetoric, the system still seems based upon a feudal mind-set. Worlds are still colliding because the feminine as organic context remains locked up. Perhaps, the way feminine and masculine are interbalanced in traditional Native American cultures can suggest patterns for mediating the anthro-Eurocentrism of Western thought. Euro-Americans have not escaped their history. This is the legacy of Christopher Columbus.

I appreciate the opportunity to

differences in cultures, language, and metaphor between these overgeneralized world views—an organic, relational, interdependent world and universe in opposition to anthropocentric technological control and dominance? What can a historical deconstruction of these world views teach us about where we are now, and how we arrived here at this critical place in his-tory and our her-itage?

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October 11, 1491

In a year and a day
they will be here.

Do not go down to the seashore!
Hide the food, the ornaments,
hide with the children in the mountains!

In a year and a day
the wizards will arrive.

Do not go forward to them!
Give them nothing!

You will see three ships come sailing in.
Out of the east the kings will come.
And the world will grow old
that morning. It will begin to die
for the first time. It will die
of the sickness of pustules,
the sickness of coughing,
the sickness of money,
the sickness of landowning,
the sickness of the old god
of the old world, the rich people.

The young world,
the red clay world
of puma, jaguar, buffalo,
of gourd and sequoia,
of corn, vicuna, sacred tobacco,
the center of the six directions,
the dawn-smelling world, the fernstem world
will live for a year and a day.

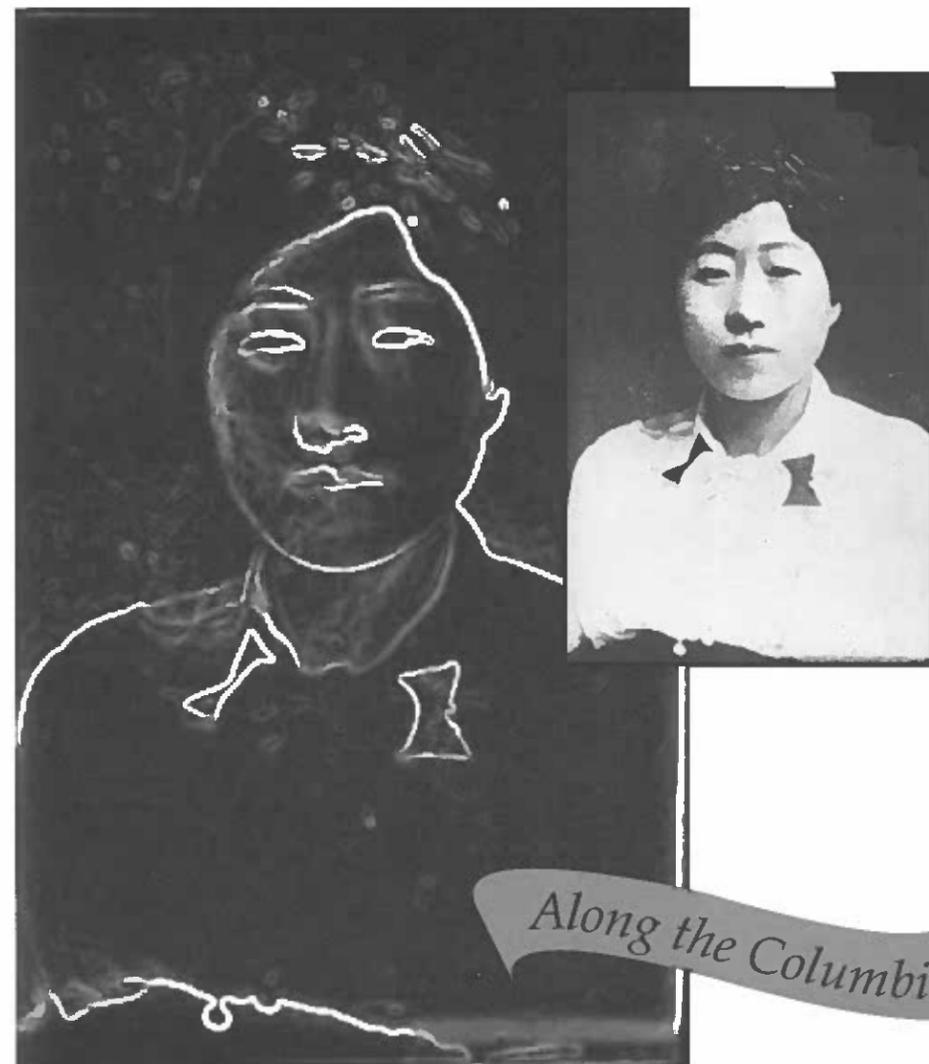
Then you gentle people
will go forward with your empty hands,
timid and smiling, and give it to them.

—Ursula K. LeGuin



Ursula K. LeGuin, CSWS affiliate, poet and author, received the Harold D. Vursell Memorial Award for 1991 from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

J. PHIL SAMUELL



The Experiences of Asian American Women in Hawaii:

Along the Columbian Continuum



by Alice Yun Chai

rior to the coming of British explorer James Cook in 1778, the indigenous people of Hawaii lived in a stable, ecologically balanced, caring, and communal culture. The Hawaiians' ethos of *Aloha 'Aina* ("love of the land") supported a self-sufficient subsistence economy on four million acres of land in the northern Pacific Ocean.

Starting with Cook, Western settlers, missionaries, and capitalists brought devastating diseases to the islanders, such as syphilis and tuberculosis. These diseases reduced the Hawaiian

population by more than 90 percent—from an estimated half million in 1778 to fewer than 48,000 in 1878. Social disorganization and cultural destruction were further accelerated by the introduction of Christianity when American Protestant missionaries arrived in 1820. And when American capitalists introduced the concept of "private property" in the 1850s, a massive land division (the Great *Mahele*) resulted in Hawaiians' ownership of less than one percent of the total land area—about 28,000 acres.

In 1872, two American generals, Schofield and

Alexander, visited Hawaii on a secret mission to investigate the possibility of establishing military positions there for future American expansion into the Pacific and Asia. The United States' minister plenipotentiary, John Stevens, in conspiracy with predominantly American businessmen, plotted to overthrow the lawful government of Hawaii and began a step-by-step process of placing Hawaii into the hands of the United States government.

On January 16, 1893, the U.S. marines landed quietly upon peaceful Honolulu and overthrew the constitutional government of

Hawaii, replacing it with a provisional government that was taken over fully by the United States in 1898. Since that time, 25 percent of the land mass of the island of Oahu has been taken over by the U.S. military, fortifying Hawaii to serve as the American Pacific fortress without giving Hawaiian citizens the opportunity to exercise self-determination.

This loss of sovereignty has caused Native Hawaiians an alienation from their land; a disintegration of their political, economic, social, and religious systems; and eroded their culture and language. Current statistics reveal that Native Hawaiians have the lowest socio-economic status and poorest state of health among all the racial/ethnic groups in Hawaii. Compounded by sexism, Hawaiian women and children have disproportionately suffered from physical abuse, illegitimate births, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, and breast cancer.

