

Who is She? Remarkable Women You Want to Know

The 2026 Sitting Room Anthology

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The last line from George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, given to us by Helen Heal, describes best what all the authors here are honoring:

“for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.”

-- George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Introduction

I've been proud of all of the Sitting Room Library's annual anthologies thus far (except for the one on humor which was so Unfunny), but this 2026 prompt has elicited material that fed me where I was hungry.

Talk about blind dates! I am in love with so many of these women whom I never knew before. What a boon to be introduced to them, brought out of the shadows, thanks to the research and to the family histories! We know their names now and much more besides.

I am especially glad that these uncovered, recovered, discovered women are being honored in the new format of the anthology – designed by Iris Dunkle and printed by our longtime partner in this enterprise, Deependra Rai at Clone, a woman-owned business in Santa Rosa (and this is a thanks to them and yes, a plug).

While you will find a variety of genres and styles in this book, each of the pieces is permeated with the sweet flavor of gratitude. You'll taste it...

Whether reading this collection online or in print format, it is a collectors' item.

--J.J. Wilson

A Tribute to Phyllis Meshulam

By Iris Jamahl Dunkle

Here at the Sitting Room we were deeply saddened to hear of Phyllis's death and given the important work she's done as a poet, teacher and activist we wanted to remember her in these pages. I am a biography, but when it comes to writing about the people who were my friends it's difficult to separate the emotional residue one feels for the person one is describing when that person was so dear. In my mind, I can still see Phyllis' wide smile. The way, when she spoke about what she believed in, her whole being would beam.

Phyllis lived in Sebastopol where for many years we would gather to workshop our work. Midway through our workshop we would always stop to have tea, and Phyllis would pull out a giant basket of teas for us to choose from. It was such a lovely gesture. After hours of commenting on each other's work, we could gather back around her kitchen table over warm cups of tea to talk about our lives.

Phyllis published five books and chapbooks of poetry, including *Land of My Father's War* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2019), which won the Artists' Embassy International Award; and most recently *(Re)Creations*, published by Kelsay Books in 2025. Joy Harjo, U.S. Poet Laureate, said of *Land of My Father's War*, an "urgency of spirit has emerged eloquently here in these poems of perception and even prophecy..." And Maxine Hong Kingston said of *(Re)Creations*, "O Hope! The Poet can

create our world again. Phyllis Meshulam breaks apart the old memes/archetypes/ stories and re-tells them. And we—her readers and listeners—can make our lives on this earth anew.”

What follows is a poem from her last collection of poems, *(Re)Creations*.

Dear Editor

for Christine Blasey Ford

There's my grandma waving from the train window,
Smart, probing. What was a girl like that,
born in the 1880s, to do? Write letters,
some to newspapers, teach
Sunday School. When she died,
I hid a few letters in the attic of her house
so something of her would remain.
She speeds past.
There's me at 24 in therapy.
The couch flashes past like a train car.
The girl is bright, insecure, not pretty.
The therapist is her father's age,
promises sexual liberation, freedom from
self-doubts. Says he knows what she wants,
what she's wanted for a long time. She thinks,
I do? I have?
The train speeds along,
driven by a patriarchal God.
I see a train car paneled like the Senate hearing room,
and Dr. Blasey Ford raising her hand,
swearing her truth, shy but certain

in the chambers of power, like
Susanna of the book of Daniel.
There's Susanna covering herself with her shawl
while the lecherous elders leer, plot to extort favors.
There are Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey of Salem,
shaking their heads, loosened by the noose.
Anita Hill presses her face to the glass
to see if anything in the landscape has changed.
I see myself in the window of my laptop,
typing, typing. Writing letter after letter.
One for grandma, another for mom,
one for auntie, one for each daughter,
sister, girlfriend.
All the letters are for the women on this train,
or anyone carrying these scars.
Like a speeding train, I aim letters to papers
across the country, trying to ghost write a reckoning.

Elizabeth Stoddard: Too Much, Too Soon, Too Strange

By Kim Askew



Enigmatic much?

In five years of podcasting my co-host Amy Helmes and I have covered some fascinating women writers, but I don't think anyone has haunted me more than Elizabeth Stoddard. Something about her story and her first novel *The Morgesons* has stayed with me and tugged at the corner of my mind like a puzzle that I have yet to solve. What is it about Stoddard? In her lifetime her work was compared to Balzac, Tolstoy, Eliot, the Brontë sisters, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The latter was an admirer and so was Henry James. She may have been a writers' writer, but her books didn't sell very well. In her own words "I think one copy [of *The Morgesons*] passed from hand to hand, but the interest in it soon blew over and I have not

been noticed there since.” It’s hard to believe once you’ve read the novel. It’s both brilliant and bold. Some scholars today consider her one of the most strikingly original novelists of her time, next to Melville and Hawthorne.

Elizabeth Stoddard, born Elizabeth Barstow in 1823, grew up in the New England coastal town of Mattapoisett, the model for Surrey in *The Morgesons*. Like her heroine, she was the granddaughter of a tailor and the daughter of a shipbuilder, raised on the margins of a community where her family’s financial instability set them apart. Despite this, she received a strong formal education and was an avid reader, counting the Brontë sisters among her early literary influences. From a young age, she was known for her temperamental nature.

That temperament is on full display in *The Morgesons*, which announces itself from the very first line: “That child,’ said my aunt Mercy, looking at me with indigo-colored eyes, ‘is possessed.” It’s a startling way to introduce a heroine. Cassandra is not simply spirited or unconventional; she is willful, defiant, and uninterested in conforming to moral expectations. As a child, she learns she can evade punishment by pretending ignorance; as she grows older, she continues to test boundaries with an unapologetic intensity. She doesn’t smooth things over or try to make herself more palatable. Instead, she can be blunt, erratic, even difficult to understand. And the novel doesn’t rush to explain her. Her motivations remain, at times, elusive and her behavior unpredictable. It’s this refusal to fully resolve her character, this sense that

something essential remains just out of reach, that begins to explain why she lingers.

Part of what makes *The Morgesons* linger, though, is not just Cassandra herself, but the way Stoddard tells her story. The novel resists the conventions of its time. Dialogue often appears without clear attribution, scenes build toward emotional intensity only to break off abruptly, and characters' motivations are often difficult to grasp. There is little sense that the reader is being guided through the narrative. Instead, the prose feels jagged, even disorienting, as one critic described it, "pointy and angular." In this way, the novel feels less like the moral clarity of a traditional 19th-century bildungsroman and more like something closer to Henry James, where interiority takes precedence over explanation. The novel doesn't guide the reader so much as abandon her to the experience, and like Cassandra herself, it resists resolution.

And yet, for all its originality, *The Morgesons* barely registered when it was initially published. The timing didn't help. It came out just days after the Union Army's defeat at Bull Run, as the country's attention turned fully to war. But circumstance alone doesn't seem to account for it. The novel occupies an uneasy space, perhaps too psychologically complex to align with the moral clarity of popular 19th-century fiction, yet too structurally unruly to fit comfortably alongside its more experimental peers. In many ways, it is a book without a clear literary home. Perhaps it was precisely this refusal to conform, this

resistance to resolution, this insistence on ambiguity, that made it so easy to overlook and yet so difficult to forget.

It's tempting to say that Stoddard was simply ahead of her time. And in some ways, she was. *The Morgesons* is, on the surface, a bildungsroman, a coming-of-age story, but one that traces not just a search for identity, but for autonomy and sexual fulfillment within a deeply constrained world. That tension runs through the novel. It draws on the brooding intensity of writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe, while also anticipating the psychological ambiguity of Henry James. The result is something difficult to place, neither fully aligned with the moral clarity of popular fiction nor comfortably situated among more experimental forms. Even its treatment of female desire feels unusually direct, unsettling in ways that resist easy interpretation. But being ahead of one's time is not always an advantage. Without a clear place in the literary landscape, the novel had little to anchor it. That may be part of what gives it its enduring power.

I still don't think I've solved the puzzle of Elizabeth Stoddard. Maybe that's the point. There are writers whose work settles into place once you understand it, whose characters resolve and whose meanings clarify. *The Morgesons* refuses that kind of closure. Cassandra remains, even at the end, difficult to fully grasp; her desires, her choices, her contradictions never quite cohere into something easily explained. And the novel itself behaves the same way, resisting the structures that might make it more legible, more containable. Perhaps that is why it lingers. Not in spite of its opacity, but because of it.

Stoddard created something that doesn't fully yield to interpretation, and so it stays with you, unresolved, a little unsettling, and difficult to forget.

Alice Ball

By Hailey Atteridge

Dear Crooked Colleague,

I hope this letter finds you in ill will. I honestly cannot say that I am surprised by your actions. I only gained your attention once you saw my research and thought you could benefit from my work, my work! I fell ill and died in 1916, only a year after my discovery. I was only 24 years old and publishing my discovery would have changed everything, my legacy, the ideas of women being in STEM, especially an African American woman in STEM. But no, you decided to take the credit and published my work in your name. You named it the “Dean Method,” presenting the discovery as your own. For decades, you received all of the accolades for the first treatment for leprosy, with no mention of my name anywhere to be found. Medical textbooks, journals, and historical books credit you with this breakthrough treatment, when I am the one which built the foundation of this ground-breaking treatment. What confuses me the most is that you took off where I left off, continuing the work I had started, but never uttered my name. You refined the method, wrote and published papers on it. You were celebrated as a medical pioneer. You took advantage of my naivety, the need to be noticed and recognized overpowered human decency. All you cared about was your legacy, what about mine, what about my accomplishments? How will anyone know my hard work when you have erased it from history? I once wrote in my high school yearbook, “I work and work and still it seems that I have done nothing.” How ironic that statement seems in this context. Well, the joke is on you. After decades of not being recognized for my research, a

historian named Kathryn Takara found my original thesis. After more research, they discovered your theft of my discovery. The university installed a plaque in my honor, established the Alice Ball Scholarship, and dedicated a chaulmoogra tree also in my honor. My name was even inducted in the Women's Hall of Fame. My story may have been erased by a man fueled by ego and ambition, but my legacy will forever shine in the limelight. My story also shows even if justice is delayed, that does not mean that justice should be denied.

Your greatest mistake,

Alice Ball

Forgiveness Freed Her from Hatred

By Sharon Bard

If you don't recognize the name Phan Thi Kim Phuc, you might remember the naked nine-year-old girl running through the streets of Saigon in 1972, her body on fire from a napalm bomb during what the Vietnamese called the "American War." This graphic image shown on television screens worldwide may well have been pivotal in changing the course of the war, as American sentiment grew ever more disapproving of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia.

Kim Phuc, also known as the Napalm girl, tried to beat the flames from her clothing. That made the fire worse, so she tore off her clothes, and part of her skin came off as well. She had been sheltering with other civilians and South Vietnamese soldiers in a Buddhist temple when the attack occurred. "I turned my head and saw the airplanes, and four bombs landing down. Then, suddenly, there was the fire everywhere, and my clothes were burned up by the fire. At that moment I didn't see anybody around me, just fire. I will never forget that moment. I was so terrified."

Nick Ut was one of several photojournalists positioned outside the village anticipating further conflict that day. He saw Kim Phuc running down Route 1 highway screaming, "Too hot! Too hot!" He was 21 years old at the time. He took the photo and seeing that her body was badly burned, dropped his camera gear on the highway, and rushed her and several other injured children to a nearby hospital. "If she goes one more hour without treatment she will die, and you will be in trouble," he

yelled. His dark room technician saw the powerful picture and told him it would win a Pulitzer.

Kim Phuc spent fourteen months in hospitals being treated for her injuries. Two of her cousins had been killed in the bombing. She tried to move on from the attack and the image that was seen around the world. “As a child, I was embarrassed,” she said. “I didn’t like that picture at all. Why did he take my picture? I never wanted to see it.”

She dreamed of being a doctor, but in 1982 Vietnam’s communist government quickly removed her from medical school to use her in propaganda campaigns. Journalists traveled from overseas to hear her story, and she struggled with the attention. “It really affected my private life. I couldn’t go to school. I couldn’t fulfill my dreams. I wanted to disappear.”

She was in constant pain and considered suicide, but through faith and perseverance she began to embrace forgiveness. In 1986, she was granted permission to continue her studies in Cuba, where she learned Spanish and was trained as a pharmacist. She reconnected with Nick Ut for the first time in fourteen years in Havana, and while in Cuba met another Vietnamese student whom she married in 1992.

Kim Phuc was granted political asylum by Canada in 1992, after which she felt inspired to use her personal tragedy for wider good. She wrote a book about her experiences and established the Kim Foundation International, a charity that provides aid to children of war. She was named a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador in 1997 and gave speeches around the world about her life and the power of forgiveness. She has received multiple honorary doctorates from various universities in both the US and Canada, where she now lives.

Through her foundation she was involved in efforts to secure medical treatment in Canada for Ali Abbas, who had lost both arms in a rocket attack in Baghdad during the Iraqi invasion. In 2022 she welcomed 236 Ukrainian refugees with children aboard a special flight from Warsaw to Regina, in an airplane displaying her iconic 1972 photo on its side.

“That picture has become a powerful gift for me. I can use it to work for peace, because that picture has not let me go,” she said. “Now I can look back and embrace it.”



“Forgiveness freed me from hatred. I still have many scars on my body and severe pain most days. But my heart is cleansed. Napalm is very powerful, but faith, forgiveness, and love are much more powerful. We would not have war

at all if everyone could learn how to live with true love, hope, and forgiveness. If that little girl in the picture can do it, ask yourself: Can you?

raw-war-raw-war-raw-war-raw-war-raw-war-raw-war
raw-war-raw-war-raw-war-raw-war-raw

Changemaker

By Barbara Beatie

Every great dream begins with a dreamer.
In 1837,
nine women shared the vision
to rouse drowsy
Concord wives, mothers, aunts, sisters, neighbors
with the moral imperative of wakefulness.
And the sole black woman,
Susan Robbins Garrison,
her father and her husband former slaves.
that night moved to host the second meeting
of the newly founded
Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society
in her home.

Their gathering, this circle of domesticity,
these women of the CFASS,
were barely noticed, or
noticed simply for ridicule,
nonetheless,
their voices in the Walden wilderness,
like invisible gossamer threads,
were flung in search of bridges,
conjuring their collective powers
the way drops of water unobserved transform into swells
trusting that their movement,
methodically tended and unfailingly applied,
could ameliorate hard hearts.

Because HDT shared the Woods with a former slave,
Zilpah White, at liberty now,
but herself barely subsisting,
screeching and singing in the borderlands and liminal

spaces
of historic colonial minutemen,
weaving flax and cotton into thread to scratch out a
living,

her name is forever pencil-written (even if it is
misspelled).

The eight Emersons Thoreaus Brooks Alcotts and Susan
Robbins Garrison

wrote, too,
while waiting for the Transcendentalists to rise,
applying the spring rain-like pressure that women know
can melt mountains.

They circulated petitions
until their gatherings became
speaking events,

And they even persuaded Mr. Emerson, finally,
to raise his voice, too.

Concord, somnambulate no more,
now caring for each, human to human,
even connecting passageways for
train riders

seeking freedom.

Tiny ripples of kindness
multiplying to
a swelling of gratitude.

All this from nine women meeting
with their sewing and tea.

One day, Susan Robbins Garrison
lay down,

though her grave was unmarked in Sleepy Hollow.
No headstone in the field, but a legacy of activism—
her steady faith in the unrelenting power of
holding fast to the belief

that this future (once a dream)
is possible.

A Card for Billie Johnson

By Ianthe Brautigan Swensen

Last week, I walked into the Hutchins Office and our Administrative Analyst, Billie Johnson, had remodeled the Department office. She had created a much-needed conversation nook in a corner, moved a small couch near a sunny window, and put more movable chairs around the table at the center of the room. This *new* to us is what she found for free and floating around the university. There is also a lending library for students who can't afford textbooks for their classes and a display space for books that faculty has written. Johnson's desk is not where she would ideally like because of the ancient wiring; if she were to move to her preferred location in the room, and someone turned on the microwave and then someone else used the copier—the breaker blows. I keep trying to come up with absurd solutions that involve multiple extension cords, which makes her laugh—something I love to hear. The importance of this upgrade is that it informs the students and guests that even though our university is going through a challenging time—and Liberal Studies Programs are being shuttered throughout the nation and state—that we are, for now, still here.

On the walls, Johnson has put group photos of our students. These photographs are one of the many reminders of our purpose. My favorite was taken at the top of Coit Tower; the students are bathed in sunlight with huge smiles on their faces. Johnson organized this field trip out of non-existent funds. We had just come out of COVID and couldn't afford, as we had in the past, admission to one of the wonderful museums in S.F., so we created an historical walking tour of North Beach and Chinatown. For many first-year students, it was the first time that they had been on a field trip. Friendships were

forged and memories were made. Upon our return, the expression on Johnson's face was one of deep satisfaction. Despite everything, a worldwide pandemic, unexpected budget cuts, she had provided a solution for our students—again.

During our recent registration, due to a gap in the system, Johnson's email pinged without mercy. At a time of less of everything, she is working relentlessly and practically to ensure make sure that our students get what they need. She's brilliant at knowing what's possible and what's not. Like our students, I go to her for honest answers to hard questions. There are more students that I can count who were able to graduate because when they came to her—ready to drop out—she was able to give a kind of tough care that acknowledges the reality of obtaining an education for some. One student did their senior capstone project on advice that Johnson had given her during a rough semester. The student was juggling a full-time job, health issues, and was thinking about dropping out. The title of the senior capstone project was “C's get degrees.”

Billie Johnson is not a therapist, nor is she a hero, she's one of the many people that have existed throughout time who find a way to work within broken systems and during challenging times. Not wanting to take too much of her time, here is our brief interview:

First, what drew you to working at a university? Watching you with students and seeing the tangible effect that you have on their lives—what makes you give more than you receive in financial compensation?

When I left my corporate job, I was burned out and felt like I wasn't being true to myself. A friend of mine who worked at the university suggested I apply because it works well with a family schedule, especially with two

young children and a husband at home. I never took the job at the university for the money. When I started, my pay was laughable. Looking back, I laugh at myself and shake my head. I left a mid 6-figure job and took one that paid me less than \$30,000 a year to start. This job was never about the money. It was about being able to give back and be there for people who didn't have someone on their side who understands the college system. I wanted to help first generation students and students from lower income families reach their full potential and goals. I help every student that walks through the door, but it's more special to me when I get to help those students because it hits close to home.

2. What does it say about the world that we live that we have systems that are dependent on folks like yourself who fill in the gaps & yet there isn't the financial compensation to go with this unpaid labor.

America was built on the backs of people like me—hardworking, don't quit people, that care. It's the people that care and put a little more into what they do that make this world great. We as a society don't value hard work and caring people. We value people that can entertain us and couldn't care less about others. For example, athletes make millions of dollars, but we pay our teachers less than \$100,000 a year, and in some other states way less than that. If you ask society, they'll say we need teachers, but we aren't willing to pay for them.

Is it fair? No. But it's been this way forever, and I don't believe it will ever change. I don't know anyone that does more than they should and gets paid for what they do.

3. Who was your mentor?

I can't say one person is my mentor. I was never someone who believed one person could have all the answers, so I've always looked to a few different people to help guide me. I've had the privilege of having strong women throughout my life who guided me at different stages.

4. What would be a step in the right direction to create new inroads of communication in organizations like ours that depend on the work of you and your colleagues.

A step in the right direction would be actually listening to the people doing the work every day. The people on the ground are the ones who see what students are going through and where the gaps are. We need more honest communication and less working in silos. If we talked more and worked together, instead of separately, we could help students in a much bigger way. It's about making sure people feel heard and valued, not just be expected to keep filling in the gaps.

5. I remember once you said, "I don't want a big deal made about what I do, but I would like a thank you card." Does this still hold true?

Yes, it still holds true for me, and here's why. A thank you card or anything handwritten means more to me than any gift or money. It shows that someone took the time to write something to me, and time is so much more valuable than anything else~ Billie Johnson

from A Dress Book

By Laynie Browne

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A DRESS BOOK

For several years now I've been writing "homage texts," or books written for particular female poets whose lives, work, and friendship have made mine possible. Attached are a couple of poems for the poet Harryette Mullen. My first encounter with her manuscript Trimmings, was as a volunteer for Lee Ann Brown, and her press Tender Buttons. At the time (1990) I was just beginning to understand the influence of Stein on so many of the writers I admired. Here Mullen had found a way to blend lingual innovation with cutting commentary. Every syllable perfectly stitched. Trimmings speaks in both covert and open ways, in confluent language, pinning multiple patterns for the myriad ways in which language dresses the body. Mullen's supreme sonic play, incorporating song, rhyme, and punning, was my introduction to her unmistakable signature, her witty riffs, and brilliant reframing of the common, the found, and the daily. Her work is an ongoing inspiration.

Each of the tiny prose poems, or fabricated remnants, in A Dress Book, begins with a phrase from Trimmings, which appears in italics as a title. The excerpts correspond with the order and pages of Trimmings. While writing, I kept considering the relation between text and textile, and was especially interested in that action of

others one cannot control, the way one is seen, which is particularly vexing for women. How is assembling oneself a statement or buttress against the assault of a pernicious gaze? What does this mean in various decades of womanhood? How to gather some soft protection to create a chosen silhouette? How to avoid becoming a dress torn to ribbons? How to represent oneself as more than a frock, a skirt (both as verb and noun), vixen, garb, bombazine or pelisse? How to create language for bodies which might wrap around a codex, a library of wearable pages, a fur envelope?

A labyrinth is not an adornment, and yet traversing tightly woven passages may be required in order to retrieve essential tools such as a case of braided powers, a worn yarn, a "serene length" or a long velvet after. Attire may shield against forms of misogynist weaponry—which makes a wardrobe of cusps, or a deck of scarves, a necessity.

wearing such wounds, such ornaments

Watching shine glide across screens. Exhaustion is a silhouette. A chosen absent pulse. Appropriates an attitude, leaning. Like mouthing vocabulary you don't quite apprehend. Standing in the illuminated circles cast by understated, well put-together pawns. Gleaning stock. I wore a cloak, an attaché case of braided powers, and sunglasses, set to surmise sublunary sums.

Body on fire, spangles

The dress code was slashed, executed. I arrived to the most decorated, lugubriously decked out occasions in minimal attire. Hair mask, hand mitts, and eye pillow. Donned in bare lip balm, bedding abets.

Watered Down

By Jill Bronfman

The Princess of Florence is what they called my sister,
born as she was in the town, although we carted her
everywhere.

An amateur by her sex, a maestro by her brush.

I take from her, my little Emily with the auburn hair and
the pointed nose. Not my Muse- I called her that once and
she poured salt instead of sugar in my tea.

We have learned to drink tea although we are Americans.
We paint like magicians, with light flashed on top of color.

Mr. Sargent, she called me, once I had my first
commission. If I became any more famous, she
threatened, she'd call me Sir.

Lake Garda in the summer, just as the sun rises we take
our easels to the shore. The mountains, our Cathedral, the
lake, our holy water.

There's this blue, I told her, I've mixed it for you, and I
hand her back her palette. My sister throws a dollop of
black oil into the blue pool. See this, she tells me, that's
the blue of this fine lake. No shallower, no deeper.

No woman I would ever paint, no Madame, no Lady,
would ever terrify me so.

I gather my paints. I fold my easel. She works, still.
There's a sailor I must meet and so I leave her to it.

All Things Bright and Beautiful

for Holly Whitmore-Wiggerly (1974-2018)

By Nicole Callihan

I hadn't known she was dying, that soon she would be dead. There were so many other things inside my head.

Probably I thought of the same things I think of today. The laundry, the children. This was before the dog.

A fog settled over my city though it is not known to be a city of fog. She hadn't seemed the type to die young.

At her first wedding, she'd asked me to wear a blue dress.

I matched her twin though was nothing like her twin

except her twin and I both wanted to be poetesses.

That's what her estranged father had called us.

Poetesses!

She and I had driven seventeen hours to meet him and his partner, though it was before people used that word.

Words come in and out of fashion. Perhaps like the dead moving through rooms. She sang most of the way. Slept hard.

Sometimes I banged on the steering wheel and told her to wake up, to talk to me, to keep me from driving off

the road. It was around Christmas time. Lots of lights

draped on lots of crosses. I think there were more stars

back then. The way home was quieter. A gasp and a
heave.

Diet Pepsis growing warm in the cupholder. Her
second

husband, I recall, was kinder, but I can't remember his
face,

his name. Only that on the phone she'd said something

about happiness, the end of dread. They were mostly
hymns,

her songs. I hadn't known she would soon be dead.