Hawaii now also has the greatest ethnic diversity for Asian women in America, and has received the largest proportion of immigrants from Asian countries of all the United States. Because of the decimation of the Native Hawaiian population, plantation owners recruited immigrant workers extensively throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So one of the most significant characteristics of the early Asian immigrant population was the predominance of men. Only a few Asian women were permitted to immigrate to America at that time. They were prevented from coming to this country by their cultural traditions of seclusion and family obligation, the temporary, sojourner situation of Asian male laborers, labor recruiters' profit motive, anti-miscegenation laws, and restrictive immigration laws



Our stories and writings are filled with active political strategies and resilience.

imposed by the United States.

When this sex ratio imbalance peaked at the turn of the century, most of the few Chinese and Japanese women in the United States were prostitutes. They had been brought into this country through the luring, kidnapping, and trading activities of Asian importers and brothel owners (or sometimes sold by their husbands). The average Chinese prostitute was

indentured for four to five years without wages. From the mid-1870s, the number of Chinese prostitutes decreased due to the government's restrictive laws and Christian missionaries' active campaigns against prostitution. The number of Japanese prostitutes was steadily reduced between 1900 and 1920 by the cooperative efforts of the Japanese government, the Japanese immigrant community in America, and the

arrival of thousands of picture brides.

Between 1907 and 1924, about 45,000 Japanese, and nearly 1,000 Korean picture brides (mostly from impoverished villages) came to Hawaii and to California to marry their fellow countrymen who were plantation and farm laborers. Picture brides were matched with partners through photographs in accordance with the arranged-marriage custom that was prevalent in Japan and Korea at the turn of the century. For Korean picture brides, the decision to come to America to marry was based not only on their desire to improve their economic condition, but also on their search for political, religious, social, and personal freedom from Japanese domination, Confucian ideology, and physical seclusion. Upon arrival, however, many of them were shocked by their

bridegrooms who were usually unattractive and much older than the photographs they had exchanged. Moreover, they were disillusioned to find that these men were poor; the reality of the American life they faced was far worse than the glowing accounts in their prospective husbands' letters.

The most significant initial economic adaptive strategy of Asian immigrant women was their wage-earning and other informal income-generating activities. Due to the demand for service workers by the existing economic structure, the limited opportunities to improve education and language skills, and sexual and racial discrimination, most early Asian immigrant women entered low paying jobs. They worked together with their men in farm fields to earn wages to help support their families or they worked at domestically skilled jobs such as seamstresses, laundresses, servants, cooks, and

rooming house operators. Those who chose to work with their husbands in family businesses, such as laundries, restaurants, and boarding houses, worked as unpaid family laborers.

The great majority of pineapple and sugar field workers and domestic servants were Japanese immigrant women. This was because Japanese women had been more accustomed to agricultural work and had a larger community in the plantations than did Korean women. And due to the stereotyped image of Japanese women (their cleanliness, docility, and patience), employers considered them best suited for domestic work. Okinawan and Korean women were known for their hard work, business ability, and ingenuity. Most Korean women moved to Honolulu soon after arriving in Hawaii and became self-employed and ran family businesses.

Within many of the

Korean women's support networks, *kye* groups were formed, and picture brides gave each other financial support for purchases of real estate and businesses, and for visits to Korea. A *kye* group was made up of ten to twenty-four women from the same home village, province, or church; they met monthly for fellowship and recreation as well as for this economic purpose.

Due to this racial, economic and female heritage, Asian American women do not regard themselves either exclusively or primarily as victims. Our stories and writings are filled with active political strategies and resilience. In fact, resourcefulness, flexibility, and creativity have been important factors for our physical survival and cultural identity. The reality of our lives in America is characterized by the contradictions typical of multiple forms of oppression. These contradictions are created by



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structural, cultural conditions such as racism, sexism, and the economic and psychic oppressions generated by dominant white society. As members of a socially marginal and oppressed group, Asian American women achieve the kind of "multiple consciousness" that characterizes economically exploited and racially stigmatized groups. This multiple consciousness of our experience in America is rooted in the first encounter between the Hawaiian people and Captain Cook (and the Columbian legacy of domination and exploitation). The inclusion of this consciousness is essential in comprehensive feminist description and theory. Such a validation of the experiences of women of color acknowledges our economic contributions, our racial, cultural, and female experiences, and honors our personal dignity.



MYTH, MAGIC, AND MEDICINE IN THE MODERN WORLD



Over the years, the ritual tradition has undergone a number of transformations, not all of them bad. A living thing changes as energies within it change, and inner energies change as external conditions (another way of talking about energies) change.

With the arrival of the Europeans, certain shifts in the traditions that had been occurring over the preceding three or four centuries became pronounced, setting off a flurry of adjustments and readjustments over two continents. Central to the process of transformation was

the slow shift from feminine orderings to masculine arrangements within the traditions themselves. The transformation of *Ic'st's'ity* (*Uretsete*), from a female to male supernatural, from mother to father of the Keres people; the shift of *Xmucane* and *Xpiyacoc* from female partners to elderly married couple among the Quiche Maya; the adaptation of *Kanati the Hunter* to husband of *Selu*, a seeming replacement of her polygynous relationships with him and *Long Man*; reification of the goddesses *Cihuacoatl* and *Coatlicue*—these are all evidence of the profound change in Native America resulting from its patriarchalization under Christian mercantilism.

A shift of such magnitude required a corresponding movement of all intelligences within the ritual system. They emerged in different forms and guises, around a reshaped focal point.

By the time of the Aztecs, particularly in their last years, the old religion had entered a period of decline. The life-focused tradition of older civilizations had become death focused, and the form of ritual now far outweighed the spirit. This was not as morbid a tendency further north or to the east and south of Tenochtitlan, but it was occurring outside the capital in a muted degree.

Populations were on the move, ceremonial cities far to the north were abandoned, and some medicine elders say even the animals and plants were undergoing transformations. Certainly the climate was changing noticeably, reflecting (not causing) the great movements oc-

curing in every other sphere. There was turmoil in the universe of power. The Great Mysteries wanted to tell and to hear another story.

At that time—one of beginnings as well as ends—the great sister goddesses (there seem to have been a “blue million of them” as my mother would say) began to prepare the people for the great change. The old calendars kept track; it was no surprise that strange beasts were seen wandering the land, that odd crafts were sighted, that new gods appeared. That’s what happens during a big ritual.

Lady Penance Grass, *Malinalli*, *La Malinche*, responding to her Elder Sisters’ call, became the slave-diplomat who brought down the Aztec empire. The great speaker and his twin (or counterpart) the high priest of the goddess *Serpent Skirt* were killed. The gold that had adorned their lives—tons of it—began to trickle east, in a bizarre echo of *Sun Woman’s* eastward journey a ritual age before. That gold, and the silver for which Mexico is famous, funded Anglo-European monarchies and the terrible wars they waged against each other for five hundred years. With the stolen riches, those monarchies became modern states that exert influence on world affairs far out of proportion to their numbers.

In another of those strange twists of ritual plot, not only precious metal went east. The idea of political freedom found its way aboard the slave ships, the gold ships, the ships filled with treasures and people of a plundered world. While the disease and disorder that came with Europeans wrought ruin, the freedom and faith they found in the new world created havoc in the old. In the universe of power, all transactions proceed in more directions than one.

That’s how it is with big medicine—a phrase enshrined in penny novels and early flicks. “Ugh! Heap Big Medicine!” the native caricature says, his eyes wide with astonishment—or narrow with guile. Well, heap big medicine indeed, a medicine whose workings are still going on, affecting every nook and cranny of modern planetary life.

The use of the word “medicine” to denote ritual magic is intriguing, its origins lost in the rush to take, settle, and forget. But in early times—the colonial era, the westward movement, the frontier days—native people often cured Anglo-European newcomers of ailments. Presumably as a consequence of their ministrations, practitioners who used native knowledge to diagnose and treat illness became known as “medicine men” or “medicine women.” In some regions, such as the northern California coastal area, shamans are still called “doctors,” and their ritual practice is known as “doctoring,” although their healings are unaccompanied by Western medical apparatus. The *midewewin*, an organization as well as occult discipline among the *Ojibwa/Chippewa* Algonquians, is called the “medicine dance” in English, and the structure where the rites take place is called a “medicine lodge,” though healing is not the primary purpose of the rites, nor is it but one of many outcomes.

Over time, the term “medicine” has come to signify American Indian ritual magic, a use that distinguishes it from the formal Western metaphysical tradition as the term “witchcraft” distinguishes a number of old tribal earth religions from the

One of the articles of faith among people who write about and study Native Americans is their diversity. “There’s no such thing as an Indian,” I was taught to say as a young instructor of Native American studies. At San Diego State, where I taught in the early 1970s, I was cautioned against grouping native peoples under the rubric “Indian” because pan-Indianism was not popular among our various peoples. Certainly it is true that there are Indians and there are Indians, as I had known from earliest childhood, so I accepted the pronouncements. But my studies over the past two decades have suggested, indeed, confirmed, that while the distinctions among native communities are many and, linguistically at least, the differences are vast, the similarities are far greater and much more profound.

I have believed for some time that the similarities in world view and spiritual understanding are marked because the supernaturals who live on this continent with us possess marked similarities among themselves, and so their teachings to us are similar, varying because of locale and because of the language and histories of the various peoples they instruct. Perhaps differences exist because different landscapes give rise to different spirits or supernaturals. But only recently did it occur to me to wonder where the idea of vast distinctions among Native Americans had

originated. I mentioned my query to an Indian friend, who looked at me with a grin and quipped, “From the anthros.”

To many native people, anthropologists represent a number of things, including colonialism. Many native people see them as a sort of contemporary colonial front, following in a line that descends from soldiers and missionaries through Indian agents and traders to academics, anthropologists, folklorists, and most recently, literary specialists like myself. This front operates analogously to the other arms of the colonizer, coming in and taking human remains along with spiritual and aesthetic treasures as the others have helped themselves to economic and geographical ones.

It has been in the interests of the settlers to view us as distinct and to educate us to view ourselves as distinct. There is an old American adage that implies, “United we conquer, divided we fall.” Until my conversation with my friend about distinctions among Indians, I didn’t realize that the adage need be only slightly modified to remind us that it also means “Divided they fall, united they resist conquest.” The idea of a unified Red Nation must even yet pose a grave threat to Western hegemony, else why should they emphasize our differences more than our commonalities?

by Paula Gunn Allen



or tribal traditions in the New World (new compared to what? new to whom?), the modern era begins with Christopher Columbus five hundred years ago.

Christbearing Dove, his name goes in English, brought the four horsemen

of the Apocalypse west along with Satan, the Cross, and the Inquisition. After sojourning on the island he named *Espanola* (*Santo Domingo*) on the eastern edge of the Caribbean, he abducted some local people and returned whence he came to get reinforcements. Within a handful of years, the thriving population of the New Eden he had stumbled upon was reduced by many millions. They did not succumb to superior European war technology, nor to superior force of faith, but to superior disease (Brandon 1974,97).

mystical rites practiced by the Roman-descended elite. Interestingly, African practitioners are known to the English—and thus to Americans—as “witch doctors,” a term which combines Anglo attitudes toward both European and Native American sacred practice. “Medicine” or “doctoring” do not bear the implications of evil that “witch” or “witchcraft” carry, but there is a class distinction operating in the use of the term “medicine.” My Random House Unabridged Dictionary (1966) gives the following racist definition: “any object or practice regarded by savages as of medical efficacy whether for good or evil.” This implies that “savages” came up with the term and commonly use it—which may indeed be the case, since English-speaking white travelers to native communities coined it. According to another story, it was coined by French travelers in Indian country. My dictionary also says the word “medicine” is “from Latin, the fem(inine) form of *medicinus*, pertaining to physicians,” and instructs “see medic.” “Medic” is given as “med(era) (to) heal.” Most recently, “medicine” has come to mean the sacred or spiritual practice of American Indian occultists, and perhaps this definition returns the term to its Graeco-Roman antecedents, albeit with feathers.

In her autobiography, the medicine woman Maria Sabina comments that disease is a spiritual disorder. “The spirit is what gets sick,” she says, mirroring traditional native assumptions about the nature of disease. (Estrada 1981, 56.) A flow chart of the sacred etiology of illness would reveal the pattern and thus dictate the treatment: spiritual disorder to astral reflection of the disorder to etheric or “energy” body to physical body. What must be contacted and reconnected with universal harmony is the spirit of the ailing person. To this end, a number of ploys are used. The first thing the healer must do is get a diagnosis. This may be effected several ways: by interviewing the patient and those close to her or him; by divination, prayer, and meditation in which guiding spirits inform the practitioner of the source and treatment for the ailment; or, as in the case of Maria Sabina, through the help of an “ally” (to use Carlos Casteneda’s term), which Sabina calls “the children” or “the saint children.”

According to a large number of medicine traditions, the cause of the spiritual disharmony that has led to disease is a violation of some taboo. If, for instance, one abuses plants, a disharmony is created in the psychesphere which must be played out in some way until harmony is restored. Certain illnesses can be traced to a mistreatment of a plant community, and treatment can be undertaken to restore harmony within the patient and within the plant community that has suffered.

It is the loss of harmony, an inner-world imbalance, that reveals itself in physical or psychological ailment. It also plays



itself out in social ailments, war, dictatorship, elitism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. This chain of action-consequence ensues because balance and harmony are fundamental laws of the cosmos. Disorder brings about a series of adjustments whose purpose is to reestablish harmony.