Overlooked Women EJ Phillips: Her Dramatic Life 1830-1904

By Mary Glen Chitty

Elizabeth Jane Philips, my great-great- grandmother, joined a Toronto theatre company at 22, and had three children (one of whom died as an infant) with the company's already married actor-manager John Nickinson. He died in 1864, leaving her to raise their two young living children and pursue her acting career on her own. An indefatigable letter-writer, I found in a family attic over 1,000 letters (1883-1901) to her young adult son, Albert Nickinson. I have been researching and writing about her life since 1992. supplementing the less documented earlier years with newspaper and archival research and writing about her life since 1992.

The letters revealed an enterprising, independent and professional woman who matured as a respected character actress. Working almost continuously in touring stock companies, Elizabeth Jane, known as Mrs E.J. Phillips, performed with the greats of her day including performing with Junius Brutus Booth Jr., brother of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth, in "*Othello*," on the night Lincoln was shot, with J B Booth Jr.'s wife Agnes, and Maurice Barrymore, father of Ethel, John and Lionel, during what has been described as the Golden Age of American theatre. She performed in Washington DC during Grover Cleveland's 1885 inaugural week and attended his inaugural ball. She traveled to the West Coast seven times (1882-1896), including to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia, with performances along the way in Chicago, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Joseph,

Missouri, Denver and Salt Lake City. The letters reveal an enterprising, independent and professional woman. Her line of business was “old women and heavies”. She was commended for playing “old women” by the time she was 30. Unlike her ingenue and soubrette colleagues, her career was more sustainable, lasting from 1848 until 1898.

I found her handwritten autobiography in the Harvard Theatre Collection. Her manager, AM Palmer, collected them from almost every Union Square Theatre Co actor. I was delighted to find her report on Civil War Cincinnati there. **Mrs. E. J. Phillips** In the city of Toronto, Ont. Canada, in the “Royal Lyceum” Theatre on Easter Monday, 1852. I made my first professional appearance as a stock actress, playing “Grace Harkaway” In “London Assurance,” the stars Mr. John Nickinson and Miss Charlotte Nickinson appearing as Sir Harcourt Courtly and “Lady Gay Spanker.” I soon realized that acting was work, not play! Day after day, new parts were handed to me to study for the next night. But experience was gained, and confidence strengthened, and now – I still feel the benefit derived from those early struggles. In 1862 I was engaged for “Pike’s Opera House”, Cincinnati, where I remained until the destruction of the theatre by fire on the 22nd of March 1866.” During my four years at this “Temple of the Drama,” I had to work very hard and in every “line of business”. From Tragedy to Comedy, Farce, Burlesque & Pantomime, “Leading Parts” Heavies, Old humour & Soubrettes – nothing came amiss. It was very seldom that I was “out of the bill.” During the war I witnessed many striking and patriotic scenes here. The soldiers from every state going to and from the battlefield. Our audiences were frequently composed chiefly of soldiers. It was after the Surrender of Vicksburg [July 1863] that General Grant was most enthusiastically received here by the soldiers, many of whom had been with him through his campaign. During this season of

1864-65, a most unique performance of Hamlet was given by Gentlemen of the Cities of Cincinnati and Columbus for "The Benefit of the widows and orphans of the Soldiers, who died in the war." Hamlet was represented by Ex Lieutenant Governor [Charles] Anderson. All the other parts were played by Lawyers, Doctors, Bankers, and Brokers, and I as "Queen Gertrude". The house was crowded! Very large prices had been paid for seats and boxes. I remained in Cincinnati for another season playing in "Wood's Theatre." Scene painter E T Harvey compares the two theatres "There was a dignity about the aristocratic Pike's which kept the general public from getting familiar with either the theatre of the company. But there was always an easy sociability about the "Old Woods," The seasons of 67-68, 68-69, I was engaged in Indianapolis. March 68, I played for the first time with Edwin Forrest [1806-1872] and did not find him as difficult to please as I had heard – on the contrary, he was kind and complimentary – I played Emelia in "Othello," "Goneril" in "King Lear" and "Servia" in "Virginius" with him. My next engagement was at the "Varieties Theatre" in New Orleans, which commenced in Oct' 1869-1870. 1871 Engaged by Chas Pope for the St. Louis "Olympic theatre." This management having theatres in Memphis, Tenn., New Orleans, and Mobile. The company was sent several times during the season to support "stars" in those cities. Sept 1873, I returned again to the "Olympic theatre" St Louis, when Mr. Pope was still manager reporting with the company on trips to the Southern cities in the spring, beginning and traveling with Mr. [Lawrence] Barrett until July, and again engaged with him for the season of 1874-75, which was spent traveling through the United States and Canada. Before closing my Season with [Barrett], I made an engagement for Sept' 1875 for the Chestnut Street Theatre Phila. where I appeared as "Clarissa" in "*Our Boys*," which was revived in the Spring

of '76 and ran through the entire "Centennial" Summer and beginning of the regular Season Sept^r 1876. During my vacation in the Summer of '77 Mr. A.M. Palmer sent for me to play Mrs. Tubbs in "*Pink Dominos*." I made my first appearance in the Union Square theatre in August 1877. The parts I was cast for under Mr. Palmer's management at his Union Square Theatre were Aunt Fanny in "Banker's Daughter," "Lady Ogden" in "False Friend," Countess in "The Creole," Mrs. Powers in "Daniel Rochat," Countess in "Danicheffs," Countess in "Two Orphans," Mrs. Jarvis in "Lights O' London," Eleanor Mormay in "Felicia," Tabitha Harewood [Trump] in "Conscience," Prudence in "Camille," Marianne Florence in "The Rantzaus". I will add a list of the principal parts I have appeared in since 1852:

Othello Emilia & Desdemona; Coriolanus Volumnia; Hamlet Queen Gertrude; Merchant of Venice Portia; Macbeth Lady Macbeth; Richard III Queen, Lady Anne & Duchess of York; Comedy of Errors Adriana; King John Eleanor; Romeo & Juliet, Juliet & Nurse; Taming of the Shrew Katharine; Merry Wives Mrs. Page; Henry VIII Queen Katharine; Twelfth Night Olivia; As You Like It Celia; King Lear Goneril; Pizarro Elvira & Cora; Lucretia Borgia Lucretia; School for Scandal Lady Teazle, Mrs. Candour; Love's Sacrifice Margaret, Hermione; Clandestine Marriage Mrs. Heidelberg; Rivals Mrs. Malaprop, Lydia & Julia; She Stoops to Conquer Mrs. Hardcastle; Stranger Mrs. Hallam & Countess; The Gamester Mrs. Beverley; Venice Preserved Belvidera. This gives a slight idea of the work done by your Humble servant. Elizabeth J. Phillips, New York, N.Y., March 8th, 1890.

Two Poems

By Robin Clark

Genora Johnson Dollinger

Under the category of weapons, can anyone imagine cuntface, cuntface, a hundred-woman strike brigade walking past a line of Pinkertons, rifles & cops to the auto factory floor? In 1936 or 2012 that's Captain Cuntface to you, you have to wear it, like a body, stitched into the mirror itself: they won't shoot you in the back. As in the history of wardrobe, doing is being, not to mention those hairstyles. Wooden clubs for hands, car-seat leather into wristbands. And we can, under the category of weapons, unscrew a stitch for the new world. They grab the jacket's back just slip right through.

Mary Harris “Mother” Jones

What to do when yellow
fever, husband, child, child
child, child? She may have lived
100,000 years, a marriage
of action verbs & explosives—
the more I think the more rad
I get—mops & brooms used to
barricade the mine entrances
nobody wants a lady
to march one hundred child workers
from Philly’s textile mills to the
President’s house on Long Island
so she must become the most
dangerous America itself

Edith Matilda Thomas

By Mary Conaway

*I know it must be winter (though I sleep)
I know it must be winter, for I dream
I dip my bare feet in the running stream,
And flowers are many, and the grass grows deep.*

From “Winter Sleep” by Edith M. Thomas

Edith Matilda Thomas, in the pouring rain, knocked on the door of the esteemed Helen Hunt Jackson with a scrapbook in her hand. The “best amateur poet of Ohio” went to New York with the ambition of widening her literary world.¹ A connection on behalf of her father led her to the literary salon of Anne C. L. Botta, a highly regarded salon hostess and artist. Botta’s Waverley Place home invited and welcomed many popular and elite authors, musicians, and visual artists and even politicians and famed entrepreneurs. Her salon is most widely recognized as the place where Edgar Allan Poe first recited “The Raven.” It was in *this* parlor, which was bursting with lively discussion of art and full of literary history, that Thomas fell utterly in love with New York and New York fell just as much in love with her.²

When Thomas entered Jackson’s home, she was met with a polite but mechanical greeting from Jackson. The young poet knocking on the door of an established one—asking for validation or where to find success—was routine at this late point in Jackson’s career. After she reluctantly turned open the pages of the scrapbook and read through some of the collection of the rain-soaked poet, she went to the editorial office at *Harper’s* “with an air of triumph” and “‘This,’ said she, ‘is something for you to read. See

what you think of the verses in that book and let me know if I have not discovered a poet for you.”³ This unusual discovery, which led to the practically immediate publishing of her scrapbook poems, established Edith M. Thomas among the elite literary circles of New York. Jessie B. Rittenhouse, a literary critic and journalist, retold this “origin story” of sorts for the introduction of the *Selected Poems of Edith M. Thomas*.

After Thomas's death in 1925, *New York Times* writer and poet Robert Underwood Johnson called her “unsurpassed by her contemporaries of English verse.” And during her lifetime, and with very few pauses (and those were primarily to travel back to Ohio to take care of family members), Thomas published regularly in the *Atlantic*, *Lippencott's*, *St Nicholas*, and *The Century Magazine*. She wrote fifteen poetry collections, many of which were published by the prestigious Houghton & Mifflin Co. John Greenleaf Whittier praised, “She has a divine gift [and] her first book is more than a promise—an assurance.”⁴ She wrote regularly to Botta, never forgetting her support and urging Thomas to meet with Jackson. Botta and Jackson were active and powerful mentors for new women poets, but none would quite rise to fame as rapidly and as intensely as Edith M. Thomas.

Botta's mentorship was praised and recognized (even by the ever complaining Poe!) and through her decades of hosting, she connected young poets to editors, other artists, and would nurture genuine friendship for years and years.⁵ While it was not a formal organization, Botta inspired what would be a network of female friendships that would carry on traditions of mentorship. For example, Thomas also was a dear friend to Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Fields, both of whom would correspond with her to workshop poems. The late nineteenth century particularly saw a rising number of women writers and poets in the

pages of influential publications. Thomas made her living off of her work as an editor at *Harper's Magazine* and, of course, her poetry. She spent her years living in New York entirely braided into the literary scene, making a name for herself and not forgetting to make new space for women who could not enter its threshold as easily as their male peers.

Thomas's footprint in literary history would fade and slip away, like the many women poets' of the nineteenth century, out of cultural memory. She'd be referenced sporadically in a select few anthologies but was almost entirely left out of scholarship—an aspect of her legacy that Paul Bernat Bennett smartly examined and questioned in her brief biography of Thomas included in her anthology, *Nineteenth Century Women Poets* (1998). Thomas wrote many realist poems, a genre that was cusped between the Romantic period and Modernism, that has only recently been revitalized in scholarship. Bennett questioned the necessity of remembering realists like Thomas who act as a “bridge” between the Romantic and Modern poets, she asks, “Having served its purpose, need the bridge be remembered?” (Bennett 294).

But in the past couple of decades, realist poetry is emerging slowly as its own category to step out of the shadow of more recognizable genres. And figures like Thomas—unsurprisingly, who were also primarily women poets—see themselves on the pages of literary history where they should have been all along. When Jesse Rittenhouse, a good friend of Thomas, assembled the collection of her poems after her death, the famed poet Ada Alden wrote in memoriam a poem titled “Psyche's Lamp” in which her final stanza called for its readers to listen:

When the sharp tempests beat,
We will remember her and hear her sing:

“I shall step lightly forth to meet the spring . . .”
Flooded with love her airy world is ringing;
For hear! above the clouds a skylark singing.

End Notes

1. This title was given to her in an Ohioan newspaper; in a letter to Botta, Thomas was clearly irritated by the comment.
2. For more information on her literary salon, please see: *Memoirs of Anne C. L. Botta: Written by Her Friends*. New York: J. S. Tait & sons, 1893
3. Rittenhouse, Jessie B. “Edith M. Thomas 1854-1925.” Harper & Brothers, 1926.
4. This was featured in a letter written to Annie Fields found in the The Sarah Orne Jewett Text Project
5. For example, Elizabeth Renker’s excellent book *Realist Poetics in American Culture, 1866-1900*.

Excerpt from “Perpetua’s diary”

By Gillian Conoley

We were left no original papyrus, vellum no parchment.

Though a redactor soon after 203 CE, date of her martyrdom,

is certain: “she wrote in her own hand and from her own experience.”

Felicitas—

Perpetua’s Egyptian slave servant/rumored lover—they
are both described

in prison with disheveled hair as though

let loose like Latin’s subordinate
clauses—

“I was languishing because I had seen languishing” was one of
Perpetua’s phrases

ferrying us through time—

Soon before she receives a vision.

“A golden ladder of marvelous light

“Very narrow” only one person at a time could ascend

each side fixed

“ with swords, lances, hooks, daggers”

so if one slipped

one’s flesh “would cleave to the iron”

Her brother—among other catechumens—pagans converted to Christianity but not yet

baptized— was first to climb.

He called back down, come, Perpetua, but watch for the dragon's bite.

So she calls on God (who she has come to trust) for help, and
slowly, not to scare—

the dragon lifts his head

to serve as the lowest rung on the ladder
on which she steadies her first step

“I trod upon his head”

To garden of “immense extent”

touch

And four angels who lift with no

stature

A white haired “shepherd of a large

cake”

who gave me cheese as it were a little

“I received it with folded hands
and understood that it was to be a passion, not an escape,
and ceased to have any hope in this world.”

"Perpetua's Diary" first appeared in *Notes from the Passenger* by Gillian Conoley, Nightboat Books, New York, 2023.

"Perpetua's Diary": Saint Perpetua invented the diary in 203 CE in a Roman prison in Carthage while awaiting execution. Her writings are considered one of the earliest Christian texts. The diary is believed to have been edited and redacted by her contemporary Tertullian who claims to have been an eyewitness to her martyrdom, though there remains no definitive scholarly evidence.

Rita Harren Bordwell, a Surprising Local Historian

By Lauren Coodley

There are four ways to write a woman's life: the woman herself may tell it, in what she chooses to call an autobiography; she may tell it in what she chooses to call fiction; a biographer may write the woman's life in what is called a biography; or the woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously, and without recognizing or naming the process.

– Carolyn Heilbrun

When I was given a chance to write about the history of Napa in 2003, I wanted to include information about labor. I went to the Historical Society and asked for the folder with that title. It contained only one article, by somebody named Rita Bordwell. Women have often been community builders but rarely published historians. I discovered that Rita Bordwell had been both. In that way, she became a role model to me as I was learning to write history.

Rita was born in 1885. Most women from that era appeared in the newspaper only twice: upon marriage and upon death. But in her seventh decade of life, Rita wrote two histories. One article recounted how “a friend of mine, a member of a union, rang me up one day and asked me if I would be interested in a position as secretary [at the] Central Labor and Building Trades Council.” She accepted the job and recorded for us the plight of jobless workers in 1938.

She described how there was always a kettle of beans and stew to share on the stove, how some families donated blankets, and how her manager at the Council, Mr. Bobst, put cots in his rumpus room while other families camped in tents on jobsites. "Work was so scarce and we had so many unemployed workers that we had to divide the work, giving each [man] two days and Mr. Bobst would say, 'Well that will give them bread.'"

Rita Bordwell also wrote a history of what would become the Napa Fire Department and organized a firefighter museum to preserve its history. Former Fire Chief Lee Mitchell told me:

Many of us old-timers knew Rita Bordwell. When I was first hired by the City of Napa in 1965, she used to stop by for a visit with the "fire laddies." She always had a story to tell and would remind us that her father was one of the original volunteer firefighters on the Pioneer Engine Company.

Bordwell's history of firefighting in Napa covers the years from 1859 to 1962. She tells how in early Napa, fighting fires was a strenuous and risky community effort:

Women and girls pumped, men passed the buckets.... My father served between 1884 and 1886. He was injured by a falling burning wall and resigned at the request of Mother—but he never missed a fire as long as he lived.

Former Fire Captain Bob Foley described how Rita Bordwell made sure that the firefighters were featured in the museum: "She shamed the guys into getting their photos [taken]." In her own hand, she inscribed the name of each firefighter on the back of each of the 589

photographs she collected. The museum would not open until twenty years after she died. It has been closed since the 2014 earthquake, but in December 2025, the Napa City Firefighters Association purchased a building at the corner of Soscol Avenue and Seventh Street where the museum will reopen.

Rita Bordwell attended almost every Board of Supervisors meeting and kept copious notes. The *Napa Register's* obituary of February 22, 1975, reads: "Napa County's ageless 'sixth Supervisor' Rita Harren Bordwell ...enjoyed a noteworthy 'career' in the Napa Valley as the wife of a contractor, secretary to labor organizations... and friend to many, a kind word on her lips for others every waking moment of the day."

For everything that we know about Rita, there are ten things that we don't know. Where did Rita shop, and get her hair done? What could her diaries and letters tell us? Are there photographs of her home at 1568 Palmer Street? What meals did she cook in her own kitchen? Barely three months after Rita's death, on my first trip to Napa, I stood at a phone booth in front of the courthouse at Second and Coombs, a block away from her birthplace, looking for a place to rent. I would teach women's history for three decades at the community college before I learned about "Napa's Great Lady."



Sources:

“Napa County labor movement was born of depression”
Napa Register, March 30th, 1963.

“Firefighters Honor ‘Napa’s Great Lady’” by Astrid
Edington, *Napa Register*, October 4, 1969.

Obituary, “Sixth Supervisor Rita Bordwell Dies,” *Napa
Register*, February 22, 1975.

History of the Napa Fire Department from 1859 to 1962,
by Rita Harren Bordwell, 1962.
Writing a Woman's Life by Carolyn Heilbrun, Ballantine,
1988.

Ask for a universe and what do you get?

By Carol Dorf

a Golden Shovel for Beatrice Tinsley

For a while scientists' proposed loopholes
crossing the universe, wormholes a technique in
which to traverse distance to other worlds, this

unpleasant constraint which most reasoning
holds us to a single solar system or may
be, just perhaps a transit could exist

to get us to Proxima Centauri but
travelling 4.25 light years is a big if –
human tolerance of forces matter – so

most likely our AI will proceed us and they
will send back slow data just to say *We are
fine and happy in the primordial*

*reaches of space making the invisible
visible while we observe expansion* – or
it is possible we will forget them perhaps

because the heat becomes unbearable or maybe
just
because too close to light we lose night's black.

“I Am NOT a Woman Composer!” The Life and Music of Louise Talma (1906-1996)

by Sarah B. Dorsey

(forthcoming from University of Illinois Press)

American composer, pianist, and pedagogue Louise Talma began life in the green countryside of southern France, speaking German, French, and English. When she was six, Talma and her mother moved to Manhattan where she started formal schooling. Her musical training began with her mother (Cecile Talma, an operatic soprano), then Juilliard, then Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, and later NYU and Columbia. Known as a prickly professor during the more than 50 years she taught at Hunter College in Manhattan, she nevertheless had followers and champions.

Her synesthesia manifested as seeing colors when she heard music. What was it like to experience a kaleidoscope while composing? This innate ability tracks with other aspects of her neurodiversity which likely contributed to her prickliness yet simultaneously provided deep focus for composing. Igor Stravinsky was her primary musical influence.

Talma was in late middle age when second wave feminism took hold in America, so her comfort with feminist ideals was mixed. She had difficulty discussing it in public but was so furious about inequities she exploded at the MacDowell dinner table when labeled a “woman

composer”. Despite these contradictions, Talma was the first woman to achieve numerous awards and honors. Among them were a Senior Fulbright Fellowship (1955-6), two Guggenheims (1946 and 1947, the first female composer to receive two - Ruth Crawford won her lone award in 1930), and first female composer elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1974). Her three act grand opera on a text by Thornton Wilder (*The Alcestiad*) was the first written by an American woman to be produced in a major European opera house (Frankfurt, 1962).

Talma was a composer deeply attuned to nature. Her devotion to the setting of MacDowell in the woods of New Hampshire is revealed in countless works—not only in sketches with numerous birdsong transcriptions, but in melodies and text choices as well. There is a tapestry of Talma’s appreciation of the natural world throughout her oeuvre like a theme running through her life and work. The only piece for which she also wrote the text was her chamber opera, *Have You Heard? Do You Know?* Finished in 1979, this libretto recommends escape into nature as the solution for worldly angst - ever more pertinent today.

In a letter from 1974 to the National Endowment for the Arts (which funded this piece), Talma wrote, “[this project is] to give voice to the longing felt by everyone to get away from the noise, dirt, crowds, confusion, rush, pollution, crime that presently exist everywhere to a saner way of life. I intend to do this in the comic vein with undertones of seriousness which will, I hope, convey the idea that this must be accomplished if we are to survive” (Louise Talma, to James D. Ireland, 11 August 1974, Louise Talma Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress).

In a central aria of this work, Talma wrote, “I want a quiet place far away, near a flowing brook and a wood, where I can watch the clouds go by, or look at stars the whole night through, and hear the birds sing at dawn. I want to go to that silent place in the woods where the goldenrod plumes in the sun, and the trees are aflame in the fall, and the lilac blooms in the spring, and birches stand slim and white like sentinels in the night” (Louise Talma, “*Have You Heard? Do You Know?*”, Louise Talma Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress).

Beloved

Be My Everything

By Claire Drucker

Between 1875 and 1913, Katharine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper, Bradley's niece, published more than 30 volumes of poems and verse drama under the name Michael Field. Bradley and Cooper were lovers, partners and aunt and niece respectively, with a 16-year age difference between them.

"Michael Field" was not just a public pseudonym, but also a shared identity that Bradley and Cooper adopted in their private life together. All of their work, even their private journals, was written jointly; Cooper and Bradley claimed that they often could not tell each other's lines apart. They died within nine months of each other in 1913 and 1914 and lived together for almost 40 years.



Mortal, if thou art beloved
 Life's offences are removed;
 yours
 All the fateful things that checked thee,
 Hearten, hallow, and protect thee.
 share.
 Grow'st thou mellow? What is age?
 Tinct on life's illumined page,
 Where the purple letters glow
 Deeper, painted long ago.
 What is sorrow? Comfort's prime,
 Love's choice Indian summer clime.
 Sickness!—thou wilt pray it worse
 For so blessed, balmy nurse.
 entwined
 And for death! when thou art dying
 'Twill be Love beside thee lying.
 Death is lonesome? Oh, how brave
 Shows the foot-frequented grave!
 Heaven itself is but the casket
 For Love's treasure, ere he ask it,—
 this—
 Ere with burning heart he follow,
 gullies
 Piercing through corruption's hollow.

to be hidden from an ordinary gaze
 if only to touch my mouth against
 my heart a balm renouncing sorrow,
 remember the abiding filigree we
 Stiffness of body does not mend
 for we are timeless inside eternity,
 our words wend into one thought
 before there was language to speak.
 You are my love, my wife, my friend
 No other would have my bed,
 suffering borne by two is nearly joy—
 to climb a mountain, your hands
 in mine
 my life will pour itself into you—
 dahlia, foxglove, lavender abloom.
 Slipping into the windy night
 under the world we are not alone,
 sun, moon and stars
 could not have conjured love like
 the bridge we've forged, the secret

us—
If thou art beloved, oh then
only some will ever know the truth of
touch my mouth against yours, arms
entwined
Fear no grief from mortal men.
soon they will know the beauty, power
of
this mind.

—Michael Field

—Claire Drucker

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Marguerite Wildenhain: Exile of Stones

By Iris Jamahl Dunkle

For years, she had been looking for something. She studied sculpture in Berlin, then worked decorating porcelain at a factory in Rudolstadt, where she began to fall in love with ceramics, and with the shape and form of the objects she held. On weekends, she'd wander the countryside. During one of those trips, she traveled to Weimar and saw a proclamation posted on the wall. As she remembers, "I stood in front of that proclamation, moved to the quick, read and re-read. 'That's it,' I said. 'I must go to the Bauhaus and learn my craft there. It was that simple.'" Walter Gropius words asking for "a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artists" had spoken to her, had found her where she was and a cathedral of thought opened.

At the Bauhaus ceramics workshop, in the small city of Dornburg, they lived in the old stable in tiny, whitewashed rooms with no windows to look out of. They slept in "virginal" beds and lived like acolytes. They woke to work from 7 am to 4:30 PM each day. The masters they worked under, sculptor Gerhard Marcks and potter, Max Krehan, worked alongside them, "what our masters expected of us, they did too."

Krehan was the last Thuringian master-potter. The Thuringian region had been famous for its ceramics since the 18th century and workshops reflected this history: wheels were turned by artist's feet, clay was found and harvested from the nearby woods and the kiln fire was built from logs cut from the same forest.

After the workday ended, their minds still spiraled with artistic ideas, so they'd gather to participate in more creative activities like life drawing or reading books. On warm days, they would walk down to the river Saale and swim naked in its cool waters. They were a family, naked in their becoming. It's in this family that Marguerite met Franz. He was the last student to join the workshop before it ended in Dornburg.

When the Dornburg workshop dissolved, Marguerite accepted a position as head of the Ceramics Department in Halle at the Municipal Art School four hundred kilometers away. Margerite and Franz were married in 1930. It's during her tenure as a teacher in Halle that Marguerite achieved the status of master potter; she'd be the first woman to achieve such an honor. But as her recognition grew, so did the Nazi's power.

In 1933, the Nazi presence pressed hard against the community in Halle. Schools all around were being pressured to fire any teachers who were "non-Aryan." Marguerite remembered, "One day, the mayor of our city came to me, and with tears in his eyes, asked me if I would do him the painful favor to resign. I was the only Jewish teacher at Burg Giebichstein, and he hoped to be able to save the school....I did not hesitate...and left the next day."

On a tip from her brother, the typographer, Henri Friedlaender, who had already immigrated to the Netherlands, Marguerite traveled to Putten, Holland, where she found "a small ceramic workshop with a home adjoining it for lease." She rented it and wired her husband, Franz, telling him he could quit his job (he was also working in the Halle program) and join her there. Back in Halle, that same day, the Nazis fired all of the teachers and closed the school. Her departure had not saved the school from closure.

Once reunited in Holland, they established their workshop, which they called “Het Kruikje,” after the small jugs that held Dutch gin, under the magnificent, “always changing” sky. On clear nights, she’d go outside, lie in a deckchair, and look up at the milky stars, trying to name the constellations. She studied them until she knew them all like trusted friends.

Their home and studio was covered in all things from the natural world. Feathers stuck out of doorjambs and rocks and plants covered the surfaces. They both found inspiration in these natural objects.

In Holland, she collected rocks. There weren’t many in Holland to collect, except for Rapakivi, a type of granite from Finland that was carried over to Holland during the ice ages. Days when she wasn’t at the wheel, she hunted for the stones in old glacier moraines.

She lived in this peace for seven years during which she learned the stars, she collected the stones from the ice age, and she and Franz made pots in their studio. It was exile, but it was a comfortable exile until the threat of a Nazi invasion increased.

In 1939, the architect Gordon Herr, his wife Jane, and their young daughter Gail had come to Holland from San Francisco and visited with Marguerite and Franz. The Herrs shared with the couple their dream of founding a Utopian artist community of Jewish artists in California (modeled on Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin Fellowship in Spring Green, Wisconsin). Marguerite and Franz shared with the Herrs their fear of what would happen to them if the Nazi’s invaded Holland. As Gordon Herr recalled in a letter, “They yearn to leave Europe to go to California. I was asked to help and I will do it.”

Because she was born in France, Marguerite had a French passport and was therefore able to obtain a visa to the United States. Franz, on the other hand, did not have it so easily. He was a German citizen. Throughout their stay in Holland, they both tried to become Dutch citizens as a way out. But to no avail. The only way Franz would get a visa was to secure a job at an American university. So, Marguerite decided to leave alone and try to find Franz work while she was there. She gained passage on a ship from Holland to New York City. As she remembered in *The Invisible Core*: “I left Holland on March 3, 1940, on a Dutch boat. We glided through the mine fields in the English Channel in the night and arrived on the 12th in New York.” Franz was left standing on the dock, waving the massive ship goodbye, his hopes for a new life in his wife’s hands. She had no idea how long it would be before she’d see him again.

In New York, Marguerite felt the weight of the long shadows from the skyscrapers that towered above her. Meanwhile, in Holland, the Nazi’s occupied Putten. Because he was German, Franz was viewed as part of the occupation, and he was soon enlisted in the German Army against his wishes. It would be weeks before Marguerite would hear about this in a letter from Franz.

Marguerite had tried everything on the East Coast, and she longed to reunite with her friends, the Herrs. Their vision of a Utopian artist community, in the country, away from the chaos of cities, called to her. So, she bought a bus ticket to San Francisco. It was the cheapest one she could get and took a full seven days to crawl slowly across the country.

At each bus stop, Marguerite eyed the new American landscape and chose a stone to carry with her to her destination, whatever that was. Picking up rocks she found along the way made her feel as if she was capturing her

new landscape, not conquering it, but building somewhere new from what she gathered.

From her window seat on the bus, Marguerite wrote back to Franz (She'd heard about the Nazi's invasion, and she didn't know if he was still alive, but she wrote him anyway). Her descriptions of what she saw are tainted with the fear she felt about her husband, the isolation and alienation she felt while driving across America, "The county widens, and undulates, offers views across the mountains and valleys. The towns spoil the impressions, they are ugly, they are a reflection of today's life, they are without form...one town after another, they have no face, but suddenly emerge in the landscape like a boil of pus."

When she writes this, is she anticipating the land that awaits her on the other side of her journey? The oak leaves shimmer in the hot sun. That dream of an artistic Utopia that had been planted in her head in Holland when the Herrs visited. They'd preached to her, "California is about as near Paradise as a land can be."

Beyond the Weeping Woman

By Terry Ehret



Dora Maar, 1942

*He can wholly possess her only as long as she fits into
the picture
that his imagination is always arranging.*

—Jaime Sabartes and Wilhelm Boeck, *Pablo Picasso*

I hold my hand in my hand
below the frame
things are in place—so, just so.

Here is the dress I have always worn. Here is my hair, my
mouth,
my jaw, my arms like two schoolgirls
awkward and fixed against my side
as if they ought not to be there at all,
having no business being there at all.

“This part of the painting will be black” he says,
bending my elbow to fit a little
more into the lower edge. “It will be
dark, even monstrous, and you will not like it there.
On your forehead a furrow above the eyebrow
because when you look, there is an absence you want to
fill
and it makes you very proud, very vulnerable—nothing
dangerous.



“The death of your father sits
behind you
on the wall that is gray. It
moves
up from the floor in the lines of
your dress,
over your breasts. But see, I
will paint here a white collar
for you, white with a lace edge,
because if I

were to take it away now not even a
red hat would keep you from breaking into
angles, your teeth clenched in your hand,
your eyes the eyes
of birds of prey.”

I wrote this ekphrastic poem almost 40 years ago, based
on two portraits by Pablo Picasso of Dora Maar (Henriette
Theodora Markovitch). I didn't know much about Maar,
only that Picasso claimed she was a nervous and troubled
creature, prone to fits of weeping. But there was
something in the way Picasso had arranged his

model/muse/lover that made me bristle at his manipulation and identify with Dora Maar's underlying rage—a rage his painting couldn't tame. When Dora Maar died in Paris in 1997, the art world that had previously known her as Picasso's mistress began to recognize the scope of her legacy as a surrealist painter, photographer, and political activist who both threatened and inspired Picasso. About the “weeping woman” name he gave her, and his characterization of her in his portraits, Maar said, “All his portraits of me are lies. They're all Picassos. Not one is



Dora Maar.” Her fits of weeping may have symbolized to Picasso the zeitgeist of the 1930s and 40s, but it was Maar's politics that shaped his great anti-war mural, *Guernica*. Prior to this, Picasso's work didn't have political messages, but Maar, who was fiercely anti-fascist, made sure Picasso kept the spotlight on what mattered. And it wasn't until he included Maar as the weeping woman that the mural found its voice, its heart, its outrage, and its power. In another ekphrastic poem in

this series, I traced the evolution of *Guernica* (just as Maar had recorded its evolution through her photographs), and could see so very clearly how static the mural would have been without her: “the weeping woman, who hasn’t yet appeared/and her dead child will change//everything/ she will make the canvas scream.”

Guernica by Pablo Picasso, 1937

“Dora Maar, 1942” originally published in *Lost Body* (Copper Canyon Press, 1992).

“The Thought She Might: Picasso Portraits,” *Translations from the Human Language* (Sixteen Rivers Press, 2001).

H.H. Jackson (1830 – 1885)

By Karen FitzGerald

H.H. is the early pen name often used by Helen Hunt Jackson who was born the very same year as Emily Dickinson and in the very same town, Amherst, Massachusetts. The girls attended the same primary school and retained a lifelong acquaintance. They were cohorts of an age and writers of an era.

The big question for me is how the reclusive, self-isolating Dickinson, who did not write for publication, rose to posthumous literary fame while Jackson's well published works fell through the cracks of the postmodern English literary canon, as well as several preceding canonical eras. My own K-12 through grad school education certainly did not expose me to the work of Helen Hunt Jackson. That came 30 years after college when I fell upon some charming poetry by a writer, "H.H." Being curious, I researched and was surprised to discover H.H. was a woman—Helen Hunt Jackson

Jackson's body of work includes poetry, fiction, non-fiction, historical fiction, travel books, children's books, and even oratorical writing; the latter in the form of an address to Congress. Unlike Dickinson, H.H. Jackson was not an unknown entity during the 19th century. Her oeuvre is massive; her writing well-crafted; her stories engaging, and her essays full of wit and wisdom. Jackson's signature work is the fictional novel, *Ramona*, inspired by her political activism for the rights of native American Indians.

In a very small, inadequate nutshell, *Ramona*, is the story of a girl—half White, half Native American—brought up on a Spanish estate in Southern California. Ramona ultimately chooses a life among the Indian people, having fallen in love with Allesandro, a full-blooded Indian “educated in the White man’s ways.” It is within the context of this story that Jackson was able to demonstrate how native Americans were diminished by missionary Christianizing efforts, were defrauded of their land by the U.S. government, and became the target of genocidal atrocities by military forces and Western settlers.

One enduring remark concerning *Ramona*, a remark born from the very intentions of Jackson herself, is that *Ramona* (1884) was to do for the American Indian what Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) did for the slave. While there is evidence *Ramona* broadened awareness of the government’s mistreatment of the indigenous people of the Continental U.S., the book was received as more a “romantic novel” than a piece of “protest literature” vis-à-vis Stowe’s work.

Significantly, however, *Ramona* had a prequel in Jackson’s highly researched, nonfictional work, *Century of Dishonor* (1881), sub-titled: “A Sketch of the United States Government’s Dealings with some of the Indian Tribes.” In the very first sentences of the Introductory chapter, Jackson writes:

The question of the honorableness of the United States’ dealings with the Indians turns largely on a much disputed and little understood point. What was the nature of the Indians’ right to the country in which they

were living when the continent of
North America was discovered?

For the next 30 pages she reveals first, a history of understandings among various conquering nations concerning the rights of indigenous people to own the land being conquered; she then moves into how early “Americans” interpreted such rights; and then into how the U.S. Government constructed laws protecting such rights; how treaties were written and the promises therein broken along with the protective laws the government legislated. And finally, how the U.S. military betrayed and brutalized the very persons they were commissioned to protect.

The book goes on for another remarkable 420+ pages. Therein are facts, witness accounts, historical documentation, letters, legal renderings and other evidence all of which serve Jackson’s plea to the Congress of 1880 to be the first “to cut short our nation’s record of cruelties and perjuries! the first to attempt to redeem the name of the United States from a stain of a century of dishonor!” (sic) At her own expense, she sent a copy of the book to each member of Congress, and was later invited to address Congress on these matters.

Ramona realized early success, with more than 15,000 copies sold in the first ten months of publication. There have been more than 300 reissues to date and the book has never been out of print. Further, Jackson’s story has been adapted into film five times and a play adaptation has been performed annually since 1923 at what is today known as the Ramona Bowl Amphitheatre in Emmet, California. Finally, the 1912 edition of *Ramona* published by Little, Brown, and Company, includes this jacket cover blurb by the San Francisco Chronicle: “The greatest story of California ever written.”

While “*Century*” and *Ramona* are certainly remarkable achievements, I found other very worthy books and essays in the stockpile of Jackson’s prodigious output. One in particular, *Bits About Home Matters* (1873) speaks, in part, to childrearing practices that experts and authorities today – 150 years later! – have mapped to abnormal, deviant, often criminal behavior, to say nothing of conditions that usher so many into drug, alcohol and other life-threatening addictions. The first four essays, in this collection of forty essays, deal with “The Inhumanities of Parents”: Corporal Punishment; Needless Denials; Rudeness; Breaking the Will. The entire collection is quite a study, and it is likely Jackson’s other works would reveal her astute capacity for divining the trajectory America was on should so many social, political, cultural conditions and traditions go unchanged during her era.

A thorough study of the life and works of Helen Hunt Jackson begs to be undertaken. Such a project would provide a richer and more valuable understanding of life in the 19th century, as well as the challenges faced by 19th century women writers, than does the massive amounts of scholarship provided us from the study of Emily Dickinson and her life. Jackson’s was a rich life experience filled with loss and emotional hardship, illness, love, travel and adventure which, for the sake of brevity, awaits your discovery outside the margins of this essay.

[https://www.gutenberg.org/Helen Hunt Jackson’s works](https://www.gutenberg.org/Helen%20Hunt%20Jackson's%20works), *Ramona*, “*Century*”, her poetry, stories, essays may all be found on-line at the [Free eBooks | Project Gutenberg](#) website. Dip in. I promise, you will not only be surprised, but some enlightening and entertaining reading awaits you.

When the Wiry Voiced Veterana Writer Dies

by Anel I. Flores

a poem honoring Sandra Cisneros

*Using the tradition of the Mexican Calavera poem, I'm writing
a semi serious/satirical poem about Sandra Cisneros; she is the
most famous Latina author and also banned. What does that
mean for all of us who have continued in her legacy or given the
opportunity because of the paths she paved*

when the wiry voice veterana writer dies we will slash
flowers from garden beds without reserve

pink baby's breath bluebonnets rain lilies firewheels in
furry and desolation

fists of floresitas framed around altares assembled through
the latine section of our libraries

kitchen lookout windows car dashboards desk drawers
classroom bulletin boards

pull pages of her pen ink from salvaged signed books
tossed back back back in the back

of our public school district storage facility behind the
asshat's who banned hers

find flyers from readings tattered in corners

we saved of a dead celebrity whom we doted on dutifully
with too many eyes on her to breath be eat leave love lose
or sleep

she used to say

in the wonderings in the words under too many beers
between friends

recounting the pitch lessons the mexican dresses the
eyebrows across the workshop table

the sonorous laughter she etched into our archetype
endearing our cousins as criminals

clouds shaped as candy sweet savage lovers and lustful
nights between gay boys

tacones tacos a cacophony where conjunto flamenco and
coca-cola meet between stanzas

glass globos across the dirt boarded windows waiting for a
star to fall

our name to sound like silver

we forgot how we rolled our eyes bitter waiting wondering
when we'd get on the list

when our words would too become the soundtrack of our
generation our gente our girls our

grandmothers

a glass vase stuffed with cempazuchitl the picture you
finally took with her after waiting in a three

hour line

the madonna of chicana writing they said

we pitching poems map out a social media monologue

sonorous with words like waiting solemn surveillance
saying our mentor poeta frenemy lover

supposedly somehow like the supernatural it was a
spectacle

she brought out the mexican house in us

like a canon

like a drunk sky



Ometeotl en el Cielo: Chavela Vargas, original artwork, Oil on Canvas by Anel I. Flores

Ometeotl en el Cielo: Gloria Anzaldua, original artwork, Oil on Canvas by Anel I. Flor



Ometeotl en el Cielo: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, original artwork Oil on Canvas by Anel I. Flores

Ometeotl en el Cielo: Tatiana de la Tierra, original artwork Oil on Canvas by Anel I. Flores

Dorothy Wordsworth

By Lois Ann Goossen

Dorothy Wordsworth, born December 1771, in Cockermouth England, was a prolific writer of the Romantic era. Best known for her journals published in 1897 after her death, she wrote exclusively for herself and for her brother, William Wordsworth. Dorothy kept detailed journals of her daily life, and her travels with William and their friends, using her keen observation skills to translate her daily life and travels into eloquent prose. As William's devoted sister, Dorothy was his constant companion and, arguably, an equal participant in his writing process.

Dorothy's writing, while a treasured look into her world offering readers a multi-sensual peek into her daily life, with the many people and sights she encounters along the way, she writes very little about her personal feelings. With the exception of an entry on May 14th 1800, in which Dorothy was beset by "a flood of tears," this confession is one of the rare times she expresses any emotion, especially sadness. It has been surmised that she was a willing participant behind the scenes as she eagerly writes about the many times she and William work side by side together, yet, was it possible she was as devoted as she claims? Was there never any pique about her obscure position as merely the sister of a famous poet, resentment of William's marriage to Mary, and her place in his life? The following is an announcement for the publication of excerpts from a (supposed) secret diary that Dorothy kept hidden, written in the emotional voice typical of the genre, where we get to hear, in her own words, what Dorothy truly felt about her writing relationship with her more famous brother. (And, yes, there really is a Tweedies Bar

and Lodge. And, sadly, this is satire and they do not actually have Dorothy's secret diary on display.)

The attached documents are excerpts from a diary that is claimed to be authored by Dorothy Wordsworth, the sister of the famous Romantic poet, William. This diary was discovered by a Mrs. Arthur Higgenbothom, of 143 Easedale Road, Grasmere, as she was cleaning the effects of her recently deceased great-maiden aunt, who at her demise resided in Ambleside. Mrs. Higgenbothom, upon making this exciting discovery immediately brought the diary to her solicitor brother in London, who immediately approached the British Library, who kindly declined the offer. The artifact now resides in Tweedies Bar and Lodge, in Grasmere, and is securely enclosed in a locked glass case. The original artifact can be viewed by appointment only, or upon booking into Tweedies Lodge for a minimum of one night.

While much is known of another diary that has been verified as authentic, the authenticity of this diary is still being discussed, debated, and heatedly argued about, often to the point of some passionate near-violence. (Please note that Tweedies Bar will no longer host these events as the damage to the premise and the disturbance to the other guests had become untenable.) While the provenance of this diary has not been verified, the curators of this document feel that this artifact should not be kept from a curious public, and have made some of the pages available. Here are two, more will become available in the future:

Oct the 15th--- Dear Diary,

William has found my other diary that I keep to inspire him. I endeavored to lay it in a spot where I was sure he would find it. I tried not to be obvious as I am desirous that he not feel he is using ideas that are not his own. I do

my best to keep that diary lively. But from most entries it would seem that I live a dull life indeed, walking through woods, walking up hills, walking down hills, walking in the other direction, dining with Coleridge, taking tea with Coleridge, and hanging linen. If you read only that diary of the record of my daily life you might believe me to be dull and uninspired. In this secret diary, just between you and me I will share my most intimate thoughts, thoughts I could and would not share with anyone else. Not even W. He might consider them to be not the sort of things the spinster sister of a great poet who spends her days walking and hanging linen should be sharing with the world. Yet, that dear boy can be so forgetful and sometimes at such a loss that I have taken it upon myself to be his secret muse. I will do my best to observe and record the many things that he often misses noticing so that he may have something to use when he is in a creative mood. W can be so moody and hence oblivious to all the wonderful things we pass every day that I would hate for them to be lost to time and his pen. Dearest William can be a bit lost in his own world which suits his vivid poetry, but it helps as well if he can recall the things of this world. I hope my other diary moves him to continue to inspire his faithful readers. His poetry is glorious compared to my own little musings. But I see the value in keeping my other diary as William will often say, "Dorothy, what was it we saw the other day? You remember, when we saw the daffodils and clouds?" and he will now have my other diary to remind him of the moment. Poor Willian, what ever would he do without me.

Oct 3---Dear Diary,

As I wrote in the other diary William and I walked, again, and I noticed a leech collector and made a note of it because his story fascinated me. It was a sad tale of much

hardship and misery. He spoke lovingly of his wife and the loss of all their children save but one, a sailor. I suspected that W would want to write about this man and he did. I do say it is a lovely poem and well received, but I was dismayed to discover that he did not include these more intimate details of this poor man's life Next time I will take care to notice something more picturesque, and besides leeches make me cringe just a tiny bit.

My Beloved W is marrying and I love Mary, but if he puts me out I don't know what I shall do. The ungrateful little git, after all I've done for him. If he does put me out I shall keep my diary to myself and he will need to remember his own leech gatherers and daffodils and clouds on his own.

Sei Shonagon

By Judy Halebsky

Lost Sections of Sei Shōnagon's the *Pillow Book**

[these sections were found at the Bureau of Song
by an appropriately depressed
graduate student looking for her stash of pretzel sticks
and chocolate-covered almonds**]

[57] Potions

sweet peas, dahlias, camellias

whatever I bring, he says, *That's my favorite*

rose water, a Moosehead Red label from 1992, buck-
a-suck string (don't ask)

the good news is that the cancer is not in his bones

it's the weight that can tell the ripeness of a
pomegranate
not the size

two girls in sandals are moving pennies back and forth
across the table for luck

cheerfully, I say, *That is good news*

[62] Spells and Incantations

a gun-shy lover is worth his weight

a gun-shy lover pairs well with the untamed

what woman, her kind, have I been?

restless, unsettled, running out into the night
star-shaped hands, winged arms
sweet gum, black gum, hazel pine

green once with August
over rooftops and hills
by November, bright red
branches, ablaze

he waits for fate to cross his path
in the roots, in the piles of leaves

a gun-shy lover pairs well with fire
if he is water
if he can't burn

[64] *yo* = night = world

[why do you hasten thus to relinquish this night]
(quote of unknown origin)

most likely the word night
was also the word for night

why are you giving up?

to give back, to hand over, to untouch

[to relinquish this world, why do you hasten thus]

* these claims have yet to be verified by experts in the field

** from the stairwell window
bright red maple leaves
I go up and down
office work, office work
ink on my hands
leaves on the ground

The Relevance of Alice Cunningham Fletcher: Suffragette, Anthropologist, Ethnomusicologist (1838-1923)

By Julia Hawkins

Those who, especially women, seek to implement cures for social problems arising from patriarchy's wealth inequality and unregulated capitalism can only do so much. Institutional opposition and one's cultural shaping obstruct however much good luck and passion one employs. The mistakes a reformer deeply regrets, her failure to achieve only partial success of what she envisions are nonetheless valuable; those lessons augment, however unintentionally, what the reformer does manage to achieve.

Miss Alice C. Fletcher's writings and recordings from her three decades of living with Native Americans, in particular the Omaha Nation, made her internationally admired and influential. But more importantly, her works preserve a pre-industrial, nature-based perspective and ethos. We who are technology-saturated and floundering under apocalyptic environmental damage can, and to my mind, must, adopt those ways of valuing nature that Miss Fletcher documents and admires of the Omaha and other indigenous nations.

Raised in privilege, well-educated, a public lecturer on American history, teacher, former temperance and antitobacco reformer, one of the founding members of the Association for the Advancement of Women, among other

achievements, Fletcher was inspired by the then new science of anthropology when her research led her to the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge, Massachusetts. In approximately 1878, after months of studying the museum's artifacts under the charismatic influence of museum director Frederick Ward Putman, she discovered her life's passion when representatives of the Omaha came to Boston on a speaking tour to arouse public support for their right to keep their lands.

In 1881, Fletcher lived with and studied the Sioux on their reservation, her companion Susette "Bright Eyes" La Flesche, an Omaha spokeswoman and translator who aided in the 1879 landmark civil rights trial in which Muncie, "Standing Bear, established that Native Americans are persons within the meaning of the law with habeas corpus rights.

Fletcher's cultural shaping by the mores of her time may have caused her regret, and it makes her legacy problematic however understandably. In 1881, her involvement with the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, where native children were taught "the accoutrements of civilization," is an example of one of the now discredited colonialist enterprises of gilding child theft and native exploitation.

Fletcher's introduction of a system of small loans to Indians to help them buy land and build houses and her successful passage of the Dawes Act in Congress accounted for not only the breakup of Indigenous reservations but also, by 1887, the theft of forty-six million acres of Native American's land. By advocating replacement of communal land ownership (what we call the commons) with private land ownership Fletcher intended, with various unintended disastrous

consequences, that American Indians assimilate to the colonists as their best means of survival.