While the person or community suffering the ailment is often guilty of violating a spiritual law (taboo), just as often the entire state of disharmony nation- or worldwide works its way out in disease among the populace. Thus debilitating and devastating illnesses sweep through the population as the encompassing psychesphere attempts to regain its equilibrium. When a community is out of balance for whatever nearest reason, its most sensitive members are most likely to suffer in their bodies and minds. Thus oftentimes the most advanced medicine people suffer a number of compensatory ailments, often having to do with immune system dysfunctions such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, cancer, lupus, chronic immunodeficiency syndrome (CIDS or CFIDS), and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Their very sensitivity on psychic and spiritual levels makes them lightning rods, drawing the disharmony to themselves and grounding it, rendering it far less harmful to the larger community.

The notion of taboo violation as causative of illness may seem strange to modern minds, but it is no stranger than avoidance of radioactivity, toxic chemicals, or disease-bearing environments of all sorts. If one violates any of these strictures, disease is likely to ensue. In a similar fashion, traditionals know that it is unwise and unsafe to show disrespect for spirits, do violence to other life forms, engage in selfish behavior, or to abuse oneself or others. The exact forms of the disrespectful actions may vary, but by and large they are clear.

This argument is not a case of “blaming the victim”—an accusation easy to make and difficult to dispute when the politics of our situation is so dreadfully confused and diseased. We native people are certain that disease is a symptom of spiritual disorder, but whether that disorder is the fault of the sufferers is another matter entirely. Indeed, there are powerful arguments advanced in the Indian community that many of us suffer from a variety of immune system disorders and other chronic debilitations because we are earth’s children, and as she endures monstrous patriarchal abuse, we suffer as well, sharing in her pain and disease and in that way ameliorating its devastation and bringing some respite to her.

Native people are also convinced that disharmonious actions toward plant and animal communities turn them against human health and life. They become poisonous, where, before

being mistreated, they were nutritious and safe for human use and consumption. Another consequence of disharmony is that they quietly disappear.

When Nau’ts’ity and Ic’s’ts’ity decide to have children before the time is right, Grandmother Spider comes to them and notes their decision. Saying that they have done this though they knew it was the wrong time (harmony is connected to what time it is, always), she advises them that she is going away. Clearly they do not care to follow her guidance, so she leaves them to follow their own devices, an action that is appropriate to the circumstances and thus restores at least some harmony in the cosmos. By and large, Indian people follow this track, seeing that the other intelligences around them act in that manner. Rather than confrontation or war, they engage in passive resistance, and if that fails they simply remove themselves physically or socially from the scene.

Right now, countless numbers of animal and plant species are following Grandmother’s trail. They are leaving us to our own devices, rendering the planet more and more bleak and empty. Traditionals say that so long as modern people continue in their depredations of the planet, spewing negative thinking, disharmony, and disrespect for all that lives, famine, drought, and the loss of vast numbers of life-forms will continue to accelerate. Even the air is leaving. Violating taboos is very dangerous to all life, and while most Americans can blithely avoid the immediate consequences of disrespect, the human community over most of the world pays a very high price for our violations.

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Transcending

Images of La Malinche

When she was a girl, she often wondered about her ancestors; especially the women of the Mayas, the Aztecs, the Toltecs, and the Olmecs. In her daydreams, she would see women grinding corn, potters busy at their crafts, masked villagers celebrating in starlit ceremonies—only to have these images of centuries past shattered by playmates jeering, “Malinche, Malinche,” “traitor, traitor.” Troubled, she struggled to reconcile her inner vision of woman remembered with the stinging contemporary taunts of woman as traitor.

Today, through her mask entitled La Malinche (see front cover), Lynda Jasso-Thomas has coaxed from clay an evocative metaphor for her own journey—the sublime explorations of emotion that are born from the contradictions of ancestral dreams and lived experience, her pursuit of a formal dialogue between those who have gone before and herself. “My work with La Malinche is not just about reshaping her maligned and mistreated historical image as a traitor,” she says, “but working with who she really was—her internal being. The mask becomes then a work about me and, in turn, about all Chicana women emerging from under the yoke of colonialism.”



Lynda Jasso-Thomas, CSWS affiliate, is an artist, and graduate student of art education/cultural services.

Who was La Malinche, a figure who remains a reverberating presence in the Mexicana and Chicana psyche? Depending on the historical and socio-political needs of each era, her presence, functions, and voice have become the product of many interpretations. What we do know is that after the fleet of Hernán Cortéz rounded the Yucatán Peninsula, crossed the Gulf of Mexico, and landed near a small village, the local chief presented him with a “gift”—a slave woman called La Malinche, whose name was probably Malintzin but whom the Spaniards would baptize and rename Doña Marina. Fluent in both Mayan and Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, and a quick learner of Spanish, this woman who had been betrayed by her mother and sold as a slave became the translator and interpreter of her people’s customs, as well as the mistress and confidante of Cortéz.

Ambiguous and abstract, the historical figure of La Malinche has evolved into mythical proportions. As Doña Marina during the colonial period, she was the protector of the foreigner, the Great Mother of the first *mestizo* (her son with Cortéz) and of the Mexican nation. Later, perceived as the Mexican Eve, a symbol of national betrayal during the post-independence era, La Malinche became an archetypal

female figure who embodied both negative national identity and sexuality.

Wresting the figure of La Malinche from the captive influences of patriarchy’s mythology, Jasso-Thomas joins other contemporary Chicanas in restoring her as a model of inspiration rather than condemnation. She sees in her a remarkable woman of strength and personal integrity who had the spiritual stamina and the linguistic skills to withstand the hardships and atrocities of the conquest. Intelligence, initiative, adaptability, and leadership are the characteristics of a restored La Malinche, a woman whom twentieth-century heirs have recast as a modern-day feminist. Just as La Malinche found the words and the courage to bridge the gap between two cultures, Jasso-Thomas creates a visual vocabulary to express the tensions and contradictions that she herself encounters as an artist in linking the Anglo and Mexican cultures of today.

Growing up near Los Angeles without Chicana role models and lacking fluency in Spanish, she struggled with a sense of loneliness and isolation—fitting neither into the culture of her family nor the surrounding dominant culture. Along with her Chicana friends, she contended not only with this cross-cultural balancing act but also

with her own culture’s identification of her as a girl evolving into a woman. The negative image of La Malinche the betrayer, perpetuated in the teasing slang of the playground, became internalized in the consciousness of her generation by males who constantly saw Chicanas consorting with Anglos or accepting their cultural patterns. For Jasso-Thomas, living in such a cauldron of contradictions, she sought safety and sanctity inside herself where she forged an impenetrable alloy between her feelings of oppression and her creativity.