But Fletcher's writings preserve Indigenous cultural beliefs and these have universal and timely relevance. Jane E. Harrison, the British classics scholar who revolutionized anthropology with her insights into Greek mythology, respectfully draws on Fletcher's notes. In her magisterial *Themis*, in which Harrison traces the development of religion from primitive beliefs and practices, Harrison draws on Fletcher's "The Significance of the Scalp-Lock," to explain the concept of *orenda*, or *continuum*, or *mana*, which I summarize as follows:

The Omaha believed, that all animate and inanimate forms and phenomena possess a common and continuous life similar to human will-power and which they named Wakon-da. Through this force all things are related to humans and to each other; a relationship maintains between the seen and the unseen, the dead and the living, and between the fragment of anything and its entirety.

We experience this in the quotidian. To hold an autumn leaf in one's hand is to feel and, I assert, to be, connected to its tree, to the revolution of the sun through the seasons, to the earth that grew the tree, and to the otherwise incomprehensible vastness and meaning of the universe, i.e., "to find the world in a grain of sand."

Miss Alice Fletcher's heart was certainly in the right place, her intentions and commitment unassailably admirable, and her writings, musical documentation and recordings are invaluable. As well, what we know of her life (she burned her private papers) helps us understand the nature of the world she had to adapt to.

In her preface to her last writings, "Indian Games and Dances," she wrote, "Living with my Indian friends I

found I was a stranger in my native land. As time went on the outward aspect of nature remained the same but a change was wrought in me. I learned to hear the echoes of a time when every living thing, even the sky had a voice. That voice devoutly heard by the ancient people of America I desired to make audible to others." One can gauge the health and sustainability of a society by the nature of that society's games (which include war) and dances. A fletcher is a maker of arrows, and Alice Fletcher hits the existential target of our times.

Ode To Isabelle

By Bridget Hayes

Sound see-er. Forget the words I want to sing to you. *Life on the open road is the essence of freedom*, you plead with me. You pull Rimbaud from one pocket and Kerouac from the other. Roads rambling, highways loop-di-loo-ing through the craters. Our song now is the sweetness of the air. *The delectable flavor of solitary freedom*. Taste the intricacies as they unfold the longer they roll around in the mouth.

Bubbling up from the magic, dreams manifest their real-lifeness. *At home everywhere*. Filled with an omnipotent: Yes, we've arrived. *The torturing need to know and see for oneself what is there, beyond the mysterious blue wall of the horizon*. The red river. A labyrinth of fuzzy mossy stone lined streets. Lakes reflecting red rooftops, new sea creatures hoping to break through the tight surface of the murky waters. *The white road leading off into the unknown distance... feeling the imperious necessity of giving in to it and following it obediently across mountains and valleys*.

Penciled Notes of a pilgrimage, soaked in spiritual synesthesia. Clonking marimbas out of context sway in rhythm with the seabirds of black and white skies. Old movie clips hint of future dreams. Tunes of hand-inked notes blown dry by fans of fuchsia incense popping through the fields. A color destination *covering the whole vast earth... ends only at the nonexistent horizon*.

I want to know, is *vagrancy deliverance*? Or is vagrancy where the dream unfolds from the journey? Is it the place, the time, where the dream wakes up onto the stage of the

streets of Hanoi? Because *I dreamed I was* in Hanoi,
flitting around in the streets; then I awoke.

Now I wonder:

Am I a woman who dreamt of being in Hanoi,
or am I in Hanoi dreaming that I am a woman.

Cochiti Potter Helen Cordero and the Storyteller Dolls: Innovation and Contribution

By Catherine Held

In February 2026, a compelling pottery figure caught my eye in a San Rafael, California hospice thrift store and came home with me. Just over seven inches tall, I immediately recognized it as a “storyteller” doll from the American Southwest. Open-mouthed, there are thirteen children attached to the clay figure—some sleeping, some crawling, some hanging on. On the bottom is the artist’s mark—CLS, 1989 (year) and Jemez.

A quick search identified the maker as Caroline Loretto Seonia from the Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico..

The origin of the storyteller dolls is relatively modern, though based upon ancient traditions. The Cochiti people of New Mexico had a strong tradition of figurative pottery. For many decades, a few Cochiti women made “Singing Mothers,” figurines with one or two children. At age 45, Helen Cordero



Storyteller Doll by Caroline Loretto Seonia (1989)

(1915-1994) wanted to earn more money. She had raised six children—her four children, and after her sister's death, her two nephews. Cordero began making jewelry and leather work for sale with her husband's cousin, but the materials were expensive. Grandma Juana suggested that they make pottery as the clay and pigments could be dug from the earth. Materials were free, and the pottery was fired using traditional techniques. Helen attempted to make bowls, but they were lopsided, so she turned to making small figures of clay.

In 1964, Helen Cordero was commissioned by artist-collector Alexander Girard to make a larger figure with several children. The first storyteller doll was a grandfather surrounded by five grandchildren. Cordero was inspired by her own grandfather, Santiago Quintero, a renowned storyteller and important preserver of tribal history.

The storyteller doll broke from tradition in two distinctive ways—it featured a male figure rather than a Singing Mother and had many more children. Cordero would make as many as thirty children for later dolls.

Cordero's work immediately caused a sensation, as she won awards at the New Mexico State Fair and the Santa Fe Indian Market. Her work would later be featured in international collections and exhibits, art journals and books. Soon potters in Cochiti and in other nearby pueblos such as Jemez began making their own variations. Cordero singlehandedly started a cottage industry that has brought income and recognition to the pueblos and the (mostly) women potters.

By the mid-1980s, more than 175 potters were making storyteller dolls of all kinds. The playful open-mouthed dolls come in different shapes and sizes that include male, female and animal figures such as coyotes and turtles.

They celebrate the important act of sharing stories to strengthen and preserve traditions and knowledge.

Cordero's original storyteller doll resides in the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe. Cordero's storyteller dolls created a pathway for herself, her family and other surrounding communities to earn money from visiting tourists and collectors. The economic impact cannot be understated as women's financial wellbeing protects families and stabilizes communities. There are now many generations of artisans within well-known New Mexico families such as the Cordero family and the Loretto family.

I discovered that the maker of the storyteller doll that graces my home, Caroline (or Carolina) Loretto Seonia (1928-2008), first started making storyteller dolls about 1978. She learned pottery by observing her mother and then passed her skills down to her daughter Debbie Loretto.

I also discovered that Caroline was not only born the same year as my mother, but her daughter and I were born just two weeks apart. I treasure the synchronicity. I do not come from a family of potters, but I do come from a tradition of fine craftsmanship. I recently taught my daughter embroidery stitches, just as my mother taught me. As we stitch, we inevitably share stories, just as I imagine the women potters do as they fashion their storyteller dolls.

Fired pottery was an innovation that helped the Pueblo peoples carry water, store grain and sustain their cultures in often harsh desert conditions. Like her ancestors who fashioned those first pots, her enchanting innovation has contributed to sustaining countless Pueblo families while inspiring creativity.

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The Shirley Poem

By Brenda Hillman

II.

Hot water pushed quartz and gold
in solution through magma to surface
as sunbeams and as wedding rings.

Reconceiving bodies, we call them “veins.”
(We write in a ‘a similar vein.’)

Shirley, a doctor’s wife traveling to
California in 1851, writes of her
“geological deficiencies” and delights in “everchanging
surfaces” when she’s just arrived at
the new camp called Rich Bar.

Men are filling pans with dirt;
“I gather from their remarks that
these bars are formed by deposits
of earth crowding the river aside
occupying a portion of its bed.”

A solution to an individual is reading more.

Of course there was no mother
lode; of course it was unlikely.

III.

Recovering from an individual as one reads,
eyes too busy to go backward.

Shirley, who hasn't made it far
into history, writes to her sister
in a lively, modest style imitating
Bret Harte's literariness, of the death
of Mrs. B., a miner's wife.

Reading at night (if you're tired):
like a pickaxe, the eye falls
on each word. It makes holes
in a territory. (Some were amazed
when some others at the conference
claimed their stylistic territory.) From inside
the claim, a mineral-self leaks out.

--The text of a woman's body
--The body supported by two buttertubs
--The woman's coffin of unstained pine
--Unstained pine lined with white cambric

Little Mrs. B., unimpressed by exterior
dramas and wreaths of thoughtful snowflakes.

A dead woman, as when we
lie down to read at night,
to read among those who've lived.

From *Cascadia*, Wesleyan University Press, 2001 pp.36-
37

Mei Takaya Nakano (1924-2017)

By Jodi Hottel

A petite powerhouse, Mei Nakano could command a room with her steady eyes and quiet conviction. I admired her and still consider her to be an inspiration and influence in my life.

When she was 17, she and her family were forcibly removed from their home and incarcerated at Santa Anita Assembly Center and then Amache Incarceration Camp in Colorado. It was in Amache that she married her high school sweetheart, Shi Nakano, though Shi was soon drafted out of Amache to serve in the Military Intelligence Service. Mei gave birth to her first son in the camp.

She spent much of her post-war years raising her family, including another son and daughter. But at age 46, she had a desire for further education and earned her BA at San Francisco State, graduating summa cum laude, then earning her MA at Cal State East Bay and teaching at community colleges in the East Bay.

During the 60s and the civil rights movement, she discovered a sense of identity and outrage against injustice. She discovered her voice and broke her silence. She co-founded Mina Press, wrote a children's book, *Rikko Rabbit*, as well as *Japanese American Women: Three Generations, 1890-1990*, an influential Japanese American historical work.

Ever-growing and evolving, Mei became a community activist. She helped establish and chaired the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights. She also participated in the Peace and Justice Center and the Peace Crane Project, which sponsors Hiroshima Remembrance Day each year. She served on the board of the Japanese American Citizens League, including speaking about the Japanese American incarceration to schools and civic organizations.

She received recognition for her efforts, including an official commendation from Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, the Jack Green Civil Liberties Award from the ACLU, and inclusion in the “Claiming Justice” public art project in Santa Rosa in 2023.

Community members said of her that she had “undeniable integrity, that she was “quietly powerful” and a “peacemaker”.

I am including a poem that I wrote in memory of her.

Beauty: A Legacy

for Mei Nakano, (1924-2017)

Once I remarked how, even in your eighties,
you were among the most beautiful women I knew—
hair like snowy blossoms framing your smooth face,
your modest smile and strong, jet eyes,
a petite but upright frame, grace of movement.
Chuckling, you said that you
never thought you were attractive, marked
by a cruel taunt made in your youth,
a white youngster calling you, “U-gly!”
How often were you stung by such arrows?

Incarcerated in an American prison camp,
and married behind barbed wire,
giving birth to a son there, surviving
to establish a new life—
a daughter and another son,
your family, a legacy of beauty.

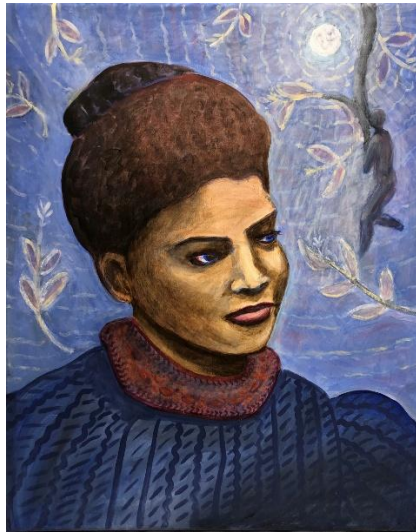
At 46, you sowed new seeds as college student,
then teacher, writer, publisher, always growing,
nurturing your legacy with tenacity and wisdom.

What you cultivated still bears beautiful fruit—
founding a commission, forming coalitions,
inspiring a new generation of “smart women”.

Mei, you *were* beautiful,
in the way you lived your life,
steady in purpose and passion,
awake to injustice— with peace
your most beautiful legacy.

Ida B. Wells (1862–1931)

By Carol Jacobsen



Portrait of Ida B. Wells by Carol Jacobsen

Fearless Journalist and Publisher

Ida B. Wells was an educator, investigative journalist, newspaper owner, and civil rights leader who used the power of the press to expose racial violence and injustice in the United States. Her courage to continue after violent retaliation made her one of the most determined journalists of her time.

Early Life and Independence

Ida B. Wells was born enslaved in Holly Springs, Mississippi, during the Civil War. After emancipation, she lost both parents to a yellow fever epidemic while still a teenager and became the primary caregiver for her seven

younger siblings. To support her family, Wells worked as a schoolteacher, one of the few professions open to Black women at the time. This early responsibility shaped her fierce independence and belief in self-reliance.

Owning a Newspaper: The Free Speech and Headlight

In the 1880s, Wells moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where she began writing about unequal education, segregation, and racism. She soon became a co-owner—and later sole owner—of the Black-owned newspaper *The Free Speech and Headlight* aka *Memphis Free Speech*. Through the paper, Wells challenged Jim Crow laws and spoke openly against lynching, which was often ignored or justified in white-owned newspapers.

In 1892, after three Black businessmen, owners of the People's Grocery and friends of Wells, were lynched in Memphis, she published editorials condemning lynching as a tool of racial terror and economic control. Her reporting directly challenged popular lies used to excuse violence against Black Americans.

Violence, Exile, and Change

Wells's fearless journalism came at a high cost. While she was traveling, a white mob destroyed the offices of *The Free Speech and Headlight*, forcing her into permanent exile from Memphis under threat of death. With her newspaper business gone, Wells had to find new ways to support herself.

She did so by writing, lecturing, and publishing independently. Wells traveled throughout the United States and abroad, especially to Great Britain, giving paid lectures on lynching and racial injustice. She wrote and self-published influential pamphlets such as *Southern Horrors* (1892) and *The Red Record* (1895), using sales

and speaking fees to earn a living. She also wrote for other Black newspapers, turning her investigative work into a sustainable livelihood.

Later Work and Legacy

After settling in Chicago, Wells continued her activism while balancing work as a journalist, editor, wife, and mother. She helped found civil rights organizations, including what would become the NAACP, and continued to use writing as both a tool for justice and a means of economic survival.

Ida B. Wells showed that journalism could be both a profession and a weapon against injustice. Even after her business was destroyed by violence, she rebuilt her career through writing, publishing, and public speaking—proving that truth, when fiercely defended, can endure. In 2020, she won a posthumous Pulitzer Special Citation “for her outstanding and courageous reporting on the horrific and vicious violence against African Americans during the era of lynching.”

THE AUTOMATIC WRITING OF HILMA AF KLINT

By Didi Jackson

It was not the case that I was to blindly obey the High Lords of the Mysteries but that I was to imagine that they were always standing by my side.

—Hilma af Klint

Hilma:

*I wanted to see the invisible,
those interstates of light beams*

*that click easily into place
like the months on a calendar,*

*the sightless lines that mark
then puncture a hole*

*into the next life, a place without
grass or dirt, without all that is*

*tangible in this world.
I learned the price*

*would be high to enter
the trance and talk*

*with those who were able
to drag themselves from bliss*

*towards all they might want
to forget. I pounded on the door*

*to unlock another reality.
Look at my hands as they scribble*

*the words decipherable only to me,
dictating in automatic text*

*the language of the dead,
like the alarm calls of birds*

*or the soft companion calls
they make to keep track of each other.*

*Look at my wrist spiraling
like a small snake sliding*

*from its skin, see as I catch
with each character all I need*

*to know with my pen. I'm another woman hungry
and ruthless for knowledge.*

*Listen to the four others
of De Fem warn me*

*of the dangers as they watch
my rhythmic and repetitive marks*

*fill notebook after notebook,
my sister dead over two decades*

*still a shadow on my wall
at night. Notice there is always room*

*at the séance for one
of the High Masters*

*to request yet another spiral,
another garden banded snail shell,*

*a continual growth,
the tail of the double helix*

*forming the exact ladder rungs
I will need to finish my temple.*

Madam Alderman

Dedicated to civil rights activist, Vel Phillips

By Janet Jennerjohn

Because, in 1956, you were the first female and African American elected to Milwaukee's Common Council, they didn't know what to call you.

Because you were the first African American to be elected to either major party's National Committee, John, Lyndon and Jimmy sought your counsel.

Because, in 1962, Milwaukee was one of the most segregated cities in America, you proposed the first Common Council ordinance to outlaw housing discrimination in the city.

Because all the other aldermen were white males, they voted "Nay" to your proposal four times, over seven years, until a federal housing law was passed.

Because the fight for fair housing was met with racism and violence, you crossed the viaduct and helped lead a civil rights march that lasted 200 nights.

Because you were a woman, Father Groppi is the name associated with those marches.

Because the governor saw a disproportionate number of black children in Milwaukee's courts, he sought your expertise

and appointed you the first African American judge in Wisconsin's history.

Because you demonstrated that a woman could lead,
because you showed us that giving up wasn't an option,
you were both the first woman and person of color elected
to a statewide office.

Madam Secretary, because we should never forget,
you sit in bronze greeting visitors to Wisconsin's
legislature,
the first statue of a Black woman on the grounds of any
state capitol.

Pablita Velarde, Painter and Cultural Ambassador

By Karen Kessel

Born in the village of Santa Clara on the west bank of the Rio Grande about twenty miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1918, Pablita Velarde would become a pivotal figure interpreting her cultural tradition with pigment on paper. The Puebloan peoples of Southwestern North America had painted geometric patterns and sometimes animal, plant, and human figures on pottery for over a millennium and stylized murals on the walls of their subterranean meeting spaces since the 1300s, but this was something new.

Born Tse Tsan, or Golden Dawn, in her native Tewa language, she was baptized as Pablita at a local Catholic Church several months after her birth, although she only spoke Tewa until she was six. Her mother died of tuberculosis or influenza when she was just three. Shortly after that, she and one of her two sisters developed eye infections that temporarily blinded them for two years until they were cured by their grandmother who was an herbal healer. This experience prompted Pablita to train her eyes to carefully observe and mentally record every detail of everything she looked at. Her widowed father sent her and her sisters to a Catholic boarding school in Santa Fe when she was six where they learned to speak English. They spent summers back at home where they learned the history of their ancestral village of Puyé on the mesa above Santa Clara, played in its caves that had been used as dwellings centuries before, and helped with farming and home chores. When she was eleven, Pablita

was transferred to the Santa Fe Indian School which emphasized manual labor skills with rigid gender roles, where Pablita failed miserably. But soon, under President Herbert Hoover's appointees for Indian education, policy reforms were introduced that transformed the school into a National Center for Indian Arts and Crafts with a goal of providing economic development and reviving Native craft skills, employing Native craftspeople as teachers and providing funding to build facilities for the program. Sixteen Native American artists were hired to paint murals at the school, including one Tewa woman named Tonita Peña who became a role model and mentor for Pablita.

In 1932, Dorothy Dunn, a young white teacher trained at the Art Institute of Chicago, arrived at the school with a mission to be "a bridge between talented young...native [artists] and white art collectors and museums..."¹ Thus was born the Studio School. She encouraged students to draw from their memories of home and the stories they had learned. The students made paint by grinding clay and natural pigments. While Dunn has been criticized for her insistence on empty backgrounds and a uniform sentimental style sometimes referred to as Bambi, she was an inspiration to Pablita and others who were homesick at the boarding school. Velarde recalled that, when her mind was blank about what to paint, Dunn would ask her, "What would the women at Santa Clara be doing on a day like this. What kind of dances do they do?"² The male students painted hunting and horseback riding, and Pablita as the first female student provided a female perspective of home life in her art. She was Dunn's star pupil. By the time she graduated at 18, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. had purchased one of her paintings, and the following year, she received a commission, through the Works Progress Administration, for 84 paintings of Pueblo life to be displayed at the visitor center at Bandelier National Monument, near her hometown. She

also had commercial mural commissions. She regularly won awards at annual exhibitions in New Mexico and had solo shows in Texas, Florida, and California. While most female Pueblo artists worked in pottery, she became the most recognized female Native American easel painter. She developed her own style, subtly using motives from ancient pottery sherds and rock art as backgrounds for figures of dancers. Visits with her father inspired one of her most admired paintings, "Old Father, The Storyteller," which depicts an elderly man with long grey braids sitting cross-legged surrounded by children against a night sky above a town with a silvery rainbow overhead of ancestors walking across the sky.

Just as her art enveloped her in portraying her culture, her personal life estranged her from it. In 1942, she married Herbert Hardin, a white man who worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with whom she had a daughter, Helen, and a son, Herbert. Pablita's work competed for her time with motherhood and homemaking. Husband Herbert's work and further studies took them to Texas, Pennsylvania, and California and then back to Albuquerque. After 17 years of marriage, they divorced, and she moved back to Santa Clara, where she felt haunted by ghosts. She was ostracized by those in the community who objected to her painting their stories and dances. Some felt that these traditions were meant to only be transmitted from person to person and not recorded in a permanent form, and not to be shared with outsiders, a conflict that colors the exhibition of Native American artwork today. Stepping outside tradition by expressing herself as an individual, Pablita chose to document Puebloan life for the world beyond her community, continuing to paint and to lecture about her work until her death in 2006. She inspired her daughter Helen and Helen's daughter, Margarete Bagshaw, to also become innovative painters each in their own way.

This earth pigment painting of a Shalako, or Cloud, Katsina and a Mudhead clown Katsina describes two important figures from the annual cycle of Katsina dances and activities performed to ensure plentiful growing seasons and harvest. The Katsina religion holds that ancestors become cloud people when they die and return every year around the Winter solstice as spirits, represented by the dancers, to help their descendants survive, staying through early July. Pablita depicts the geometric patterns of Puebloan cotton textiles in intricate detail in the Shalako Katsina's garment, and the expression between the two figures conveys their intimate connection in the dance.



1. Hyer, pg.280

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Why Yosano Akiko Broke Out of Her Box

By Jean Gordon Kocienda

When I first discovered the romantic poetry of Yosano Akiko in graduate school, I was charmed. It wasn't until I learned of her hard life and lived a bit myself, however, that I started to *love* it.

I nearly fell off my comfortable couch when I learned that in the Japan of one hundred-plus years ago, Akiko gave birth to thirteen babies and supported the eleven survivors, plus her philandering husband, on her writing income. I almost spilled my merlot when I saw that she co-founded Japan's first co-educational high school and that she was the first person to translate the entirety of the classical *Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese (three times over, in fact, and with only an eighth-grade education). I swear I will never again whine about how hard it is as a working mother to find personal time for creative pursuits when I see that she published tens of thousands of *tanka* poems and stayed creatively productive throughout her life. To accomplish what she did, she must have been one tough, brave lady.

As only real people can be, Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) was full of contradictions. Her writing was passionate and sexy, yet in person, she was painfully shy. She was narcissistic, yet not beautiful in the traditional sense. She was ahead of her time in her opinions about the rights and capabilities of women, but old-fashioned in family relationships. Outside of

Japan she is mostly unknown, but Japanese schoolchildren today all know her as a singular, world-traveling poet and one of her country's preeminent feminists.

How is a powerhouse like Akiko made? She was born with certain gifts: intelligence (as good at math as reading the classics); monumental stubbornness; physical and mental fortitude. Yet, her gifts might have gone unused if not for her miserable, unloved childhood. As the third daughter in a family that needed a second son, she was taken from her mother's arms and sent to stay with an aunt until her mother delivered a boy three years later. Until Akiko reached puberty, her parents dressed her as a boy and kept her hair short and cropped close to her head, as though to punish her. They allowed her to grow out her hair and dress as a girl when she reached puberty but locked her in her bedroom at night to ensure her chastity. She had little to look forward to beyond an arranged marriage and continued drudgery in the family shop.

A loved daughter or a weaker human being might not have broken away. But Akiko could not stay locked in that cage. She fell in love, ran away from home, and scattered her poetry like cherry blossom petals in the wind. She proved that she could do anything a man could do, and quite a bit more. And what's more, she knew it. She gave herself credit because she knew a male-led society never would.

Long ago, when the Great Hall was built,

I, too, drove a single, golden nail

- Yosano Akiko

Chinese Bronze—The Alloy Formed If Enough of Me Is Scattered

By Lani Lan

For Anne Seymour Damer (born October 1748 – 28 May 1828), a brilliant sculptor of her time who was a lesbian (both unusual for that era in high society).

Inspired by Deborah Butterfield's Rondo and Three Sorrows (quake, tsunami, meltdown)

There is the ground, then, there is you,
hovering above it,
resembling a reflection.

You are not yourself anymore. You are, say, a bronze
horse.