Rooted in her earliest memories is an image of her father making squiggles on scraps of paper as a houseful of siblings and cousins hovered over him insatiably waiting for a turn to add their own visual magic to his initial shapes. Jasso-Thomas grabbed onto these infectious moments to sketch cartoon characters which she describes as concrete yet somewhat surreal in their humanness. From these beginning cartoons, she stole occasional moments away from the neighborhood baseball game—where she played pitcher or catcher—to continue drawing in secret. Gradually, in grade school she began to draw more openly; and, in third grade, was selected to exhibit at the Laguna Arts Pageant an abstract design she etched out of black ink over crayon. To this day, she retains the image of those colorful rectangles and triangles that gave her a first taste of public recognition. Yet, throughout her school years, she rarely felt encouraged by most of her teachers, a probable consequence of the racism that defined many of her formative learning experiences.

With the economic pressures bearing down on her in junior high school, Jasso-Thomas found herself juggling her remaining years in school with the demands of a job, always at the expense of her artistic strivings. Occasionally, she would join her teenage friends on shopping escapades across the Mexican border where as a tourist she found herself stunned and “fascinated by the beauty of the masks that were everywhere in all the stores.” But the memory of these masks languished in the shadow of her consciousness for many years, precipitated by the more pressing need to establish her independence at the age of seventeen and refine her skills as a secretary. Not until her honeymoon to Yucatán several years later, however, did she discover the

profound power that these ancient faces held for her. Suddenly, "I was finding pieces of a puzzle I had tried to fit together all my life," she says. "I'd always felt 'whole' yet it was like I'd found a missing piece of myself. I had never really felt completely Anglo, yet neither did I find the ethnicity of being Mexican."

For Jasso-Thomas, integrating the intrinsic wonder of the masks she discovered in Mexico began a search for her authentic self—a journey that has given her the freedom to unravel the meaning of her roots, to understand the complexities of her own familial relationships, and to unleash her previously restrained creative energies. While pursuing a college degree in art, she enrolled in a ceramic class where she was astounded by the new opportunities of expression that lay before her. With her hands shaping the clay of the earth, a primary resource used by her ancestors, she molded a cast of her own face, "making a mask out of it," restoring the mystery the mask had long held for her. A new artistic direction was underway.

In refining this rediscovered creative form, Jasso-Thomas also pursued the meanings and interpretations embedded in the cultural history that gave birth to Mexican folk art by pouring through volumes of history. With each reading, she blended the strokes of light and dark buried in her people's past with the patterns and ideas defining her contemporary experience as a Chicana and as an artist. Jasso-Thomas explains that these learnings led to a philosophy that continues to guide all her work: "In doing pottery and trying to find something unique to do, I haven't seen anything where someone said they were searching for their roots and bringing a certain ethnicity to their work." In discussing this notion of centering as a theme of her work, she frequently quotes potter and poet M.C. Richards who observes that the unifying energy of our perception is formed by "how we seek to bring universe into a personal wholeness, and into art the rich life which moves so mysteriously and decisively in our bodies, manifesting in speech and gesture, materializing as force in the world. . . ."

In creating the mask of La Malinche in her own image, Jasso-Thomas not only unearths the multiple roots of a

historic persona but she also strives to understand how this representation has played out in her own family. In contrast to the positive impression she treasures of her father's early encouragement of her drawing, she finds her artistic efforts periodically reflecting the negative memories of an abusive father who victimized her mother by slapping her face. The impact and pain of observing her mother's suffering remains imprinted on Jasso-Thomas who seeks, through creating a mask of her own face, a symbolic way of uniting with her mother's devastating distress. While the mask symbolically protects her mother from harm, it also serves to shield the unique dimensions of her mother's face and to restore the lost integrity that her mother finally deserves. At the same time—by deconstructing the cultural icon of La Malinche as perpetrator of evil consequences for an entire people—Jasso-Thomas wields a new image of both La Malinche and her own mother as women who are betrayed and victimized by the relentless and unceasing acts of patriarchy's conquerors.

Each of these personal and historic images, both vulnerable and valiant, have been cast and contoured into works of art that today bring to Jasso-Thomas the precious jewel of recognition. Yet, as she speaks of her artistic yearnings, she basks not in public approval but salutes those of her ancestors who prepared the way for her. Imbued with their wisdom and sensibilities, she has developed an undeniably strong, unapologetically direct vision that distinctly replaces for her, as well as for those who have the privilege of seeing her work, the rapacious maw of colonialism.

In addition to honoring those who preceded her, she acknowledges that both persistence and a conducive artistic environment are essential ingredients in the evolution of her creative process. Her move to Florence, Oregon, with her partner has led to an artistic collaboration that is daily nourished in her shared studio, De Mano Pottery Works. After years of juggling outside jobs with the drive to create, Jasso-Thomas finds her studio a haven where she has the space and the freedom to translate the humanness of her experience into a powerful and accessible form. Here in this nurturing setting, she designs masks, and contemporary pots that meld the stories of

centuries past with the ethnicity of contemporary Mexican culture.

The mystery of the masks that Jasso-Thomas creates are not rigidly bound by traditional styles but they do reveal the past and "the religious beliefs and culture of their makers. Masks were a means of magical transformation where the wearer's face, personality, and even soul, were replaced by those of another." Using the five-year-old mold of her own face as a base, she adds other facial features after wedging the clay and pressing it onto the mold. During the glazing process, the mask may be adorned with hieroglyphics or symbols representative of rituals such as those used in earlier times to welcome the hunting or fishing seasons. The non-traditional Japanese raku firing method that she uses requires her to take the hot, glowing piece from the kiln and place it in a covered galvanized can that has been filled with newspaper. The heat of the piece ignites the filler, and after an allotted period of time the piece is removed and sprayed with cold water, assuring a cracked glaze with black lines running through the piece. What emerge are contemporary works of art that echo an age long past.

Whether she is creating the mask of La Malinche, or the more functional piece, *Milagro Canesta*, "Miracle Basket" (see back cover), Jasso-Thomas blends movement and sculpture, dance and art, fusing in their elegant shapes both time and space. Her mask of La Malinche evokes both the intellectual control and the self-command and authority of a woman who struggles to position herself as a subject rather than an object. Jasso-Thomas shuns any sign of a personal age or historic perspective by casting her/self in changeless time. Giving to her face a glowing patina that symbolically delivers her from her negative reputation, the artist frees her from the clutches of the many myths that have shaped the La Malinche paradigm. Yet Jasso-Thomas does more than erase the many realities that have defined La Malinche; through her mask, she signals a change in social relationships by re/forming and re/visioning the meaning inherent in the symbol of La Malinche.