A bronze horse with long limbs and a lithe neck.
In time, aging into the ground,
Your feet, lightly grazing the floor, will plant
themselves
down firmly.

And then, your body will follow. This is called laying
belly-
up.

Your back is beginning to touch the ground.
Try as you may to arch back upwards.
But you are stiff—you are cold bronze.

And it is a heavy load, the body.

But convulse uncontrollably and you can break into a
million
parts.

Your now mismatched breast of driftwood and an old
plastic
sheet:

Are you searching for the pieces? A lost self amongst
this
wreckage?

These bits and bobbles of old Gatorade bottles and
gasoline
tanks on the ground?

There is that shadow.

It now joins only at the base of your feet and the
bottoms of your scatter.

It is looking at you intensely:

Is *this* liberation?

Mary Crellin Langdon Down: Pioneer of Disability Care

by Amy Lemmon

In a tree-adorned London suburb, a block of Victorian buildings harbors a powerful history. Normansfield Hospital was a residential care facility for intellectually disabled children, founded in 1868 by Dr. John Langdon Down and his wife, Mary Crellin Langdon Down. Framed in historical accounts as supporter and partner of her famous husband, who identified the condition later named Down Syndrome in his honor, Mary is an unacknowledged heroine in the history of care for the disabled. Normansfield was her domain; she supervised operations, from hiring staff and ordering supplies to construction and repairs, personally overseeing the care of every resident.

Mary's obituary notes that she was known as "Little Mother," a title conferred by her husband and adopted by the entire Normansfield community. While John developed his private practice and research in London, Mary balanced the labor of running Normansfield with parenthood. Her youngest child Percival was born the week after Normansfield opened; before he turned two, the family had moved permanently to the Normansfield property. Mary's multiple roles became ever more demanding as the patient population, starting at 20, grew to over 150 by the mid-1880s.

Born in 1829 into a modest Protestant family (her father was a “slop-seller,” or dealer in cheap ready-to-wear clothing), Mary Crellin brought practical knowledge of domestic management and commerce to Normansfield. Her sincere faith inspired a dedication to service and providing for those less fortunate. Mary’s brother Philip was married to John’s sister and had supported him during his medical training in London. John had determined to focus on the care of the “mentally feeble” and was appointed Medical Superintendent of Royal Earlswood Asylum in 1858. He found a kindred spirit in Mary, whose pale-blue eyes, sharp features, and simple elegance matched her honesty and practicality. They married in October 1860, and she energetically supported the care of residents at Earlswood, volunteering to assist with training programs and supervising private care of individuals not formally admitted to Earlswood.

John referred to residents as “the family,” an orientation that would guide their establishment at Normansfield. When Earlswood’s governing trustees grew suspicious of John and Mary’s efforts to provide more individualized care and support for residents, the couple left to found Normansfield in 1868. Like her husband, Mary believed in eliminating corporal punishment or restraints in favor of routine, affection from carers, and training in arts and crafts. A woodworking shop was added and in 1879, Mary supervised the construction of an assembly hall featuring a jewel-box theater, which still operates today. In hiring staff she prioritized talent in music, performance or other arts in addition to reliability and dedication. By the late 1880s she was hosting events

for hundreds of guests—performances, charity events, receptions for medical congresses.

In one of the few surviving photos Mary is at her desk, pen in hand, no doubt writing to the numerous suppliers, contractors, prospective employees, and families of Normansfield residents. The London Archives contains thousands of letters to Mary, many of them from parents eager for news of their children's care and well-being. Her responses are missing from these records, but the documents that remain show her to be a warm and caring wife and manager who kept her own notes on newly admitted residents' preferences, habits, fears, and needs.

Mary's empathy for the Normansfield families was deepened by her personal heartbreak. While at Earlswood, the Langdon Downs' only daughter, Lilian, died of a sudden illness at age two. In August 1883, Everleigh, their eldest child, died from injuries sustained in an accident in the Normansfield workshop. Her younger sons, Reginald and Percival, both followed their father into medicine and later helped continue the work at Normansfield.

Today Mary's portrait hangs next to her husband's in the halls of Normansfield's main building. Now the Langdon Down Centre, it houses a Museum of Learning Disability and the headquarters of the Down's Syndrome Association of the UK. The Theatre is still a popular venue, and the walls are lined with details, images, and artifacts. The place feels infused with her caring spirit, her legacy of hope and healing, and her belief in the unequivocal value of every human being.

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Downhill Amy Lowell

By Owen Leon

Amy Lowell was a pusher, a Sisyphus straining to push herself past all the heavy burdens her time placed upon her. All in pursuit of bringing herself and all those in her around her to the top. A 18th century woman doing all things she shouldn't, puffing out clouds of inky cigar smoke, holding lectures and drawing crowds to hear her speak, even sleeping with other women and being downright open about it. Amy Lowell went for everything she could no matter if others insulted her she would just push right pass comments on her weight or personality.

You call her “too domineering” as Ezra Pound did. She'll push you out of your own movement and make it better without you. Lowell was even a page pusher publishing over 650 poems and even being awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1926, seeing success both during and after her life. Even now her life is celebrated and her work still studied as one of the great poets of her era, she's pushed herself into the modern consciousness too.

In such a male dominated world she must have felt surrounded, especially as an educated queer woman. Her personality would tell you otherwise though. She was outspoken and had an unmatched confidence in herself even as a self-made poet who worked for eight years before her first publication. Lowell even took a leading role in the imagist movement creating a yearly anthology series to grow the group, leading to its establishment as a true poetry movement. Still, she

was surrounded all the same, criticism coming on every side especially from her former friend and one of the founders of the imagist movement Ezra Pound who accused her of taking too much control calling it the "Amyglist movement with her at the head. Lowell pushed past this and all other critics from Pound's ilk to become widely celebrated not only by imagists but just in general. Poet and critic Louis Untermeyer said she was " not only a disturber but an awakener."

Lowell is famed for many things but one of the most important is her sexuality. She was an almost open lesbian. She once told a friend, "there is nothing so exciting as a young woman's naked body" This itself acts as the greatest example of her boundary pushing she would openly publish love poems about Ada Dwyer Russell, her long-term partner. Lowell was not, of course, openly announcing her sexuality due to the massive stigma around it at the time in some ways she might have well been with the subject of her poems almost clearly being about women, many at the time not making the connection and just assuming she was just writing from the perspective of a man. That claim might seem outright ridiculous but people believed it, despite the fact that she dedicated her biography of John Keats(who she had great admiration for) saying "To A.D.R., This, and all my books. A.L. " which is hard to see in any way other than romantic. Though the poems and some correspondence act as evidence for the twos relationship most of the letters were destroyed likely to keep the relationship secret at the times. The revelation of Lowell's sexuality not only reframes many of her poems but also much of her life as well as her bold and determined attitude becomes even more remarkable as she was not only a successful

woman but also queer which if revealed could have torn down her life making her out to be one of the bravest writers of the period certainly more than any of her detractors.

It might sound that Lowell had a rough life with all of these different barriers she had to overcome and she did have to push through these obstacles to become successful, but in many ways, she was also very advantaged. For one she was a white woman in America so comparatively to others disadvantaged groups in the country she had it okay especially compared to women of color during this period. The main reason she had it easier than most is due to her wealth. Lowell was born into a very wealthy family. For Lowell to even be as educated as she was in this period is a mark of great privilege, none of this in any way means that she did not have to put in a great deal of effort to become successful still having to work 8 years before her first publication as stated previously. She used her money to help publish the imagist anthology collection bringing more attention to her peers and she also used to promote her reworking of Chinese translations of older poets helping bring other cultures and histories to the front.

Lowell was a pusher but also a riser.

Rising to become a poet

Rising to shape the imagist movement

Rising other ups through her publishing

Rising up past every stale critic and jealous ex friend.
Past all those who doubted her and past all
expectations and cruel barriers of the 19th and 20th

centuries. Even rising up again in history after being forgotten, A word woven phoenix coming back through the women's movement. Returning to inspire today showing that anyone no matter the barriers or insults blocking the way that there is always a path forward if you're willing to push through and find it.

Rise past barriers and love freely because as Downhill Amy Lowell shows it will only make the art that much more impactful and important.

Genevieve Taggard: A Brief Introduction

By Julia Lisella

Genevieve Taggard (1894-1948) was an American modernist poet who authored more than 13 collections of poetry, and edited several landmark literary anthologies, including *May Days*, an anthology of writings from *The Masses* and *The Liberator*. A member of the American Communist Party, Taggard published widely in both leftist and mainstream literary outlets, such as *Poetry* and the *New Yorker*. Born in Waitsburg, Washington, Taggard moved with her family to Hawaii as a child and spent her early years there. Her parents were missionary educators and she credits her time there for exposing her to the human costs of imperialism and racism. “Poet Out of Pioneer” is a brilliant personal essay in which Taggard traces her political convictions to her time growing up in Hawaii. Her younger years were spent alongside the indigenous children of Hawaii, playing and exploring, while her high school years were spent with the children of the white missionaries: she attended the Punahau school, the same school Barak Obama attended years later. There she began her career as an editor and writer, publishing numerous poems and stories. She returned to the US to study at UC Berkeley in 1914. Her career spanned her years in the bohemian enclave of artists in Greenwich Village through and beyond the Great Depression. Always a committed socialist, she remained a member of the Communist Party until her death in 1948. In addition to her poetry publications,

Taggard wrote several short stories, personal essays, and book reviews, now beautifully collected in *To Test the Joy* (Boiler House Press 2024), edited by Anne Hammond.

Taggard wrote one of the earliest biographies of Emily Dickinson, taught writing at Mt. Holyoke, Bennington College, and Sarah Lawrence colleges, served as a contributing editor of the Marxist journal *The New Masses*, was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to Mallorca, just previous to the Spanish Civil War, and served on the Executive Council of the League of American Writers. She had a daughter, Marcia, with her first husband, the writer Robert Wolf, and later divorced and married journalist Kenneth Durant in 1935. Durant served as director of the American bureau of the Soviet news agency, TASS. She collaborated with some of the leading composers of the time and created several radio shows to discuss poetry. Her poetry continues to be relevant to us today for its unique combination of lyric beauty and craftsmanship, and its expression of political commitment to social, economic, gender, and racial justice.

Taggard's poems range from tightly formal and lyric to nearly free-verse and even at her most personal she rarely abandons more public, communal concerns. The lyric and the feminist, the personal and the global, are entwined in her work and can teach us much about the necessity to invite the world into the lyric and to demonstrate our stake as individuals in this troubled world. "With Child" is one of my favorite poems of Taggard's as it maps out both a private experience and its elevation to a moment

beyond the personal. It appeared first in the leftist magazine, *Liberator* in 1921, and appears in *To Test the Joy*, p. 21:

With Child

Now I am slow and placid, fond of sun,
 Like a sleek beast, or a worn one,
 No slim and languid girl – not glad
 With the windy trip I once had,
 But velvet-footed, musing of my own,
 Torpid, mellow, stupid as a stone.

You cleft me with your beauty's pulse, and now
 Your pulse has taken body. Care not how
 The old grace goes, how heavy I am grown,
 Big with this loneliness, how you alone
 Ponder our love. Touch my feet and feel
 How earth tingles, teeming at my heel!
 Earth's urge, not mine, – my little death, not hers;
 And the pure beauty yearns and stirs.

It does not heed our ecstasies, it turns
 With secrets of its own, its own concerns,
 Toward a windy world of its own, toward stark
 And solitary places. In the dark
 Defiant even now; it tugs and moans
 To be untangled from these mother's bones.

Olive Schreiner and Lyndall The Great

By Sophia MacAller

“Men are like the Earth and we are the moon; we turn always one side to them, and they think there is no other, because they don't see it—but there is”

--Olive Schreiner, from *The Story of an African Farm*

There is a name I recently discovered that holds the same sense of gravity that makes names more than a noun, and that is Lyndall. The author Olive Schreiner, included in the efforts of creating the “new woman” persona of Victorian literature, did not just create a character that makes her reader rethink the beginnings of feminism. Lyndall is the type of character that gives a physiological reaction to her readers; her prose is oozing with the denial of complacency similar to Wollstonecraft when she said in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* “That the society is formed in the wisest manner, whose constitution is founded on the nature of man, strikes, in the abstract, every thinking being so forcibly, that it looks like presumption to endeavour to bring forward proofs...yet to urge prescription as an argument to justify the depriving men (or women) of their natural rights, is one of the absurd sophisms which daily insult common sense.” (4). Lyndall had the same feelings as Wollstonecraft, the same anger and everlasting frustrations of being a Woman. Olive Schreiner’s creation of her “new woman” has an underlying erotic sense that is fully embraced by her character. The men amongst her, such as Waldo (who

I must add has his own psychological affairs) find her confusing, aggravating, yet magnetic.

I read *The Story of an African Farm* for a class that examines Victorian novels with a magnifying glass, and being in my last year of college my familiarity with the greats allows me to usually be aware and attentive to who guided Women like myself to become the relentless thinkers we are. I had never heard of Lyndall nor Schreiner, in all of the texts I've read about who to *really* pay attention to, her name had not merely been mentioned. In most academic settings, Sue Bridehead from *Jude the Obscure* holds the Nobel Prize for being *the* "new woman". I sat in my bedroom of my college apartment ready to continue my to-do list of reading that week, unprepared for the breathtaking persona of Lyndall, along with the tears accompanied by the relatability I felt being a Woman in 2026, despite the fact that Schreiner's novel was published in 1883. Her chapter, entitled appropriately "Lyndall", became filled with my miniscule pink sticky notes, each sentence of undying anger at the patriarchal world filled my chest and awakened my soul.

What I loved most about Lyndall, contrary to what you as a reader may be thinking at the moment, was not *just* the fact that her words had a way of speaking through the page. It was that she did not stop for a second to hear Waldo devalue or argue with what she had discovered. What she says in the long monologues of her chapters does not face the rude interruption of a man who does not nor will ever understand what being a Woman is. Lyndall speaks with confidence because what she speaks is the pure and unapologetic truth of the feminine experience. Its

value is not only relatable but generationally prevalent through all the waves of feminism that came before and after her creation. And, despite the feeling that she gave to a raging feminist in her final year of college, her name is nowhere to be seen listed within the great characters of womanhood.

There is a piece of Lyndall in all of us, she represents the craving of intellectual and physical autonomy that we are endlessly denied. She acknowledges the absence of empathy from men that we groan and moan over on the daily. And as the cherry on top, she says it all in a single breath, leaving her reader touched, hurt, angry, and satisfied all at the same time.

I read Olive Schreiner before being introduced into the anti-marriage world of Sue Bridehead created by Thomas Hardy. Despite the adoration I hold for Sue's escape from her marriage bed—by jumping out of a window—Lyndall allows herself to be a “new woman”. She does not question the decision to pursue her education, she does not accept marriage despite having a child out of wedlock, she lives purely for herself. She retains value from her own thoughts and feelings, and, with no pun intended, she denies the penetration of a man's learnings of the world to counteract what she knows to be her definition of actualized living.

I will never forget Lyndall, and if I could have her entire chapter inked into my arm with a needle I would not hesitate, for her name *belongs* with the greats, and the versatility of her womanhood resonates in the soul.

Reading is not just a scan of the orbital sense over strange shapes on a leaf of carefully formed white substance. Books are not an array of multicolored lines on a shelf of wood meant as a tangible display of “yes, I know all about that!”. Literature is not just a label on your diploma saying you completed your “to be read” list this year as a consolation of the fact your New Years resolution was confined to a quiet corner of thought opposed to the gym open 24 hours a day.

I chose to be an English major because I chose to see *more*, I chose to think *more*, I chose to dive deeper. I did what all of us do, and began with the famous texts that spoke to who I am: and who I am is a Woman. I capitalize Woman, because that word in and of itself has gravity, meaning beyond a descriptive word, stories beyond a genital association. As Women we fawn over the greats: Mary Wollstonecraft, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Bell Hooks. We become engulfed in the study of the female body, spirit, and mind; then, you find a character that is included in this list of the greats, yet isn't plastered to be the face of feminism. When you find that character that makes you realize it was not just the greats, but every Woman alive who woke up one day to resist against their facade of inferiority, your perception changes. Women are not just a study of baby making pawns who sit in their drawing rooms knitting until they can be courted by the most affable suitor imaginable. Women are alive, awake, alert, enthusiastic, and that one character changes how much effort is pulled by the greats. So, it is safe to say that Schreiner and her shining star of a new woman Lyndall deserve the same attention given to the greats, for what is a great without the Women who paved the way for her to be allowed greatness to begin with?

On Becoming a Gifted Dancer: The Life and Times of Carmen De Lavallade

By Marjorie Mann

I have often wondered what comes first for us as professional dancers. Is it knowing that one has a talent for movement and dance in the early years of our lives? Or is it knowing without a doubt that dance is a passion that stirs in our hearts and souls so profoundly that it becomes a burning desire... and our reason to live. I wonder which came first for me, and I wonder the same for the graceful, ethereal dancer Carmen De Lavallade.

Carmen came into the world on March 6th, 1931, a child of Black-Creole parents who moved to Los Angeles from New Orleans just before her birth. At that time in history, Cab Calloway's jazzy dance tune, *Minnie the Moocher* was the number one song. The Empire State building had just been completed in New York City, a loaf of bread cost eight cents, and America was steeped in the Great Depression. A shining light of a baby girl was born in dark times...and she was born to dance!

After showing promise and talent at a young age, Carmen was accepted at a ballet school for whites only. On her first day of class, all of the white dancers walked out --leaving Carmen, the only Black student, to receive a "private" dance lesson from her teacher. It would not be the last time that Carmen re-framed a

negative experience into a positive one. I can imagine that this event was one of many that influenced her to face bigotry and adversity with courage and determination.

Carmen grew as a dancer, exhibiting strong dance technique with beautiful lines, flexibility and fluidity. She had the gift of dramatic expression through movement. She danced ‘beyond her body,’ to the very edges of the theater!

Carmen attended Thomas Jefferson High School in Los Angeles. While there, she met and became the dance partner of a young man named Alvin Ailey! They choreographed dances and performed together, making quite a name for themselves. They moved to New York City, and because of their synergistic dances, they were cast in their first Broadway show. Truman Capote’s Broadway musical *House of Flowers*, with an all-Black cast, opened at the Alvin Theater in 1954. Carmen was partnered with Alvin Ailey for the *pas de deux* scenes. This was their foray into the world of musical theater and the limelight of Broadway, performing nightly for appreciative audiences. The leads in the production were Pearl Bailey, Diahann Carroll and a young dancer named Arthur Mitchell (who would go on to start the Dance Theater of Harlem). Also cast in the musical was the dancer-actor Geoffrey Holder. He was a tall, handsome Trinidadian man, who caught Carmen’s eye...and her heart. Three months later they were married, and the artistic and creative bond they shared brought them much success.

Carmen's career took off, as she made her film debut in the movie *Carmen Jones* in 1954, with Dorothy Dandridge, Pearl Bailey and Harry Belafonte. More film opportunities followed, and then an offer from the Metropolitan Opera. Carmen became the second Black woman to dance with the Met (Carmen's cousin Janet Collins, was the first Black prima ballerina at the Met). Carmen performed in *Aida* and *Samson and Delilah*, and many other operas. She eventually became the Met's choreographer, creating dramatic dance scenes for many operas during her time there. Carmen was often featured on television shows and in magazine articles for *Esquire*, *Jet* and *Dance Magazine*. I loved reading the articles with my mother, who was also a dancer-performer.

In 1958, Carmen became a founding member of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Just twenty-three years later, in 1981, I too moved to New York City. I auditioned at the Alvin Ailey school and won a scholarship to study there. Under Mr. Ailey's training, I learned Horton Technique and Katherine Dunham's choreography. I was following in the footsteps of two of my dance idols, Mr. Ailey and Ms. De Lavallade, who had studied with Lester Horton in their early years in Los Angeles. When they were present in the building, all of us were thrilled to catch even a glimpse of them. We knew we were in the presence of dance royalty!

In 1998 Carmen and dancer-choreographer Gus Solomons, Jr. started a performing company for dancers over the age of fifty. I admired Gus, as I too studied with him and performed his innovative style of modern dance as part of my dance studies at the University of Michigan in the early 1980s. Here I am

today, a testament to a dancer well over fifty, like my dance idol, who continued to dance well into her seventies and eighties. Carmen is famously quoted as saying, “you can take a lifetime to discover what you want to say in your art.”

Ms. De Lavallade received the 2017 Kennedy Center Honors award. She was in good company alongside other greats in entertainment: Lionel Richie, Gloria Estefan, LL Cool J and Norman Lear. She has also been honored over the years with lifetime achievement awards from Capezio, Julliard and the American Theater Wing, to name a few.

Carmen De Lavallade passed away at age 94 in December of 2025. Her dance legacy lives on in the people she inspired, like Misty Copeland, first Black prima ballerina at American Ballet Theatre. Even actor greats like Meryl Streep and Sigourney Weaver who studied movement with her at Yale Drama School have benefitted from her teaching. I am still not sure which comes first, the talent for dance, or the passion. What I do know is that Carmen De Lavallade lived an exquisite life in dance, paving the way for many, and she continues to inspire the dancer in me!

To learn more about Carmen De Lavallade: A Wealth of Wisdom: Legendary African American Elders Speak, by Camille Cosby Carmen & Geoffrey, a documentary film.







Barbara Hazard, Artist & Poet

By Leslie Marks



“I think the earth is fantastic. I am astounded that plants and birds and human beings grow out of little specks we can’t even see, that the earth spins around the sun, and that the sun is only one of millions. Billions. I am aware of the fleetingness of everything – not just my own personal life drawing to a close, but perhaps much life on earth.”

--Barbara Hazard

I worry about the ethics of being an artist when there is so much hunger and violence in the world, but really, all I

want to do is paint and make things. It would be great to believe that looking at a painting of a flower or the forest or the sea would temper the part of our nature that gets us into such trouble, but I don't really think that paintings are going to turn humanity into environmentalists. Sunflowers will probably not save the world, but they certainly make it more magical."

--Barbara Hazard

I met Barbara Hazard when she taught Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) at her home in San Geronimo Valley, Marin County, at the beginning of the 1980s. I'd realized by the time that my son turned two, that, as a new mother, I needed help. I asked my friend and mentor, Bev Ludwig, and she suggested RC aka Co-Counseling. The meeting closest to me was at Barbara's home in the San Geronimo Valley. Barbara was warm, welcoming, clear, and fascinated with life in all its forms. During the sixteen weeks of training and practice in active listening with other co-counselors in our group, I was relieved and grateful to receive the support I'd been looking for. I was also learning how to listen and respond supportively to others. Co-counseling was an active community at the time, which included workshops on parenting, racial injustice, and more.

In the studio at her home, Barbara was painting brussels sprouts plants from her garden, as well as landscapes and other scenes. I learned about Barbara's involvement with Interhelp, an international organization that supported people in facing the

dangers of the nuclear arms race in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Their work evolved from Joanna Macy's "Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age" workshops: "We lived through one close call after another as we stood on the brink of devastation. Instead of waking from the nightmare, many of us woke up into what felt like a nightmare: first strike strategies, civil defense plans for "winnable" nuclear war, and new generations of missiles." Barbara was one of the co-founders of Interhelp.

It was in the early 1980s that my four-year-old son's dictation was published in Interhelp's "Humpty Dumpty Report." After a jet fighter plane suddenly roared over our heads barely above the trees in the high country above Yosemite, scaring us, I wrote down what he dictated. He concluded, "President Reagan, you can't make bombs because those people really don't want to make wars. We want to smash the guns."

I knew from Barbara of Interhelp's ten-year project to support cleaning up the Ganges River. They made connections between Buddhist monks, other religious leaders, and local groups along the Ganges. Education, emotional support, and connection helped people take action, later including the government. The UN recognized Namami Gange as one of the top 20 World Restoration Flagship initiatives in 2022. Interhelp evolved into the "Work that Connects" to

include a focus on environmental destruction and social injustice, as well as facing the nuclear threat.

Barbara moved to Berkeley and took classes in Russian, while continuing to paint. She traveled to Russia in 1986, during “glasnost” or “openness,” when Soviet leader Gorbachev reduced censorship to allow citizens to discuss government failures, like the Chernobyl Disaster and Stalinist atrocities, intending to combat corruption and move toward modernization. Barbara mentioned to me that they still had to go on walks outside in order to talk privately. Her book, *Off Nevsky Prospekt: Life Among Leningrad's Unofficial Artists*, was published in 1992, a documentary of their daily lives and challenges working outside the official Soviet system. She helped them organize a cultural exchange of exhibitions with Gallery Route One in Pt. Reyes Station, Marin County. Barbara became lifelong friends with some of these artists. It was during this time that she began to draw and paint people and portraits.

Barbara wrote, “My twenty-year friendship with Russian artists has helped with my acceptance of the dark. I have let go of some of my urge to do beautiful things, and allowed more rawness, deeper colors, browns and muddiness. I am working more intuitively.”

After her first visit, Barbara traveled yearly to an island in the St. Lawrence River in spring and St.

Petersburg (previously Leningrad) in the summer. She became a quilter and textile artist. She began writing poetry with two poetry group leaders, and dedicated her book of poems, *Wednesday River*, to them as her muses (looking over her shoulder below). I have been rereading her poems, remembering her sense of humor, her integrity, and not only the “fleetingness of everything,” but also that which endures.



(1931- Barbara died peacefully in Berkeley in 2019) To see Barbara Hazard’s artwork:

<https://www.barbarahazard.com/artist.html>

With gratitude to Barbara Hazard and the other remarkable women who have helped me on my path, including J. J. Wilson, my long-ago English Master’s teacher for Creative Writing,

Leslie Marks www.lesliemarks.me Substack link for other articles, including wise quotes from children: <https://lesliemarkssahaba.substack.com>

She Was a Leader in the Tradeswomen Movement Opening Up the Building and Construction Trades to Women Cheryl Parker (1947– 1992)

By Molly Martin

The Club for the Deaf's attic on Valencia Street reeked of scorched timber. Char and blackened beams swallowed the light; soot clung to everything. We crawled, backs bent low, balancing on sheets of plywood stretched across the ceiling joists. As electricians rewiring the place after a fire, we worked while thunderous punk music rattled below—the deaf crowd savoring the music through their feet. It was just one of many electrical jobs Cheryl Parker and I did together.

Cheryl belonged to Sonoma County and the San Francisco Bay Area in a way that was both rooted and radical. She came from land and labor, and she spent her life insisting that women—especially lesbians—had a right to both. I knew her as a close friend, a sister tradeswoman, and a fellow building inspector. Our lives overlapped on jobsites, in union fights, in lesbian bars, and in the long conversations that

happen when you are trying to make a life where none has been laid out for you.

I first met Cheryl when she was working at Mare Island Naval Shipyard. She was already doing dangerous, skilled electrical work there, and she was also helping to raise two daughters with her lover. They lived on Farm Road in Shellville near Sonoma. That combination—determination on the job and deep commitment to chosen family—was classic Cheryl. She was grounded, political without posturing, and absolutely unwilling to shrink herself.

We later worked together through Wonder Woman Electric on several jobs. At lesbian bars in San Francisco, while everyone else was dancing, Cheryl and I would be off to the side talking about electrical work—arguing over grounding, circuitry, and the strange logic of systems hidden behind walls. No one wanted to sit with us. We didn't care.

Cheryl came out of an Italian American family deeply tied to Northern California agriculture. Her grandparents emigrated from northern Italy; her grandfather homesteaded land outside Cloverdale. Her father was a fruit tramp who met her mother, Irene Gianoli, while picking fruit. Cheryl grew up in Cloverdale, one of three children. She had been a high school cheerleader and a member of the riding club, but she was never ornamental. Strength came naturally to her.

In the early 1970s, Cheryl entered the political and cultural ferment of the Bay Area. At City College of San Francisco, she met Joan MacQuarrie in a women's history class. They became lovers and political partners, asking a question that would shape

the rest of their lives: how could women make a living wage without a college degree?

That question led them straight into the building trades—places where women were barely tolerated. Cheryl went on to be a leader in the Tradeswomen Movement, organizing to bring more women into the construction trades and jobs that women had not been allowed to do.

In 1972, Cheryl became the first woman cabinetmaker in Local 550, hauling ninety-pound doors. She later became the first woman to enter the electrical apprenticeship at Mare Island, working in confined, dangerous spaces including nuclear submarines.

Cheryl went on to own her own business, teach at the Center for Employment Training in Santa Rosa, and receive Sonoma County's Tradeswoman of the Year award. But her real legacy was collective. She was a founding member of Women United for Apprenticeship, and she fought—loudly and publicly—for enforceable standards to get women into union trades. When apprenticeship officials claimed women couldn't do the work, Cheryl, a tall woman, stood over them with the authority of someone who already was.

As building inspectors, we helped found a network of women inspectors. We called ourselves the "FBI"—Female Building Inspectors. It was funny, and it was deadly serious. Cheryl knew how isolating the work could be, especially when you were the first or the only female. She made sure others didn't have to be alone.

Cheryl lived openly as a lesbian, embedded in women's and lesbian communities, from tradeswomen groups to the Oakland-Berkeley Women's Union. She argued about everything. Friends said she should have been a lawyer. In 1986, at 38, she gave birth to her son Tyson, and he became another fierce center of her life. I got to be her birth coach, an amazing experience.

Cheryl Parker died of ovarian cancer on July 9, 1992, at the age of 44. Visiting my friend as she was dying and sick from chemo, I repeated an old chestnut, that I'd prefer to die quickly of a heart attack rather than suffer. She said something profound: "Don't be so sure. Just think of all the love I've received and all the love I've been able to give as I'm dying." Cheryl lived just nine months from her diagnosis to her death. Much love flowed in all directions and my view of death was transfigured. She is buried in Healdsburg, back in Sonoma County soil.

Cheryl understood something early that many still resist: solidarity has to be built and no one breaks barriers alone. I carry her with me—in the work, in the arguments, in the memory of two women at a bar talking about grounding while the music played on. Cheryl helped make a path where there wasn't one

before. I was lucky to walk part of it with her.



What Stands Behind the Flowers

By Caitlin Grace McDonnell

After Hilma af Klimt

End of May, optimistic bouquets bow down in their saturated yellow tunics. At the food coop, my daughter asks, in front of my therapist, *Why are you buying a basil plant?* Everyone with their stupid carts of hope. *I want to be a person who has a basil plant,* I say, to them both. To myself. This morning, a small blade in my throat. Maybe a new strand. I close my eyes and make the expressway outside an ocean. The honks, seals, sirens, seagulls in empty gray sky. *I'm just so so much worse at life than everyone else,* she texts, late to school. When the messages from the divine overflowed, Hilma turned to the language of flowers. The inherent power of bird cherry—obedience of European aspen. *You are amazing.* I text back, and think of my mother young in Paris in a red hat; creme brûlée and kir royale. Beauty here, at the end, perhaps our only anesthesia.



Hilma af Klint, *Tulipa* sp. (Tulip), sheet 35 from the portfolio "Nature Studies" (May 20, 1920). Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Sarah Polley Helps Us Live, or The Sensuousness of Every Movement

by Kristi McKim

Though acclaimed filmmaker Sarah Polley isn't exactly unsung, and though Polley recently appeared as herself in the popular Hollywood series *The Studio* (2025), I continue to be surprised by how—when talking with anyone beyond my niche film community—I find myself met with a vague curiosity that betrays a lack of recognition whenever I casually mention her name. While I could chronicle her biography from child star to film director, I would rather celebrate the quality of her work I most love: the way her films enliven and invigorate.

As a film professor, I teach hundreds of film clips and have recently come to marvel at how something magical happens in relation to Polley's films: sharing a clip feels like a special occasion, its audiovisual complexity causing my students to physically lean forward, to brighten their expressions, to open their eyes wider (I do not exaggerate), to soften their gaze, to shuck off momentarily (after 26 years of teaching college students, I have come to register how this *looks*) the pressures of the day and to live a bit more fully. Most recently, the opening of *Stories We Tell* (2012)—its Margaret Atwood quotation framing a home movie aesthetic, complemented by a warmly-

textured voiceover (“when you’re in the middle of a story, it isn’t a story at all, but only a confusion”) in tandem with footage of Polley’s gentle-yet-perfectionist directing of her cheeky father’s reading (all preceding a montage of her family’s self-conscious preparing to be interviewed, accompanied by Bon Iver’s “Skinny Love”)—transformed a meeting of my Film Sound class. Studying “needle-drops” relative to Amy Herzog’s concept of “musical moments” in preparation for Charlotte Wells’s *Aftersun* (2022)—its “Under Pressure” closing montage, a masterclass in how film can rupture and heal through music—students could have talked all class about *Stories We Tell*, the curiosity that the opening minutes build and how, the wailing and yearning of Bon Iver’s voice, its poetically-accentuated syllables contrapuntal to the music’s folksy lightness (“and I *told* you to be patient”), on the heels of the earlier soft piano music. Students loved the pacing, the nervousness of Polley’s siblings in striking contrast with their charisma, the assurance that we all were in good hands.

Polley’s earlier films similarly flourish. Featuring an aging couple’s difficult navigation of Alzheimer’s, Polley’s directorial debut *Away from Her* (2008) stars a luminous Julie Christie as Fiona, whose “spark of life” (her husband’s epithet for her singularity) shines within vitality-rich closeups that counter her waning memory. Set to Bach and Neil Young’s music, the film conveys how the specificity of their love bears history. For nearly two decades now, this film has seen me through enormous transitions into what’s squarely (if I’m lucky) my middle-age. Like any good film, Polley’s films grow with us; but, unlike most

films, Polley's films convey youth and age simultaneously. *Away from Her* helps my college students register the scale of their lives, the tenderness of sex for people beyond their college years, the histories that all of us carry.

I first screened Polley's sophomore feature, *Take This Waltz* (2011), in the weeks before marrying my now-husband; its white-hot sensuality challenges enduring monogamy, and the film lives as a capsule of how it feels to be young and worrying and restless and longing, sans judgment. Much of this sensuality owes to Michele Williams's performance that blends mature intense sexuality with youthful play (a feminist Anna Karina or Bernadette Lafont). Polley gives Williams (as Margot) the time and space (and steamy atmosphere and retro-colorful mise-en-scene) in which to thrive. In a water aerobics scene, Williams has never been more unabashedly giddy than when mimicking the enthusiastic teacher's motions and imperatives (March! Pull!) next to her sister-in-law (Sarah Silverman), their silliness exacerbated by the watchful gaze of dreamy suitor (Luke Kirby), until Margot pees the pool from laughing so hard. Water aerobics comes to a screeching halt ("not cool, guys," the instructor's scolding, only amplifying their irrepressible laughter). The pool setting also yields a staggeringly rare scene in film history: women—of multiple generations and body types—shower in the locker room, the camera less a voyeur than comrade, honoring, via tableau, the complex ways that we live inside of our bodies in relation to each other. Female nudity on-screen rarely feels so lovingly welcome, and something of Williams's performance via Polley's direction makes

the fact of having a body more of a privilege, a careful fact of existence, the vehicle through which we feel extreme sensation (Williams's role in *Take This Waltz* prefigures her role in *Dying for Sex* [2025]; to Polley's/Williams's credit, *Take This Waltz* heightens the stakes of desire *without* a terminal diagnosis). Has longing and remembering ever been more palpable than in the astonishingly-paired "Video Killed the Radio Star" scrambler scenes? Forms change (radio, video), and so can affections; time passes linearly, yet aesthetics can flash surprising alignment of circumstances that might challenge aging, history, stories. Polley's most recent feature *Women Talking* (2022) and her series *Alias Grace* (2017) foreground friendship and community as life-saving. Very simply, Sarah Polley helps us love being alive through films that accentuate—with joy, lightness, and kindness—the sensuousness of every movement.

Given to Fire

— *after Elise Cowen, US, 1933 -1962*

By Sharon Mesmer

Not from nowhere
not the consort of a river —
what I remembered best
were accidents
of quiet brightness
 Allen's arms around me
and if he said I was standing
in the middle of the room
at dawn all in black

high on mescaline
 more beautiful than the poem
 then I was
 And now I am
 passing back into the rocks
 into the god of the rocks

Betty said it was birds
 who first fitted witches
 with wings
 while fir trees
 of great antiquity
 sang lays they'd learned
 from their mother
 Air

I say it was too easy to love
 the leggy one
 who made me run up and down
 the Statue of Liberty
 until I learned to fly

past the frosted skylight airshaft
 thru the closed window
 like an arrow cast
 without a bow
 without an owner
 but borne on longing
 a cool stream of air

Allen Ginsberg, my Brooklyn College MFA
 professor, once asked me if I'd heard of Elise Cowen.
 I said I'd seen her name in his *Journals: Early Fifties,*
Early Sixties.

 "She was a fine poet," he said.

He thought her work would be inspiring and instructive for me, and that it was a pity that her parents had destroyed most of it after her death (because in it she'd mentioned lovers, both male and female). He said her allusive, lyrical style was reminiscent of Dickinson and Sappho. Excerpts had been published here and there, but those magazines were hard to find. He said if he came across anything in his papers he'd show it to me. Our conversation took place in his apartment in 1989.

Twenty-six years later, after I began researching and writing to "underknown" women poets of the Americas for my collection-in-progress, *Even Living Makes Me Die*, she came to mind. By a stroke of luck, Ahsahta Press had just published *Elise Cowen: Poems and Fragments*, edited by Tony Triglio, and there was information about her on the Internet. With delight, I delved. She'd been born into a well-to-do Long Island family. As a Barnard College student, she met Joyce Johnson — in whose memoir, *Minor Characters*, she'd make perhaps her first appearance as a flesh-and-blood human woman — and through a professor for whom she baby-sat, she met Allen. They became lovers but, to my mind, they were more like kindred spirits: intense, hyper-sensitive, dark-eyed, bespectacled. Misfits seeking compassion and understanding. While Allen was becoming a public poet, Elise's work was written in (and kept) secret.

After she graduated she worked shitty jobs, moved between San Francisco and New York City, and was treated for depression at Bellevue, a source of shame for her family. Released to their care in 1962, she jumped out a window of their Washington Heights

apartment — a closed window. When her parents discovered her poems and journals, they destroyed them.

Luckily, her friend Leo Skir had eighty-three poems in his basement. After her death, he sent them to literary magazines. (Skir's narrative of his experiences with Elise, published in *Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists, and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution* is a sad and beautiful introduction to who she was, read alongside Johnson's *Minor Characters*.) In 1998 she made her "debut" with eight poems — provided by Skir — in the American Book Award-winning anthology, *Women of the Beat Generation*, edited by Brenda Knight. In 2015, the collection edited by Tony Triglio, containing all the poems belonging to Skir, was published. Reading her work in both, I could see the allusive lyricism that Allen described, and her brilliant mind shining through.

In my poem "after" her, I tried to capture her lyricism and longing; how her strict lineation, paradoxically, gives flight to emotion. How frank she is about longing. Of all the poets in my collection, it was Elise whom I most felt was speaking to me as I wrote, as if she were directing what I should write. I could almost "hear" her voice reminding me of Allen's beautiful description of her in his journal (and thus I incorporated a riff on it into my poem). In fact, when I set out to write a poem dedicated to another woman in my collection, I heard Elise's voice saying, "You know more about me. Write to me today."

“Charlotte Salomon Paints Her Life” by Pamela Reitman

retold by Susan Miller

Years ago, I stumbled upon “Charlotte: Life or Theater” by Charlotte Salomon. Her 800 plus gouache paintings told the story of her life. I loved the bright colors and primitive manner her strokes take on. Her work inspired me to paint with gouache.

I found I had a soft spot in my heart for her story. Recently I found a retelling of her story by Pamela Reitman. This time I felt a desire to tell her story with a different ending, one where she lives. In my story, Charlotte and Henri, her husband, do not perish in Auschwitz. They are hidden in the French countryside by good people. Charlotte completes her pregnancy, her baby daughter Annabel is born in Italy at the “Redhouse”, Charlotte’s friend Max found Henri and Charlotte a safe place at the Red House also known as Alberobello in Puglia. The house is also called Casa Rosas. Many rural areas of southern Italy feature homes built from red iron rich stone creating a warm earthy feeling. The House seems beaten down, like its inhabitants. Earlier the house had probably been an orphanage, before that a parsonage and church and now a detention center housing 42 refugees fleeing Hitler.

Charlotte and Henri had never been out of France. Once again, a local farmer takes them in his farm cart pulled by his two Clydesdales, Bruno and Ben. The horses have beautiful rich brown hair. They travel at

night. They are covered with straw. Romaine, the mother whom they stayed with in her home & closet in the French countryside, packs them a generous food basket with boiled eggs, cheeses, baguettes, butter and some baked treats.

By night on bumpy country roads they travel south to Italy reaching The Redhouse that makes room for them in the already crowded center. They did not know where they were going. A guard named Alfonso shows them to their quarters. They share a room with a family of four. They seem friendly and welcoming. They know a little French and make Charlotte and Henri comfortable. The couple is thrilled to be out of the cart and to have their own living quarters. They arrive at night, so they bed down on the straw ticking with no sheets or blanket. They curl into each other's bodies to keep warm. They take a last bite of cheese and baguette before falling asleep. They are not sure but are happy to be at the Red House.

After Hilma af Klint, *Primordial Chaos no. 16* (1906-7)

By Lisa L. Moore



Hilma af Klint, Primordial Chaos No. 16 (1906-7)

I. Amaliel

A flower blossoms, withers, dies.

Its fragrance lingers.

Strike a note—

the faintest sound

is an eternal echo.

On the shoreless ocean of space,

the vibration is never lost.

I seek a door in the forest.

II. Hilma

After my sister Hermina's death,

Sweden could not hold my sorrow.

III. De Fem

Anna was the first of The Five

to join Hilma. With Cornelia,

Sigrid, and Mathilda,

we called ourselves

the Edelweiss Society.

For five years, we drew nothing
but plants, as directed
by the spirit. When
we commenced making
paintings for the Temple,
we abandoned art
anonymously
and collectively. Our work
was sacred transcription,
eternal geometric language.

We knew the world was not ready.

IV. Primordial Chaos no. 16

Whatever my message,
I have always conveyed it
and will go on conveying it.

They say I vibrate.

V. 120 Years Later

I make a drawing of *Primordial Chaos no. 16*
in colored pencils. I wear Indianthrene Blue
to a stump, copying the starlike streaks.
I draw spiraling loops that could be letters
in an astral language, spirochetes,
snail shells, seed heads. The tiniest atom,
the largest galaxy.

I seek a door in the painting.

Zitkala Sa - A Native American Woman of Many Stories and Powerful Journeys

By Sophia Morris

There is somewhere between the willow trees and the milky oat weeds where there is complete peace. Where there is no time and no weight against our prominent sky. We read within the textbooks of white male figures that conquered our land for our freedom, but what we are told holds a heavy pain of a lie within our country. What if I told you we were not the first humans upon this land, the first was the Native Americans. The Native Americans knew the land and the way of being. But that was taken from them. Little children were taken out of their reservations barefoot, along with their fathers, sisters and grandfathers. They were abruptly stripped from themselves, hair down to a buzzcut for men, women forced to wear traditional European dresses, and children taught English to slowly erase any memory of their lineage and who they are. Their Indian heritage is suddenly a distant memory.

The Yankton Dakota Sioux Tribe, otherwise known as the People of the End Village was a unique tribe

speaking the Dakota language, based in South Dakota. Like most native tribes, their hair is sacred to them. It holds spiritual value and a sense of holding memories and spirits with them. They normally did not cut it, some of the expectations being ceremonial reasons and mourning. Cutting their hair signified a significant loss and change within themselves and the tribe.

White men, they come from different directions. Their skin is paler than that of Zitkala Sa's. It sickened her to see skin that blinds her eyes from the brightness. Zitkala and her brothers and sisters are taken as a "sign of recruitment" for the White's Indiana Manual Labor Institute. There, people of European descent cut the hair of the Native Indigenous people, a part of themselves falling slowly to the ground. Her history, a part of her identity, her spiritual knowledge, gone with the swipe of a knife.

The sun dance opera was a special composition of Zitikalas that got her a lot of recognition. She used moments like those of being taken to grow uniformity within her tribe and within herself, growing and learning as well as advocating for others within a time of pain. She would meet a man born in Utah named William Hanson, the son of Danish parents. Their clash and mix of native American and Danish culture would meet within history books as one of impactfulness and beauty. Their impact of braiding

cultures would leave a beautiful legacy of Native American culture and a Danish twist of collaboration.

There is a photo shown of the first The Sun dance opera cast, mostly white cast members and some Native Americans. The European cast members were clearly painted in red face paint and along their body, that in itself also debatable if it was culturally appropriate. The Sun Dance Opera was a push of cultural education and wisdom brought in a more European style. It was not sure what to be made of with a widely different form of entertainment and music at the time, it was the first of its kind. And to Europeans and Native Americans, their “spheres of influence and culture” were wildly separate and different, Europeans saw Native Americans as a form of exotification as well. Almost as if they were in a zoo, and that in itself did not sit well with Zitkala Sa. Creating this opera and among her other works, it was a push of hers to intentionally merge those spheres of culture and educate people to know that there is no need to erase away her culture and identity and that they are humans too.

Cultures benefit from each other when they learn and grow from each other. The Sun Dance Opera features the Shoshone singer and his love rival. Lots of Native American practices, rituals, and dances were outlawed at the time, making The Sun Dance opera a more unique and powerful form of education and art of that time and decade. It shows the intense beauty within

the Sun Dance of their tribe and also the love formed within their people.

“A wigwam of weather-stained canvas stood at the base of some irregularly ascending hills. A footpath wound its way gently down the sloping land till it reached the broad river bottom; creeping through the long swamp grasses that bent over it on either side, it came out on the edge of the Missouri. This quote is from act 1 of *The Sun Dance Opera*. Zitkala paints a scene of wonder and of mystic nature. Of a nature-scaped Missouri, at the almost sundown.

Zitkala's writing is so unique because of her ability to capture nature and land familiar to her and her tribe. It was her voice and where she found her strength. Zitkala found resistance in showing power for her people of the Yankton Dakota Sioux Tribe. She gave power back to her people that was taken from them, by working with a white man, a man of privilege and that had the same skin as her oppressors but shared her creativity in similarity. It was an unlikely form of work and collaboration that led to the first opera created by a Native American Indigenous woman, a power move and one that gave voice to the voiceless in her tribe.

Zitkala's wisdom and knowledge lives on through her work and literature. She played the violin as well, and used that as a voice when she felt voiceless. Her passion for violin would lead her to make an appearance for the former president William

Mickinley, playing one of her famous pieces, pouring her passion of life and pain into the soul of the violin. Her childhood and history of pain morphed into a poetic rendition of taking power back that was taken from her and her family. Within the stars today she is remembered by having a crater named after her on Venus, the Bonnin Crater, her name also being Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. Within her work she also advocated politically as a lobbyist for women of all colors in making sure they had the same voting privileges and laws as men. Her work shows us that you can explore different careers and passions in life, you don't have to choose just one necessarily and limit yourself if your heart tells you there are other things to explore and work on too. Her name, otherwise known as Red Bird, lives on through history books as an incredible force of strength and resilience within a time of despair and degradation against her own people.

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Rose with No Name

By Linda Norton

*... such as are often found in old gardens
growing on their own roots,
and sometimes of great age. They are of the
highest value in the garden,
as the picture well shows. Such a rose, though not
the one shown,
whose name is lost, is Anna Alexieff.*

Gertrude Jekyll
Walls and Water Gardens

Red roses on a rose bush looped with garden hose—
The first paintings were made with blood,
beauty out of carnage, or was it red ink
from the body of the first girl, the first
wondering about what was happening
and how it might look and how it might smell—
The heirloom roses in this garden smell old
which means they smell fresh as the first girl
unlike some of the new roses bred to blossom
thornless, fast, synthetically, to resist pests.
They smell of money and garden hoses,
pneumatically flawless, un-gardened: anyone
could do it, could do them; pornographic.
The first girl, the first rose: Sapphic.

Fanny Howe

By Katie Peterson

Today, the voices on the radio were talking about women musicians, and how in the history of music, they were often put in “boxes,” framed, as it were, by their peculiarities and circumstances, rather than imagined in a lineage or a family.

Women poets have shared the same fate, their stories told as stories of resistance and exception, which feels keenly unfair since women are often holding up families and communities as they make their way in writing, which, for all of us of all genders, has some relationship with exception and strangeness. I thought of my friend Fanny Howe, who left the earth so recently (2026) her voice feels like it’s in the next room, though maybe it always will to me. Before I ever met her, I loved her radiantly concise *Selected Poems*, and her novel *In the Middle of Nowhere*, one of the most savage treatments of love and desire I know. But I *was* fated to meet her, in March of 2004, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then, to travel to Russia (of all places!) with her in the summer of 2007, and to become her movie-going friend during the years 2011 – 2013, and her correspondent and occasional phone call, and now, her mourner.