—Diana Sheridan

Ceramist

In a small gallery of masks
this face hangs on the wall
and the Artist's Notes say it is your own
"La Malinche"

I try it on

it chafes
penance grass winding tightly against my throat
lacerating my voice, lacing up the words
a manipulation of clay, like dirt on our faces
each wrinkle of mine
appearing in the glaze
as once, trapped in the hairdresser's chair for hours
I watched my mother's and my daughter's faces play
under my bones and skin
electrocuting me with recognition
each time my eyes caught the mirror

inside your mask I find our similar features are more obvious than the differences
we might have been childhood friends
sharing lunches on the blacktop
catching lizards in the ice plant
(back then, all the schools in San Diego looked the same)
it's possible
you may have seen me
slug Ramona hard in the back
making her cry
proving the point of my new loyalty to someone else
and that was not the worst of it

The seductive promise in compromise
shows all over our skin, a thousand times a day
a subtle brutality
mother to daughter to sister to friend
secrets spilled, kept
old crimes forgot, new ones birthed
too many in each moment of conscious thought
urgent as survival or just plain meanness
shaping each fold and crease

I replace your mask to the wall

awestruck:

there is dignity in embracing an ancient betrayal
naming this face Malinche
your own face
and mine

Elizabeth Archers





we are aware of the difficulty of drawing people into a conversation that has transpired over several months. . . a conversation that set out to share thoughts about the work of two Native American writers,

Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, at a time when we enter, as a society, into discussion of the quincentenary and 500 years of cultural interaction. This conversation moved from the summer, through the fall, transcending the literary focus [on the works *Broken Cord*, *Crown of Columbus*, and *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*], emerging as a conversation between a man and a woman of different cultures . . . reflecting on the historic inequities and struggles. . . the notions of empowerment . . . and the realization that any legacy we are the recipients of comes as a result of our cultures and the struggle of our communities instead of the gift of one white man. This piece is a series of excerpts from the much longer ongoing dialogue. . . as we commit, during this time of reflection, to find mutual, enhancing ways, both as individuals and within our cultures, to speak with each other and to come to understandings that lead to survival of all people.

P: We did that much talking?

C: More. I'm going back to add segments, using this as a base, adjusting to match what my ear hears. I hadn't given enough thought to the extent to which a listener enters into what she hears and shapes it by her own orientation. Also little changes, like *passed through my mind* becomes *crossed my mind*, or you say *the analogy I would make is* and it's transcribed *the analogy is*.

P: It's funny because I was going to speak to you today about research and collaboration. I'm putting together questions for a graduate-level research presentation . . . about culturally appropriate research. . . So many of our colleagues speak about quantitative and qualitative in research as if the methodology were the context for interpreting reality. I speak about methodologies. It doesn't matter how they mix, they're just tools. I believe context is the most important consideration in terms of research. . . . But this question of transcription (catch the tone of our voices going up and down with this) is more difficult. . . . Where are we going with all of this? Do you have a clue?

C: Last time we talked about some of our assumptions about power and process, our initial agreements, and how much we've moved beyond the texts . . .

P: . . . I believe the reader also needs to begin with the notion that we're not sitting down in a traditional manner and starting at the beginning or moving toward an end. Rather, it's a process of constant clarification. Collaboration in itself poses dilemmas and challenges and compromises . . . in a much

different way than writing does. It also is a different chronicling of time . . . time in our traditional (Native American) sense of expansion and connection rather than time as a point with a beginning and ending. . . . This shared experience started in the late summer, here in Cafe Roma, and we've moved through one season and into another. Earlier we could sit out there in the courtyard, under the tree, with more open space. Here, inside, is much more like the cubicles . . .

C: . . . confinement, yet the impossibility of keeping out, which echoes all the library-cubicle, womb enclosures of *Crown of Columbus* and connects to *Broken Cord*, where we have to keep acknowledging the significance of what crosses over—and what doesn't.

P: . . . containment and absolutely no predictability at all in relation to that containment. And that containment in many ways becomes the illusion through which we operate . . . the artificial walls. . . . But where this began for me was when you, for some reason unknown to me, came out of nowhere—even though we'd had a slight interaction in the past. It began with that movement toward. Because to some degree, I think all of our discussions . . . whatever kind of article we write . . . are a convergence. Some way of coming into a moment to record or connect and clarify. . . . The raft arrives. There's a motion set. Maybe it's always been there and that's part of the understanding, but I think the reader has to understand the way we're looking at this: as a convergence.

C: Shouldn't we replace the book jacket blurb that says "a novel of discoveries, *The Crown of Columbus* chronicles the adventures of a pair of mismatched lovers [Vivian Two Star

and Roger Williams] and their quest for truth about Christopher Columbus and themselves." For me, this reduction totally misrepresents what Dorris and Erdrich accomplish.

P: Yes, the publishers missed the community there. It's categorized as the story of two individuals. It misses the whole: the basic understanding of the relationships between individual and the community, the individual and the collective.

C: *Broken Cord* is tougher. Dorris chronicling his son Adam's story plus Adam's own story . . . Fetal Alcohol Syndrome . . . barriers and boundaries . . .

P: It's a chorus. *Broken Cord* is a chorus. But when I think of *Crown of Columbus*, I think of a symphony. I worry when it's characterized as "two mismatched lovers," which makes me think of two fiddles, or two violins. It's not acknowledging the incredible complexity of human interaction and existence . . . and of the human community and other communities. When a complex process is thrown into a non-relational context, it becomes flat and devalued. . . . On one hand we do matter, our voices change things . . . but we as individuals are not the only voice . . .

C: . . . which Erdrich doesn't forget . . . because she believes in connections and change, she enters the present . . . lives the past in the present—unlike the historian who was here last week, who, instead of circling, forgot the now.

P: . . . and all the more difficult to deal with because in his hands was the ability to empower. We—you and I—have to struggle to get a little bit of power and we share it. He—that historian—has so much of it and then who did he select for his example of teachers who are doing this kind of work cross-culturally? A "white" man. Not to devalue white men, but they are always used as examples. No, it's intentional. The power brokers have to be all the more accountable because they continue to perpetuate the myth that their expertise is the only expertise . . . by only including white males in their retinue, they pass the power on to other white men . . . generationally that becomes the expectation and it works to the exclusion and delegitimization of everyone else. . . . If we look at this system of justice and cultural interaction, or if we look at what has historically happened to native peoples in relation to this system, we see clearly that we've never had a legitimate voice in dialogue with those men of power. . . . Even those with good hearts. . . . Think of all the times we've gone



Poets and writers, Rob Proudfoot and Deb Casey bring different gender/intellectual/cultural traditions to these conversations, set at Cafe Roma, Eugene, Oregon, in the summer and fall of 1991. Both teach at the University of Oregon and within a variety of communities.

back to petition for our lands or to petition because we signed treaties and they were broken. Among my own people, the longest standing treaty with any Indian people in the country, made in 1789, was broken in the late 50s and 60s when Kennedy decided to put the Kinswa Dam on our reservation. The U.S. government had no respect for existing treaties. After a couple hundred years of mutual agreement, mutuality was thrown out. It became convenient not to acknowledge their words and the power balance went out the window just like that. When they realized they couldn't have their own way, they took what they wanted. . . . That characterizes the last 500 years of "bad word" the white male has put forth. . . . Why should we believe them anymore?