Fanny loved women writers and told me to read Eileen Miles, Leslie Scalapino, Charlotte Solomon, Theresa Ha Kyung Cha. From a close, even tribal family, she created a tribe of her own, and her children and their children are a tribute to her. She was exceptional but she didn’t want to be framed. She

seemed to love to influence and be influenced. She liked to spend time with women and talk, get a little Vitamin G (gossip). She introduced me to so many interesting women I've lost count. She didn't need a man in the room to have a good time, but she liked men (even when she trash talked them), she thought they were fun and could keep things interesting.

When I met Fanny, I was obsessed with these lines from her poem, "Veteran," from her *Selected Poems*. I was on the lookout for an ungended god:

Some of the others believe in food & drink & perfume
I don't. And I don't believe in shut-in time
for those who committed a crime
of passion. Like a sweetheart
of the iceberg or wings lost at sea

the wind is what I believe in,
the One that moves around each form

This poem is about the night that I met Fanny Howe.
It's about a particular time and place – Cambridge,
Massachusetts, in 2004, a few years after 9/11, at the
end of the beginning of the forever wars that led us
where we are now, wherever that might be.

SACRAMENTAL

Cries from the fire escape
of the triple decker.
The drunk man in the fine suit
wanted to smoke a cigarette
in the pearly evening,

and got himself locked out.
 The great poet had brought him.
 I only memorized her words about the wind
 because I didn't have the courage
 for tattoos, not ever, and I told her this,
 hoping she'd find me clever,
 but she responded with a question,
why would you mark your body?
 Last night I saw Fanny Howe
 in the flesh, in Grafton Street,
 drinking a glass of wine,
 just like us, I told Brighde,
 who said, oh, tomorrow night
 she's coming to my party.
 I didn't quite know poets were alive
 even though I hoped I was among them.
 I had no idea what I was doing there.
 Someone had to let the man back in.
 The moon lifted above the sash
 like a communion wafer.
 Love means never having
 to be ashamed of being lost.
 With her bright eye she turned
 and said to me, *he's shameless.*

After She Dies, My Mind Flees to Rio

For R.B.G.

By Kyle Potvin

Restive marmosets sound their staccatos.
Beaches—Ipanema, Copacabana—burn without
judgment.
Greet this day again.

Raise your Caipirinha, tongue-tied by *Cachaça*.
Battle of vowels and consonants, sugar
Gravel in your throat.

Rotting fruit remains far away in the marketplace.
Black beans, here, stew for hours, for comfort.
Garlic-greens steam bright.

Root yourself in the intricate footsteps of samba.
Believe me when I say some women are
Greater than heaven.

Redeemer, high on your mountaintop.
Behemoth arms naive with welcome.
Get down! Lightning!

First appeared in Gyroscope Review. Note: Invented form (by me), called the Heroine, using initials from heroic woman to start lines of each stanza.

River

for Marjorie Stoneman Douglas

By Catherine Esposito Prescott

She saw beauty worth
 keeping where most saw
an untamed landscape
 in need of shaping.

This wildness, a liminal
 space, a threshold
between water and land,
 an ambiguity, a place

in movement, hardly known—
 like a woman's mind,
weaving identities of mother
 and myth maker— not settled,

but also unseizable by man,

though lived in
for centuries by indigenous
people in communion

with the land, and by great
blue herons, roseate
spoonbills, alligators, and
crocodiles, and

manatees, and endangered
and threatened beings.
Its air is molasses-thick, freckled
with iron-heavy clouds

of mosquitos, those *swamp*
angels, hovering above
the seemingly still water and
busy connecting one species

to another. This land was not

her dream, but a dream
manifested, a place too uncertain,
too porous, too undefinable

and unrelenting to have been
manmade, where ibises
commune with wood storks
and egrets, flocks roost

in adjoining trees, neighborhoods
of them, loud and half-hidden
as they prefer to be, all except
the anhinga, who dries

her white-lined black feathers
facing away from the public
path, away from camera lenses, and
judgement. Her show,

and her flight is for her enjoyment,

a dangerous independence,
through the unflashy marsh
with its silence, its low, slow-

moving current under a river
of grass—the only geological expression
like it the world over,
and worth protecting and saving.

Her fight so singular,
she articulated for every
being, its forever value, her gaze
set toward an infinite sky.

Who Is She? She's Wendy Rose, and You Should Be Reading Her Poems

By Dean Rader

I still remember the first time I read Wendy Rose's great poem, "Excavation at the Santa Barbara Mission." I was in graduate school, and the University of Arizona Press released a *New and Selected Poems*. I had read a little bit of her work, but I did not know it well. I stopped on the Santa Barbara Mission poem because of the epigraph: *When archaeologists excavated Santa Barbara Mission in California, they discovered human bones in the adobe walls.*

I recall thinking: *Where do you go after a sentence like that?* Well, you go inward.

The cool objectivity of the epigraph gives way to the more personal, more subjective narrative of the speaker. *My* pointed trowel. Even more interesting is that the archeologist is also the artist. Excavating and painting—disassembling and assembling—are one in the same. To create is to destroy; to destroy is to create. In the next stanza, the speaker takes that intermingling to the next level:

So many bones
mixed with the blood
from my own knuckles
that dig and tug
in the yellow dust.

There is something visceral and powerful about the image of the bones of the dead and the blood of the living mixing in an act of liberation. The distance between the objectivity of the epigraph and the subjectivity of the speaker has collapsed (like the walls of the mission?) into one moment. The past is present; the present is past. Somehow, the bones within the walls no longer feel like archeological artifacts but bodies, like that of the speaker. Like the reader. Like you.

As the archeologist continues digging, she begins to associate more and more with the bodies. Past and future merge. Finally, we come to one of the most unforgettable endings in all of 20th century American poetry:

Indians. They built the mission with dead

Indians. They built the mission with dead

Indians. They built the mission with dead

Indians. They built the mission with dead

As a poet, I think a lot about those last four lines. The decision to include them, how they basically just repeat the information in the epigraph but feel radically different, the work they do. The first sentence feels quiet to me, like an internal realization.

The second one like the speaker talking to a fellow archeologist nearby. The third perhaps a line in a report. And the fourth is the poem itself. A shout from the rooftops.

Wendy Rose is one of the most important California poets. And one of the most misunderstood. Within the field of Indigenous literary studies—and especially within the realm of Indigenous poetry—Rose is a significant figure. However, outside of Indigenous studies, she is virtually unknown. She is for many of us a pioneer, a ground breaker (both literally and metaphorically). And even though her work goes beyond poetry—she is an artist, a historian, an anthropologist, a scholar, a teacher, an editor, and an ethnographer—my great fear is that she is in danger of being forgotten.

Rose was born in Oakland, California in 1948 and grew up in a somewhat Indigenous Oakland, though it was both fractured and turbulent. In the 1950s and 60s, Oakland was a major relocation destination for Native Americans. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 terminated the recognition of dozens of Indian tribes and removed thousands of Indigenous people off reservations and into cities. Oakland was one of those cities. In fact, the presence of so many Natives of different tribes in the Oakland and San Francisco area is what led to the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969, which Rose was connected to. Interestingly, Rose was born under a different name: Bronwen Elizabeth Edwards. Her mother was of European descent and claimed Miwok ancestry. Her father was Hopi, but because the Hopi are matrilineal, Rose could not enroll as a member of the tribe. She was raised in an urban environment, a long way away from Hopi,

never feeling fully white nor fully Native, and importantly, never officially belonging to a tribe.

By all accounts, Rose had a brutal adolescence. She was estranged from her family for most of her young adulthood, which was hampered by life on the streets, drug use, and a growing sense of dislocation. She dropped out of high school, endured a brief and violent marriage and eventually moved to San Francisco and got involved in AIM (The American Indian Movement). Around this time, she started taking education seriously and also began writing poetry. She bounced around community colleges in northern California for a few years before enrolling at Berkeley in 1974, where she earned a B.A. in Anthropology in 1976. Two years later, she got her M.A. and a few years after that received her Ph.D. She taught at Fresno State for several years before moving to Fresno City College where she was on the faculty for most of her career. Imagine a young Wendy Rose in, say, 1965, when she was 17, with no real path and no real resources and no real sense of self. Virtually no one would have predicted that 15 years later she would have a Ph.D. from Berkeley and three books of poetry. That alone is a testament to her brilliance. And her resolve.

My favorite Wendy Rose poem is “Alien Seeds,” which I think of as one of the great California poems. Here, she brilliantly plays with the dual meanings of “invading species” to ask large questions about the ways colonialism has taken root in the West, especially California. The poem begins with a realization that all of the plants Rose sees near her house are non-Native. That concept takes on larger

significance as she imagines the shared history of arrival, contact, and conquest:

All these, wild oats, the strangling
grass, even the succulents
with the secret of moisture within, the
tumbleweed
rode on the tails of strange beasts or
were caught
in the wool of Spanish sheep. How
can I not feel
the killing, the massacre that cleared
the valley, the foothills,
the mountains of my kind? For every
seed, its wagon train;
rhizomes colonize underground,
spines catch foxes
on their little hooks--barbed wire
crosses our nations
and taproots suck the stolen dew
no matter how dry the desert.
Thistles thrive on the most ravaged
flesh;

I just find this passage so smart. We think of conquest
in human terms. We think of colonization as
something that happened to and in history, but Rose
reminds us of the biological, botanical,

environmental, consequences and legacies of conquest and invasion.

The poem closes with

Eucalyptus rolls its seeds on the
ground,

we slip and fall, hurtle into the
sacrifice,

gather not grass but sorrow in our
hands.

Vanishing Americans, endangered
species,

vermin and weeds, call it what they
will,

rock hard places where bones rattle
down.

Ah, and there we are again – the bones. The bones.
The bones. The bones. The bones.

My Unforgettable Mother, Mildred

By Jonah Raskin

All women are overlooked, only some women are overlooked more often and more intensely than others by historians, politicians, friends and family members. Where to begin? Almost anywhere and everywhere. I'll begin with my own mother, Mildred Alice Raskin born a Quitkin, and known to one and all as Millie, who taught home economics to high school students, wrote and published her own Dickinson-like poetry, belonged to the Chinese-American Friendship society, traveled to China and India, raised three sons, including me, and cooked and cleaned and washed without pay for decades and died alone and lonely in a nursing home, her ashes spread in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Does anyone remember her? Not really. Not any of her six sisters, or her brother or her parents or her husband who are all dead. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1916, she worked with Margaret Sanger, a now largely forgotten figure, disseminated information about birth control, sculpted, posed as a model for other artists, joined the Young Communist League (YCL) and earned the ire of her Ukrainian-born father who was a socialist and who believed in electoral change and detested Communists.

In 1936, she married my father, left Brooklyn and moved to a small rural town on Long Island, became a housewife, founded the co-op day-care center which I attended as a child, raised me as a Spock baby, led my grammar school's Parents Teachers Association

(PTA), followed the ideas of nutritionist Adele Davis, another forgotten figure, and at the age of 60 settled in Berkeley where she lived for 20 years, rented a room in her house to young women who attended Cal, served as a kind of surrogate mother, and encouraged them to be independent, courageous feminists. She never really wanted children, would have preferred to travel through life solo, making art in a room of her own, befriending young women, reading novels and eating at Chez Panisse, the restaurant founded by Alice Waters, now 81-years old, who isn't yet forgotten, at least not in culinary circles and who changed the ways that legions of people eat. Mom, I won't forget you. I'll remember that you taught me to cook and that you made me and my brothers, your sons, decent young men.

A FIERCE DETERMINATION: Charlotte Salomon's Pursuit of Art at All Costs

By Pamela Reitman

Charlotte Salomon—extraordinary artist, courageous martyr, inspiring woman, and, finally, mother-to-be. She rubbed and grated and cut away at the family secrets, and fulfilled her vow to traverse the treacherous terrain from not knowing to knowing. By painting the bone truth of who she was, she prevailed over the Nazis and thwarted their will to reduce her to a nonentity.

Charlotte Salomon was a young Jewish artist at the Berlin Fine Arts Academy, who grew into the rude awakening that there was no place in Germany for artists who painted green skies. Hitler labeled such art works “degenerate,” claimed the artists who made them suffered from an “eye disease,” and vowed to treat them as criminals. Moreover, art made by Jews was by definition considered fraudulent.

In the summer of 1938, Charlotte's position at the Academy was annulled. A month after *Kristallnacht*, at the age of twenty-one, she was sent to live with her grandparents in the South of France. Her father, Albert Salomon, a distinguished doctor and researcher in mammography, and her stepmother, Paula Salomon-Lindberg, a charismatic opera singer, fled to Holland to procure papers. The plan was to meet up with Charlotte in Marseille and sail to America.

Initially Charlotte lived with her grandparents at Villefranche in a cottage on the grounds of *L'Ermitage*, a chateau owned by the American heiress Otilie Moore, who recognized Charlotte's talent, encouraged her work, and became her patron. Moore had been benefactress to Charlotte's grandparents for a number of years, but conflict erupted between the disgruntled and entitled elderly couple and Moore, when the latter turned her attention away from them and became consumed with providing sanctuary for orphaned children and Jewish refugees. Likely her grandparents would have been asked to leave had Charlotte not first managed to move them out of the cottage at *L'Ermitage*, away from Villefranche, and into an apartment in Nice.

Within months of the move, shortly before France fell to Germany, Charlotte found her grandmother hanging by the light fixture in the bathroom and managed to save her. It was then her grandfather revealed the family secret: eight people on her mother's side—including all the women, among them Charlotte's own mother—had killed themselves.

Charlotte sat up all night, keeping watch over herself. In her painting of that vigil, her bedroom airspace is a dense inferno in yellows and oranges. A small easel balances on her lap. The umber lines render it a continuation of her body, as much an appendage as an arm. Scrawled in red across the whole conflagration are these words: *Dear God, don't let me go mad.*

Shortly after Charlotte learned of the suicides, her grandmother leaped out the window, plunging to her death. Charlotte became the last living member in her

matrilineal line, hounded by her grandfather, who insisted that suicide—not art—was her destiny, too.

Opinions differ, but it seems that during the roundup of foreign nationals in the summer of 1940, the Vichy government sent Charlotte and her grandfather, with thousands of others packed into a train, across France to Gurs, a squalid internment camp in the Pyrénées. A few weeks later they were released. Her freedom was conditional: she must be caretaker to her aged grandfather. The penalty for noncompliance would be re-internment. Without food, money, or extra clothing, they had to make the return journey home on foot, hundreds of miles, from western France to Nice. At night, the way Charlotte portrayed it, her grandfather badgered her to sleep with him. By day, he urged her to kill herself and “get it over with already.”

A year passed. Rotterdam stopped issuing visas. Charlotte had no word from her parents. Unable to put up with her grandfather any longer, Charlotte abandoned him. She moved into a *pension* in tiny St. Jean Cap de Ferrat, where she lived alone, without identity papers, risking deportation. In an artistic fury lasting over a year, she created over 1300 gouache—dense watercolor—paintings. She remained there, struggling to produce a monument to her life in a race against time before capture by the Nazis.

Charlotte suffered a severe depression in the winter of '41-'42, convinced her work would never be seen. But a breakthrough led the artist to edit and order her paintings, adding narrative, dialogue, and musical prompts. The process transformed a sequence of frames into a story: a coming-of-age in Hitler's Berlin and a coming-to-terms with her family's tragic legacy.

It became a wry, ironic operetta, entitled *Life? Or Theater?*.

When she was forced to return to her grandfather, she battled his menacing personage, the threat of psychological disintegration, and the terror of the encroaching Third Reich.

Meanwhile, Otilie Moore had returned to America, leaving an Austrian-Jewish refugee as the sole occupant of *L'Ermitage*. Charlotte found a temporary haven there with Alexander Nagler, and they became lovers. Having created an identity in art, the sensitive, naïve artist grew into a mature woman, ready for life, as she never had been. Before long Charlotte was pregnant.

The couple's subsequent marriage left an address record at the Town Hall—a fatal error. The Nazis stormed their hideout and shipped Charlotte and her husband to the transport camp at Drancy, outside Paris. But not before she was able to deliver her masterpiece into safekeeping. At the moment she released the two humble bundles, wrapped in brown parcel paper and tied with string, into the hands of a local doctor, she spoke these words: “This is my whole life.”

Among the one thousand souls shut inside the freight cars of Transport 60, Charlotte Salomon and Alexander Nagler left Drancy, bound for the East. On October 10, 1943, at age twenty-six, Charlotte Salomon arrived in Auschwitz. Being five months pregnant, she was immediately gassed.

Having survived in hiding, her father and stepmother went in search of Charlotte after the war and

discovered her work, now considered one of the most challenging art works of the twentieth century. Its home is the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. The complete work (paintings, music, and narrative) can be experienced online at <https://charlotte.jck.nl/en>.

Read my biographical literary novel, *Charlotte Salomon Paints Her Life*, and experience how I have brought this remarkable young woman alive in literature.

The Rules She Wouldn't Accept

By Elaine Rock

Most people have never heard of Barbara “Dusty” Roads (1928-2023), yet many have lived with the freedoms she helped secure. A Sonoma County resident, Dusty helped transform women’s working lives, even as her name remained largely absent from the history she helped shape. She did not begin her fight out of personal need. In fact, she had nothing to lose.

When American Airlines introduced its 1953 policy requiring stewardesses to retire at age thirty-two, Dusty was exempt. Hired before the rule took effect, she was “grandmothered” in, free to continue her career, while around her, experienced, capable women were dismissed simply for reaching that age or for choosing to marry.

Dusty saw what others were only beginning to grasp. This wasn’t about safety or service but about economics. By pushing women out before they could earn higher wages, benefits, or retirement, airlines maintained a workforce that was young, single, attractive, and easily replaceable, a reality she refused to ignore.

When Dusty began flying in 1950, commercial aviation was in its so-called golden age. It was an era of dressed-up passengers. Stewardesses, required to

be young, single, and attractive, were marketed as part of the experience. Behind that polished image lay rigid rules: no marriage, strict weight limits, constant surveillance, and an unspoken expiration date. Dusty rejected those assumptions. These women weren't temporary; they were safety professionals.

She carried that conviction into her union work as a negotiator and grievance chairman, listening to the stories of women quietly pushed out of their livelihoods. Over time, she became one of the first female Legislative Representatives to Congress for the Transport Workers Union, advocating for flight attendants in a space where few women's voices were heard.

In 1963, at a press conference protest prior to contract mediation, Dusty directly challenged the age rule: "A Lolita I'm not, but do I look like an old bag?" At thirty-five, she and other stewardesses stood as living proof of its absurdity. The remark made national headlines. It did not end the policy, but it made it impossible to ignore.

After the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Dusty pursued a new path. In 1965, she filed the first sex-discrimination complaint with the newly formed Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, paving the way for others to follow. Soon, roughly one-third of the agency's early complaints came from flight attendants. Progress, however, was slow, and cases stalled. The culprit was resistance from some male EEOC commissioners. Still, Dusty persisted.

By 1968, a nationwide American Airlines stewardess strike over the age rule loomed, even as legal pressure and public scrutiny were beginning to force change. The policies that had defined the profession for decades could no longer stand. Dusty called on her congressional contacts to help avert the strike. Suddenly, the EEOC dismantled the age limit and marriage bans, and “stewardesses” became “flight attendants.” What had once been a short-term, tightly controlled job became a viable career.

Women entered previously closed professions, including the cockpit, while men joined the ranks of flight attendants, reshaping a workforce once defined by appearance into one grounded in ability. Yet Dusty Roads never became widely known—perhaps because she acted not for recognition but out of conviction.

Years later, when Dusty thanked Gloria Steinem for her work on behalf of women, Steinem replied, “Oh no, Dusty. I should be thanking you. You’re the one who started it all.”

Today, her legacy is woven into what we now take for granted. Because Dusty refused to accept “the way things are,” she helped ensure that others no longer have to.

The Bird Likes the Dog and the Cat Likes the Fish

By Patricia Falconer Roland

[This journal belongs to Faith Augusta Mayhew, of Berkeley, California. Her character is based on Isadora Duncan, and Opal Whiteley of Cottage Grove, Oregon.]

September 27, 1912

I have decided that the bird likes the dog, and the cat likes the fish. I try to pair off the different animals, and place them in proximity to one another so they can become friends. They all live in a stand of eucalyptus, on the mossy banks of a small pond. It is surrounded by rocks the shape of squashed cannon balls, offering planes on which I can set down the figurines and arrange them, make them act out particular scenes, or get them to stage wars against each other, depending upon my mood. I do what I want.

I can see all the way across the water to Yerba Buena Island from this rock I am perched on, high up in the Berkeley Hills. On the horizon, I view San Francisco, between the branches of two great oaks. I can see other things, too. Some people say I am clairvoyant, because my predictions often come true.

“Faith! Faith!” I hear Mama calling me from across this field, which is turning from brown to a vivid green as the rains start to come. And when they do, I wonder how long our family can live here in the Temple of the Wings. Surely it will take more than a few sprinkles to get Mama and Papa to move us seven children out of

our home, which is composed of two small Grecian temples. They are elliptical structures, topped by shallow domes, and connected by a balcony. The walls are made of plain canvas awnings that hang from the tops of the Corinthian colonnades. How will those keep out the rain?

September 28, 1912

It is almost time to roast the peanuts. Each day we have to roast them for fifteen minutes. Aside from that, we eat fresh food like fruits and vegetables, nuts, and lettuce. After chores, I get to play; but I have to be careful not to get grass or berry stains on my white Grecian tunic, which is called a chiton. I know that mother is worried about this, but she only says, "Why do you think we live in temples with no walls?...To be free!"

Our lives are full of celebration most every day, as an offering to the gods and goddesses from Greek, Roman, and even Egyptian times. Mama and Papa say that the gods protect us, even when we might get distracted and forget about them for a moment.

We are always romping through the fields of tall, waving grass, edged by rows of eucalyptus, poplar, and dotted with stands of white birches. Golden-yellow, crimson, and purple California poppies grow wild and free, all down the surrounding slopes, stems erect with life, as though they are in motion, they have so much energy!

Oftentimes we have an open-air pageant, where our dance troupe winds down through the hillside meadows, cavorting, singing, and playing instruments. We play long, narrow ancient Greek horns called aulos,

crash cymbals, beat and shake tambourines. All of us in our white tunics and colored himations, which are like big capes. Women wear bright, flowing dresses of sheer fabrics in jewel colors, printed with bold designs. We parade up and down the hills, playing songs and singing along with friends, our colorful draperies and streamers trailing behind us in the breeze.

September 29, 1912

Father wears a suit, tie, and hat for his job at a law office in The City, across the bay. But when he returns home, right away he puts on his white tunic and flowing robes. Mother teaches me and my siblings in the morning; and then we draw or paint pictures, write, sing, and play instruments. We frolic round the May pole all year round. We learn to dance in the style of Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, each of us acting out the part played by a different instrument in the music. I make cottages for the faeries, gnomes, and animal spirits. Today I fitted together small wooden planks to build a road raised up over the clover forest, so they can travel to market and sell their wares

September 30, 1912

I dreamt of walking along a path, with the bay on one side and a sky-road on the other. Was it the tall road I had built for my little figures? Sunlight sparkled happily on the surface of the water. Suddenly everything began shaking, and I saw the high-up road collapse, like a stack of dominoes that had fallen down, one upon the next, so that each piece was propped up on the one below, at a forty-five degree angle. Then a great tidal wave arose, coming to crash down on me.

October 1, 1912

Tonight the troupe and our friends met for a poetry reading at Upland Place, which was decorated with spherical Japanese paper lanterns, in yellow, green, and purple. We had a big feast and a poetry reading, then enacted the dance of the four elements: Fire, Earth, Water, and Wind. I played Terpsichore, one of the nine Muses, who represents dance, choral song, and lyrical poetry. The stage was lit with candles, and coals glowing in a copper brazier. We trailed each other in a circle, which shrank bit by bit, until I was the only one left. I spun faster and faster, my draperies swirling all around me, until I got dizzy and finally collapsed gracefully, like a daffodil bending its yellow trumpet toward the earth: I seemed to disappear, and that was the end.

October 2, 1912

Last night I woke myself up with my own screaming; I was half-jumping and half-falling out of bed! Luckily, mother came over and caught me. I had been swimming amidst towering waves, and crying out, “Papa! I’m coming to save you!” In my dream I had seen a great iron bridge stretching over the bay, and my father driving across it in our Model A. Except this was in the future, so the automobile was self-contained, not open to the elements. Suddenly the bridge shook, a section fell down at a great angle, and the car plunged into the ocean! Papa was trapped, pounding on the window, trying to get out. The water level in the vehicle rose quickly. He was wearing his white toga, so I could see him through the dark depths, with one of his long draperies unfurling beautifully, but then wrapping round his throat—it had caught on the steering wheel, and was choking him. When I awoke, I was afraid: I didn’t know if I had saved him or not....