C: We shouldn't—I may be using a larger "we"—but it is about the power, the assuming power, which again ties what the historian was doing on stage to what Erdrich and Dorris explore in *Broken Cord* and *Crown of Columbus* . . . In all these cases—in the Supreme Court confirmation hearings and other places, we have this assumed power, instead of what? Shared power?

P: That's a good point. Nurtured?

C: . . . how to suggest the need to stay fluid?

P: Negotiated.

C: Right, ebb and flow: give and take, instead of siphoned off.

P: Yes, except for me that power isn't separate from all the other things the privileged assume . . . other things that support power and privilege. They're never really separate. We're speaking about authority, we're also speaking about legal authority, about history that supports what they do. We're speaking about gender relationships in favor of the privileged. We're speaking about not having to be responsible to community. Even when they speak of power sharing, there's no such thing in reality in this society. . . . People of all cultures live their lives to serve the interests of the privileged few . . . the "owners" . . . and that is accomplished at the expense of all of us . . . of great parts of all of us . . . given up to the consumption of the greed. . . . There isn't cultural or gender equity in this society . . .

C: So *Crown of Columbus* opens and moves out from an understanding of assumed power that is built on imbalance, and on a lack of communication, no respect for community . . .

P: Embedded in the assumption around this power is the notion that it's something the privileged are the caretakers of . . . that it belongs to them in stewardship . . . that in fact we don't, we aren't capable—either implicitly or explicitly—of wielding that power in a way that is acceptable for them or their needs. . . . They don't negotiate. They dominate. Or they kill you off one way or another . . . spiritually, economically, emotionally . . .

C: . . . because once that power is let loose, it's not owned. It's available. . . . It's dangerous. The desire to control creates an urge to possess, an imbalanced clutching that freezes parameters—it's the boxes of containment that we see throughout the *Crown of Columbus*—the bat cave, Tupperware sheet-cake carrier, womb. To loosen the grip, means letting go of all that acquired assumed power . . . and connected to that clutching is an impulse to turn away from darkness . . .



C: . . . to look past the moments that don't sit right. In order to arrive at a destination that will be complete and contained, controlled and definitive. In *Columbus*, he is going to be the biographer with the truth. With Adam, he is going to find the cause and fix him as well as control those responsible—directly responsible—for his limitations . . . boxes again, the jail. . . . I mean—to fix is to fail is to falsely believe in control, right? . . . In *Crown of Columbus*, this happens between the men and women constantly, too . . .

P: . . . and in a society that purposefully sets out to create divisions and power imbalances . . .

I was recently in Klamath country with friends and we were up in the high buttes. These people had lived there all of their lives and been by this spot many times. Out walking, they came upon a particular set of petroglyphs they hadn't seen before. . . . There was this striking one of Modoc ancestry: it's common in the Indian Country to depict people in a circular formation. . . . Only, this one was really striking in that the people in the great circle of this petroglyph, men, women, and children . . . obviously all ages and multidimensional . . . and others depicting our four-legged, swimming, winged, crawling relatives . . . where their hands meet there aren't hands . . . instead there are waves. I'm wondering if we've really come up on an older expression of what we've been speaking to . . . a clear expression of the collective . . . of relation. . . . The point where the individual hands connect and disappear, the point

where everyone becomes community and yet remain distinct beings. It's a circle, but I've not seen anything like it. . . . It's the community legacy of united power that transcends the individual . . . the belonging . . . the responsibility . . . the protecting . . . "White" Europeans stole and tried to destroy our power of community . . . with ourselves . . . with all living things . . . with the earth. This petroglyph reminds us that the "crown" is the whole we are part of . . .

C: Exactly, that image is amazing. I keep returning to Valerie (at the close of *Crown of Columbus*) starting to think of the sea as a place to cross, and I know this is a deliberate word choice, but I keep thinking she wants to enter the water, join those

waves: link hands . . . that she's permeated with a sense of belonging to, or recognizing, something larger.

P: I'm wondering if they're not saying that on a planetary level, on a global level, that we all belong. She belongs as much to the other side of the ocean. . . . And that's one of the questions of our time: how to come to an understanding of the deep relationship to our collectiveness on this planet. Despite the disaster that the Europeans brought here, the

ocean on the other side is the same ocean and so is the land . . . Valerie's wanting to cross it is a natural desire to know what one belongs to, that sense of greater belonging to the earth itself. That's how I interpret that. . . . There's a particularly European penchant for categorizing nature as a woman only, and men not being able to ever have nurturing values and roles . . . as if men were outside of the natural order. . . . In many cultures, that's not so: It's a complete wisdom that informs the community . . . requiring a balance between the genders. But where man . . . the enlightened "white" man . . . is perpetually outside of nature, it sets up this manipulative process which is really bad news for all of us . . .

C: Position, appropriate relationship.

P: I'm not sure I want to say this in print. I want to think about this. . . . I don't want to admit at this point that despite all that has happened to all of our peoples (indigenous peoples) . . . I can't articulate in the way I want to yet—that the other side of this devastation is a wisdom that is real important to the survival of our species . . . and that we have something to give back out of that pain and suffering and loss . . . but also the joy of survival and the joy of seeing what has survived being passed on. . . . Sometimes when our peoples come together to story tell or to dance or just to be with each other generationally. . . . I'm so filled with a sense of past and future. We need to know the old traditions . . . and that they belong to us and we belong to them. Yet, too, we must acknowledge our "nowness" . . . I guess it's a hopefulness and a

sense of future and a sense of trust in renewal that emerges out of that that's really more important than the crown, or the ocean, or individual people, or—I mean in Adam, too, in the long run, just knowing that Adam's Adam. . . . The circle is there. . . . We are the ones who have stepped out of it as a species. We are also those who have the power to step back in and become a part of the dance. . . . There is great strength in knowing that despite the difficult journeys of our peoples, that we are not gone, that we in the now are "alive" . . . the people of the past and the future alive through us . . . and that will continue . . . I think of the people and the waves and the hands . . . the waves of the other generations come through us . . .

C: . . . we can stretch this a bit and connect to *Broken Cord*, when Dorris consciously relates his motivation for having a child to his work with the tribe in Alaska whose word *dene*, meaning people, is used in place of the singular "I" . . . acknowledging the collective . . . so every singular act becomes, at least in potential, a community act. Yet this consciousness doesn't seem to affect his dissatisfaction with the solitary, individualized nature of his own home . . . He wants to be a "we" in the father-child relationship . . . separate from the recognition of the "we" he already is.

P: Yes, in *Broken Cord*, the "we" is not acknowledged. He seems to want to control the "we" through the role of the father . . .

C: But in *Crown of Columbus*, we eventually connect with a "we" that is the multidimensional sense operating across time and space, really inside of the *dene* concept—you agree?

P: Yes, you're touching on what I feel to be one of the most critical realities Dorris and Erdrich present to us, particularly in the end of *Crown of Columbus*. We spoke about intentionality. . . . I think they created Roger a little slower in his realities, intentionally, to let us know what a silly fool he is, because in reality he is a part of the "we". . . . This is very much within the traditional sense of humor of Indian cultures to teach through this gentle kind of prodding. There's some real fun-making within the struggle, carried to a universal level . . . we are poking fun at our own limitations, our own humanness. In many ways, he becomes symbolic of all of the individuals in the "we" that struggle to maintain a balance between who we are as individuals and who we really belong to, that which is greater than us . . . and the foolishness of thinking that we're always going to be in control and can control that "weness." However, I think it also underscores the importance of our remembering that we do affect that "weness." But at the end of *Crown of Columbus*, they are



clearly saying that it could be any one of us . . . that we all struggle to maintain a balance in our lives.

C: Adam, too, in terms of power and time . . . which naturally affect his relationship with his father . . . Adam (because of his Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), not at all daunted or touched by powers, or degrees, or authorities, in a sense, in a father-son way, intensifies for Dorris the scholar-anthropologist-expert elements of himself, so that the more balanced Native American person gets overplayed—partially lost, maybe—responding to what Adam is, or is not.

P: Well, you've made two very different points. Dorris's expectation of Adam could not be a reflection of his experience and it is overplayed. That opens up a whole can of worms for me. In particular, Dorris's attitudes towards women, Indian women, who were involved with drinking. He appears to be insensitive to the understanding of how these things happen. This appears to lead to his not understanding the child and thus not accepting the child for who he is. But isn't that much like the white, male scholar? To be the intellectual high priest? The

male high priests are more valued than other people. Wouldn't the male want the next generation of males to be perfect? Intellectuals are taught to strive to be more than, smarter than . . . intellectuals have the ability to change the lives and the people that Adam is symbolic of. It touches on arrogance, a privileged sense of knowing . . . a special knowing based in "power over" . . . You made another point in the beginning when you spoke about Michael Dorris being the father and wanting to control and yet wanting to be a part of things . . . The historian who was here was a good example, too, saying, "I want to be a part of things, a part of the collective, but I want to control them . . ." That's part of the legacy. That's the thorn of the *Crown of Columbus*. . . . But there's something deeper happening and it's not separate from people not recognizing that people are starving in Africa—massive, massive numbers of people are starving in Africa. It's this lack of community consciousness that Erdrich spends so much time talking about. It seems for me that we're at a point right now where we have to make some critical decisions . . . It's almost like we're filing through, one by one, on this precipice and the ground has ice on it and the rules are that we can't even reach out to help each other to get through it. Do you know what I'm saying? We can't cross alone. That's why "the people" die if only a few individuals not connected to community continue to monopolize the power.

C:—So in *Broken Cord*, when Dorris and Erdrich defend the position to lock up women who are pregnant and who cannot handle alcohol, who might be endangering their unborn—as if

we can separate that moment . . . even if the complexities, the tragedies, have been chronicled—this recommendation, too, is born of the legacy of Columbus . . . that controlling impulse that threads through *Crown of Columbus*. . . But Vivian—and *Crown*—show us reality: there is no control, and there is no absolute: we have to constantly pay attention to our shifting feet. Sometimes that puts us over the edge where we create our Columbus, we encourage the kind of containment and freezing of moments that lead to bad things.

P: Exactly. We fall into the expert mode. Whether it's orchestrating Indians or Adam's life.

C: But to be fair we can't stop here because *Crown of Columbus* builds from that impulse, like "Good through '92," which is stamped on Vivian's hand as she tries to enter the library. They're making contact with deeper connections.

P: Yes. In the end, "Good through '92" simply means that the crown is not the issue, nor is Columbus, nor any of us "individuals." . . . Maybe there's some hopefulness that we'll put Columbus and the damn crown behind us and look at what we've been doing for the last 500 years and what the complex interactions of culture and gender on this continent have meant and can mean. . . . They leave it open for us beyond '92 to create a different vision of our potential as human beings and to be aware of . . . a part of . . . whatever unfolds there. It was the first time thinking about this quincennial stuff this week that I felt a hopefulness around what we might do . . . I've been overwhelmed lately with mainstream culture focusing on Indian people, which for me is through a process of negations. What I mean by that, is that I see it just as distorted in a human sense to focus only on Indians in a decontextualized manner, as it is to focus solely on Columbus. We certainly need to understand that the uniqueness of the strands of Indian peoples in relation to each other creates a multifaceted historic dynamic. We also need to understand the historic relations with all the immigrant peoples: Asian, African, Hispanic, and Europeans. We Indians do not disacknowledge the braiding of our collective experience over these past 500 years. The obsession of Euro-American people of acknowledging Indian people in certain ways and totally disacknowledging and ignoring Indian people in other ways is of great concern to me. We're not solely emerging at this point of time. Nor are we purely historical beings. A jump off point for me would be the acknowledgement that certain historical events happened and continue to happen and we need to work with and understand them, but they're not separate entities. This means not looking at Indians just because of the quincennial. In actuality, it's an opportunity to look at ourselves and also to realize how Indian people have moved back and forth through multiple cultural experiences due to the arrival of so many people in our home lands. We can't help but learn from each

other. All those unknowns arriving and interacting with us. . . . All those rafts we've been stuck on . . . from reservations to boarding schools . . . that have modified our culture, have forced us to struggle to maintain the essence of past as it transits us to the future. European-American culture continues to disacknowledge the complex struggle that Indians have had to face transmitting the past to the present. Like for Violet the baby . . . the woman who became her caretaker transformed her reality. In the future that moment won't be lost. What is important is that each of us, within our own culture, has the full opportunity to see that our circle stay whole . . . not broken by outsiders and then "reinterpreted." In that way we bring to the greater circle of cultures our particular strengths to share. That process—of clarification—is intriguing to me. . . . In an essence, it's what Dorris and Erdrich focus on when they leave those open-ended processes. They seem to be saying that in our being the legacy, we have the opportunity to direct that legacy and to change that legacy. . . . In a tangible sense, the crown isn't a real crown. The crown is realizing our potential. The raft isn't a real raft, but it symbolizes the safety and potential that come to us through connection to our communities . . .

C: . . . and it ties into the dedication of the book: "to our bouquet of violets," which focuses not only on the children but transfers the respect . . . or devotion . . . from the gold metal to these fragile petals.

P: And an acknowledgement that where we are as a species is so fragile . . . how fragile yet strong the circle and the people can be . . . constantly changing.

C: And the time sense shaping this. Every time I try, I always have to reenter from where we are now, which is part of what *Crown of Columbus* does.

P: You've just named it. We're forever looking out from where we are. We're at a point, but that point is all the places. Some of that 500 years is emerging through us right now . . . and for me, the 20,000 years before that of our people putting deep roots to the tree of life . . . the circle of our people on this continent.

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