How glad I was to find him sitting calmly on the hearth,
reading a book.

In autumn 1912, Faith Augusta Mayhew inadvertently predicted these two instances of damage caused by the Loma Prieta Earthquake on the evening of October 17, 1989: the collapse of the upper, westbound level of the Bay Bridge; and the collapse of a section of the Nimitz Freeway, where it ran through Berkeley, California.

Silueta

By Anna V. Q. Ross

Where does landscape end and the body
begin? All my life,
I've been uncertain, hazarding one foot
after another.
When Ana Mendieta first lay down
naked on the rocks
in Yagul, it was 1973. She asked the man
with her—her lover—
to cover her with weeds and grasses
as if they'd grown *up from her body*
before he took her photograph. As a child,
she'd boarded the plane
from Cuba, two girls throwing silhouettes
against the blank
Iowa winter. Now, she pressed
herself into mud
beside stream beds, filling the hollows she'd left
with pig's blood
purchased from the butcher. Solider
and solider became her horizontals—
a purse of herself saved into landscape,
then preserved on film.
At her first gallery opening in Manahattan,

the pictures leapt from the walls
in an applause of splintering glass
as the room filled—
the warmth of so many bodies loosening
the glue in the cheap frames
that held them. Or so the story went.

She went out the window
is what her husband, Carl Andre, said
when he called 911
from their 34th floor apartment,
the marbly gleam of her
silhouette splayed on the deli roof below,
a woman's voice
heard screaming *No! No! No!*
by passersby.
But this was New York, 1985,
when such things *just happened*.
Is a city a landscape? Is a marriage?
The space she'd left
quickly began to coalesce—
silhouette upon silhouette—
into sirens gleaming red
through traffic, bearing her away.

Sylvia & Sexton Understand Me

*A collaged pantoum from lines by Anne Sexton and Sylvia
Path*

By Cin Salach

I did not know the woman I would be,
now I have lost myself. I am sick of baggage.

Skinny man, I'm no more your mother.

The end of the affair is always death,

now I have lost myself. I am sick of baggage.

Surely spring will allow a girl without a stitch on to turn
softly

in her sunlight and not be afraid of her bed?

The end of the affair is always death.

How far is it? How far is it now?

Surely spring will allow a girl without a stitch on to turn
softly

in her sunlight and not be afraid of her bed?

It is so small, the place I am getting to, why are there these obstacles?

How far is it? How far is it now?

Will you marry it marry it marry it?

It is so small, the place I am getting to, why are there these obstacles?

I am sure it is unique. I am sure it is just what I want.

Will you marry it marry it marry it?

La la la, Oh music swims back to me.

I am sure it is unique. I am sure it is just what I want,
stepping from this skin of old bandages, boredoms, old
faces.

La la la, Oh music swims back to me.

Many women are singing together of this,

stepping from this skin of old bandages, boredoms, old
faces.

This is the room I could never breathe in.

Many women are singing together of this,
why should I complain?

This is the room I could never breathe in.

For years I have tied this knot in my dreams -

why should I complain?

I should wear tiger pants. I should have an affair!

For years I have tied this knot in my dreams -

Skinny man, I'm no more your mother.

I should wear tiger pants. I should have an affair!

I did not know the woman I would be.

Two Women Poets of Lithuania: Different Eras but Similar Sentiments

by Dave Seter

Recently I began exploring my Lithuanian heritage. I decided to try my hand at translating contemporary Lithuanian poetry, and to focus on women poets who have not been celebrated to the degree that male poets have been. In 2022, I attended the Poetry in Translation Workshop led by Forrest Gander at the Napa Valley Writers' Conference. My deep dive into Lithuanian poetry began, which took me from the contemporary era to World War II. On the way, I discovered two women poets of different eras but similar sentiments.

Alina Borzenkaitė, whose work I translated and placed in *The Los Angeles Review*, was born in Vilnius, Lithuania. Borzenkaitė studied heritage science at Vilnius University. She began publishing her poetry in 2021. Here's my translation of one of her poems:

Rivers in pipes

buried rivers are screaming
in voices of seaweed-eyed sirens

lungs pierced by the spires of St. Anne's

the rivers were left to babble
in pipes
their water archived in fonds, in maps

the rivers promise to re-emerge
once the world's glaciers dissolve

once Neptune has sentenced to death
dictators of all time zones

let them pour moraines into being
let them form landmasses

the last of their kind

The first stanza is set in Vilnius, where the poet associates buried rivers with mythological sirens and church spires in a way that describes the world's ecology as being in a state of agony. In the second stanza, the word "fonds" is a term used by archivists to refer to a body of stored records. The idea that the rivers are seen as records, of their flows, and of their original watercourses, calls to mind our species' sometimes detached view of nature. The poem invokes the deity Neptune, hoping for a remedy to the ill effects dictators impose on our world.

The actions of one such dictator resulted in the loss to the world of a young Lithuanian poet

during WWII. Matilda Olkinaitė (1922-41) was Jewish, and she lived with her family in the village of Panemunelis. Prior to the rise of Nazism, Jews and Christians lived there together in harmony. From a young age, Matilda wrote poetry, and she continued to do so while attending Vilnius University. Her studies were interrupted during WWII as the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania followed by the German invasion of 1941. Matilda kept a diary of her poetry, but her voice was silenced when she became a victim of a massacre of Jewish villagers by Nazi sympathizers in August 1941.

Matilda would not stay silent. Her diary came to light in 1987, when it was discovered hidden in the Panemunelis Catholic Church. Historians believe that the diary had been given to the pastor of the church for safekeeping. Father Matelionis, later sent to a Siberian labor camp, never revealed the secret hiding place. Rediscovered, the poems provide a glimpse into the hopes and fears of a young woman growing up in turbulent times. I quoted Matilda Olkinaitė (text translated by Laima Vincė Sruoginis) in the epigraph to my chapbook *Somewhere West of the Mississippi*:

Then you left that bright butterfly,
And, you forgot about the violets.
You set out on the path that leads to the Sun.
To reach the Sun, you set out.

Matilda knew she would be forced to give up her
innocence and youth. She intuited that her future
was in the hands of the cosmos, where an
unpredictable afterlife waited, symbolized by an
illuminating yet incendiary sun. Alina
Borzenkaitė and Matilda Olkinaitė, poets of two
different eras, shared the sentiment that life,
though fragile and uncertain, must be
documented, in order to be remembered by the
very last of our kind

Remarkable Marilyn Mackel, My Hero

By Barbara Sapienza

July 13, 2016, ten years ago, Marilyn Mackel filed the complaint appeal with the California Department of Education (CDE) to investigate Sausalito Marin City School District (SMCSD) for fiscal discrimination in favor of the charter school and not the public school in Marin City.

Two years later the district was found to be racially and ethnically discriminatory against the minority school. Conclusion, “the appeal has merit and is granted. The task to begin anew with adequate funding and work to achieve ethnic and racial balance among its students.”

That day we all met in the schoolyard of the minority school to applaud the victory as the then State Superintendent of Schools declared an end to racial segregation in 2018.

As I write today for this remarkable woman, Marilyn Mackel, I picture my first sight of her— a strong woman with round features, a commanding voice, and stamina to stand up straight in front of a white board of trustees for the children of Marin City, a largely Black and Hispanic population. I admire her and wish I too could stand up against injustice.

She reminds me of Atticus Finch, a character in Harper Lee’s, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Atticus, a white man, stands up in a southern courtroom for Tom

Robinson, a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman. Oh, Marilyn doesn't look like Atticus! Marilyn is a black woman. It's their spirit that match and their livelihoods, both are lawyers and advocates. Marilyn stands up for hundreds of children who currently face discrimination.

To me Marilyn Mackel is even stronger than Atticus Finch. As a black woman, she has stood up to white folk at every school board meeting, perhaps standing tall her whole life. Picture her as she walks slowly and deliberately to the podium to address the dais; stands in front of the trustees, connecting directly to their faces. Looking them straight in the eyes, she calls them on every sleight-of-hand they have made; every blindness; every theft; every oversight made to Marin City kids.

She says, "I didn't see a one of you at any cultural event in Marin City, nor at Black Heritage Day, nor did you ever step into a classroom."

She tells them how they don't even see how they've stolen money from the African American school on the other side of the tracks.

Yup, for more than ten years she attends faithfully the school board meetings, stands up at the dais repeating their hypocrisy over and over into their blind eyes and deaf ears.

Ultimately, she files that appeal against the district with the State and wins. And today in April 2026, we celebrate with her a newly remodeled and integrated public school, totally rebuilt and beautiful.

Now it is safe for me to tell you of her courage to face spinal cord surgery that will take eleven hours. I recall the day a few years ago when Marilyn entered the procedure room at UCSF. We, her friends, waited for hours for news of her well-being.

Finally, a text!

“We need her light. Pray for her,” Shirley texts the nine of us. Shirley is Marilyn’s partner and a hero in her own right.

As we wait, I pray for Marilyn, “May you stand once again in good health and joy. If you see fit may you continue your stance as advocate, protector, and inspiration for our community, we love you.”

Beep a text comes from Susie.

Surgery was late starting. Everything on track and proceeding as expected.

Out of procedure in recovery thank you UCSF health.

Beep, from Shirley

I’m at the hospital. Marilyn is still in ICU and still in great pain.

Beep from Susie

Hello everyone, I spoke with Shirley. She slept until noon! Marylyn just saw a PT and wiggles her toes. Will be getting out of bed to walk later today! he surgery was a great success.

Beep from Susie

Hello everyone Shirley is on her way to UCSF. Plan today is for PT walking in pain control. I will let you know more information as the game progresses.

Today, April 2026, Marilyn Mackel stands up for justice, inspiring us to do the same. Thank you, Marilyn.

From GIVEN

By Sasha Steensen

We all have words we hear as bells, as bellows, as bellwethers.

When these words are spoken, we hear them louder, clearer.

They rouse us from a waking sleep.

You know the words I mean.

Word-bells.

Mostly women have given me my words. *Creek* was given. *God* was given. *Garden* was given. *Margin* was given. My teacher taught me that “all words run along the margins of their secrets.” Rachel Carson called the edge of the sea “the marginal world.”

She loved the crabs that scuttled at the margins.

Several years before her breast cancer diagnosis, Carson wrote, “the little crab alone with the sea became a symbol that stood for life itself—for the delicate, destructible yet incredibly vital force that

somehow holds its place amid the harsh realities of the inorganic world.”

The little crab is also cancer’s symbol.

The margin of a cancerous tumor is removed during surgery. When no cancer cells are found at the edge of the tissue, the margin is described as negative. When cancer cells are found at the edge of the tissue, the margin is described as positive.

The margin where ill and well meet.

*

A few days after Thanksgiving, 1960, Rachel Carson wrote to her friend (possible lover), Dorothy, to tell her that her breast cancer had spread, “I thought a door had been closed last spring, and now it has been opened a little.” She worried mostly about how this opening might slow her work on *Silent Spring*, how it might infringe upon her ability to answer “the sense of urgency...to press on with the things I need to say.”

Toxin is given.

In *Silent Spring*, she kept her distance, writing about how chemicals affect plankton, chickadees, robins, brown trout, whitefish, ladybugs, pirate bugs, and humans, without ever mentioning the cancer she was battling as she rushed to finish the book.

Carson felt the mounting pressure to write about carcinogens.

Carson felt the mounting pressure not to write about her own cancer.

What is the margin of exposure, the margin of safety, the margin at which the toxic substance becomes carcinogenic, genotoxic?

A woman writing about her experiences runs the risk of being discredited.

A woman writing about her cancer worries she might call it toward her.

Like the shifting margins we see on the shore—swash lines, bedforms, drift lines, ripple marks, up and down, up and down the seaboard, fear strays toward the diagnosed and then away.

“Always the edge of the sea remains an elusive and indefinable boundary,” writes Carson.

*

After being diagnosed with breast cancer, I began reading the texts of other women writing through diagnosis. I discovered that oftentimes these writers chose to write about their illness in letters and journals, which, presumably, they never planned to publish. Sometimes, even in these private writings, references to the writer's cancer were veiled, secondary, marginalized.

Cancer and Breast were given.

I hear these words now and two bells ring as one.
A belling is a welling up of water, as from a spring.

*

Or, does wellness mean to be
“in the beached margin of the sea,”
where we are not entirely
ourselves, but microbial, autopoietic,
grassleafy, sea kaley

polygenomic,
a collection of secrets
sent or kept
a letterjournal diarynotebook
is a volcano. Is
a kingdom of cinders.
Is a lover.
Is a poem.
Is the recipient internal
or external, or both?
Is a reaching, regardlessand
once one is known, one knows in which ways one is
aloneand
once one is alone, one knows in which ways one is
knownand
Aby gave me a poem:

Perhaps we'll open the day's doors.

And then we shall enter the unknown.

Given is given.

Anxieties of Influence & the Mysterious Nonappearance of C.D. Wright

Dickson Street Books, Fayetteville, AR, September 2024.

By Jennifer Sperry Steinorth

When I go to pay for *Spring & All* the 28-year-old man behind the glass counter can't locate the price. He's tallish, thinish, fairish with brownish curls cut from a distance & moves with the swishy swash of adolescence. I tell him I fished it from a box, guess it's new—if also used— and nothing's *really* new, despite Ezra's imperative.

I know he's 28 because I've been listening to him chat up his co-worker: how old are you, how old do you think I am. She's 21. He tells me there are other collections by Williams w/ *Spring & All* in them. I say I want the one in his hands. Until the tragic postal incident of 2018, I owned its likeness, a powdery blue facsimile of the 1st edition with a 21st century introduction by CD Wright.

I'm CD's biographer. If you love books in Fayetteville, you go to Dickson Street Books. So here I find myself, far cry from Michigan, shimmying between its narrow stacks, pockets full of jasper culled from the springs that stippled my hero's youth, haunting her haunts in the 75th year of her birth.

For the uninitiated, which would seem to include much of northwest Arkansas, C.D. Wright was—*is*—

a major American poet: recipient of the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Griffin Prize, the MacArthur “genius” prize, fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Lannan Foundation, translated into numerous languages, Chancellor of the American Academy of Poets, faculty at Brown University for 3 decades, the editor of Lost Roads Press, & champion of artists overlooked, underserved & forgotten.

Born in the creek riddled hill country east of Fayetteville where she completed an MFA under the venerable direction of Miller Williams, she did not, as is elsewhere written, begin her affair with poetry in this razorback den, but here she made tracks. And tracks, any razorback knows, make a mess.

I tell the man, yes, I’ve got other printings of *Spring & All* back home, but I want this edition for sentimental reasons. I could have said *for research*, but he seems inclined toward sentiment. I’m right.

Ah, he says, *I get that*. Says he has at least two copies of everything by Rimbaud. His girlfriend (how old is she?) thinks he’s nuts. We laugh.

I’m slipping the bluet into my bag when I decide to be brave. *You know, this version has an introduction by CD Wright— you know CD Wright?* He nods but I don’t believe him. I say I noticed little plaques on the shelves for superstars like Neruda & Dante & locals like Miller Williams & Frank Stanford, but nothing for CD. You know, she’s from here? A big player. He shrugs. *We only stock what we get*, he says. *But you could have a sign for her*, I say. Leave the light on.

Not only does *Spring & All* already live on my shelves back home, but thanks to the Beinecke Library at Yale, home to CD's archives, I have scans of her introduction to the edition I just bought, along with her preliminary notes and drafts. I don't need the book I've just tucked away, but there's something about an object's hold on space—like a bookmark to keep one's place—and it was the only thing I could find with CD's name.

It is notable, but not surprising that the Arkansas poets with shelving nameplates are Miller Williams and Frank Stanford, though neither achieved the literary acclaim of C.D. Wright. For decades Miller directed the MFA program, yearly turning out disciples, and Stanford's rockstar status was sealed the night the 29-year-old shot himself in the heart while his unsuspecting wife and lover read farewell letters in other parts of the house. But Wright's absence is particularly ironic given her work to amplify the voices of Arkansas poets and writers, including the MFA teacher who routinely dismissed her and her tragically suicidal lover.

C.D.'s work to keep Frank's poetry in print after his death is known by diehard fans. Lesser known is her role in preserving his papers in the Yale archives along with those from their poet partnership, Lost Roads Press. Wright also facilitated the preservation of the lesser known but equally remarkable poet Besmilt Birgham, whose work she discovered in the course of a larger research & recovery effort. In 1992, Wright was awarded the Lila-Wallace Reader's Digest grant for a public service endeavor. With the 105-thousand-dollar award, CD & a crew of Arkansas artists would create a traveling expedition, a Walk-In

Book of Arkansas, “that young and mature Arkansans can gain awareness and pride in the achievement in letters of its own citizenry.”

In a 1992 letter CD asks Miller to approve the publication of a Literary Map of Arkansas through the university press, as supplement to the traveling exhibition and for particular use in Arkansas schools. Wright notes to date, no such map of Arkansas had been created, and that the Library of Congress, with stations in 27 states not Arkansas was organizing an exhibition of literary maps with little hill country representation. She describes the neglect of literary Arkansans like Henry Dumas, a Black writer from Sweet Home wrongfully killed by NYC police in 1968. The 30-year old’s trove of poetry & prose would be posthumously printed thanks to the editor and emerging novelist, Toni Morrison, but in 1992 remained unknown to the people of Sweet Home:

The community of Sweet Home was absolutely central to his writing. The writing shines. As far as I could tell, at this point in time, Sweet Home has little left to recommend it. It is no longer a unified farming community, but a visibly shattered urban outpost. There is a neighborhood center but it has nothing in it that indicates Henry was here. Less than a mile from Sweet Home is a consolidated elementary school, largely black. It is named Wilbur Mills Elementary. That’s why I want to undertake a literary project of Arkansas. That’s why a map. I submit that the students at Wilbur Mills have yet to be positively affected by the flagrant reprobate whose name their school bears, and most of them have never heard of Henry Dumas who grew up in the same, the exact same place, and returned it to them in critically acute

and generously imagined terms. Variants of this scenario are repeated ad nauseum in our country, throughout our country.

Miller Williams approved UA publication of the map, but did not attend the Walk-In Book of Arkansas events celebrating his work alongside lesser-known writers like Besmirl Birgham & Henry Dumas, not even the culminating event featuring musical performances from the university in Fayetteville. And CD was never invited as a notable alum to read in the University's Distinguished Reader's series. Not after she won the Griffin Prize. Or the National Book Critic's Circle Award. Not when she became a Chancellor of the American Academy of Poets or won the MacArthur "genius" prize.

In 2018, not long after CD's unexpected death in 2016, the University of Arkansas Libraries had a special exhibit, "Lost Roads Press: The Fayetteville Years" featuring the first publications. A library article introducing the exhibit begins, "In 1977 the now renowned writer, Frank Stanford, founded Lost Roads Press in Fayetteville..." The introduction ends, "In 1980, the press relocated briefly to San Francisco before spending much of the next several decades in Rhode Island under the direction of the first person published by the press, C.D. Wright, and the poet Forrest Gander." *The first person published by the press?* Were cooler words ever spoken? And while it's true Stanford founded the press in January of '77, thanks to a loan by fiction writer & Mississippi plantation heiress, Ellen Gilchrist, it's also true that by November, Frank & CD were co-signers on a loan from CD's father, securing a printing press the couple would run together from the garage

attached to the home they shared on Jackson St—a hop-skip from Dickson. Later the article mentions CD also won some awards, but suggests Wright was not part of Lost Roads’ “Fayetteville Years” except as an author, a supposition contradicted by extensive archival papers at Yale.

For my part, it is eye-opening to witness regionalized undermining of a writer as now renowned as C.D. Wright, poet vanguard and champion of underdogs, affiliation with whom I imagine nothing but pride. But CD was nothing if not an anti-hierarchical, given to expanding circles & destabilizing regimes. Hard sell to any king—or queen—of the hill.

Lola Ridge

By Terese Svoboda

Lola Ridge (1874-1941) was a radical poet born in Dublin who spent her youth in New Zealand and Australia and emigrated to New York in 1908. When she died, the *New York Times* wrote that she was one of the country's most important poets. She published five books, all of them acclaimed, the most famous being her first, *The Ghetto and Other Stories* (1918). Four years before Eliot's bleak and anti-Semitic "The Waste Land," her equally long poem "The Ghetto" celebrated the "otherness" of the Jewish Lower East Side and prophesied the multiethnic world of the 21st century. Ridge was one of the first poets to delineate the life of the poor in Manhattan and in particular, women's lives in New York City. The title poem of her second book, *Sun-up and Other Poems*, is a striking modernist depiction of a girl's interior life. Harriet Monroe, founder of *Poetry*, and William Rose Benét, founder of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, called Ridge a genius. "An early, great chronicler of New York life," wrote three-time poet laureate Robert Pinsky in a *Slate* column about Ridge in 2011.

While Ridge was editor of the influential *Others* and later, *Broom* magazine, she presided over Thursday afternoon salons filled with modernist hotshots. Eating slices of Ridge's cake and drinking whatever Prohibition would allow (and not), William Carlos Williams and Robert McAlmon hatched plans for their magazine *Contact*, 20-year-old Hart Crane flirted with everyone in sight, Marianne Moore read early drafts of

her own work, and Mayakovsky stomped on her coffee table.

In 1919, Ridge gave a speech in Chicago entitled “Woman and the Creative Will,” about how sexually constructed gender roles hinder female development—ten years before Virginia Woolf wrote “A Room of One’s Own.” “Woman is not and never has been man’s natural inferior,” Ridge announced. Although she wrote little personal poetry, Ridge advocated individual liberty. She supported not only the rights of women, but laborers, blacks, Jews, immigrants, and homosexuals. She wrote about lynching, execution, race riots, and imprisonment. As a rebellious lefty, she interacted closely with the most radical women of her era, from editing Margaret Sanger’s magazine on birth control in 1918, to reciting her own poems at Emma Goldman’s deportation dinner. In 1927, she was arrested during the demonstration against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti and hauled off with Edna St. Vincent Millay. In 1936, watching a Mayday parade in Mexico City, she raised her fist in solidarity with the marching communists. When asked by an English critic what was the proper subject for poetry, she answered: “Anything that burns you.”

Ridge died at the nadir of leftist politics, just as the U.S. was entering World War II. By then Eliot and Pound had very effectively equated “elitism” with “good” in poetry. Surely the 60s generation that rediscovered feminism and anarchy would have resurrected her? Not quite. Although her work appears in two important anthologies of the period, and her life as an anarchist should have had great appeal to the revolutionary spirit of the time, her poetry was not revived. For the last forty years, her executor has promised a biography and

collected works, contributing much to Ridge's relative obscurity and neglect. Feminist critic Louise Bernikow singled out Ridge and Genevieve Taggard as twice-neglected because they were women and radicals, part of "the buried history within the buried history." Now there's the biography, [*Anything That Burns You: A Portrait of Lola Ridge, Radical Poet*](#) by Terese Svoboda and [*Light in Hand*](#) ed. Daniel Tobin, a collection of her first three books.

Laying Our Foundation

By Barbara Tannenbaum

You approach the suburban house on Duncan Street after cresting one of San Francisco's vertiginous hilltops. The home has been an historic landmark since 2021, but the building is neither visible from the sidewalk nor open to the public. Its picturesque blue trim and wood shingles and large picture window are hidden by a retaining wall almost buckling from the weight of overgrown Scotch broom and ivy. The cracked concrete stairs leading up the steep hillside are littered with red berries and pine needles. An overgrown pine tree blocks the living room's northern sightline. That picture window once offered sparkling views of downtown office towers and bay waters. Now the view takes in a front lawn overgrown with foliage, weeds, and foxtail grasses.

Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, a life-long lesbian couple, bought this house at 651 Duncan Street in 1955. They lived there until their respective deaths in 2008 and 2020. If the couple could see the state of their yard, perhaps glancing up in their living room after reading our current newspaper headlines, they would know all too well that weeds choke out what otherwise would be unique and beautiful.

They'd know, too, that weeds behave like any common prejudice. Weeds, like hateful ideas, require purposeful, strategic efforts to clear away. And that's why 651 Duncan Street earned its landmark status. It was the base from which Lyon and Martin undertook their life's work to uproot the invasive weeds of stigma, shame, isolation, and targeted danger that

were suffocating the lives of America's lesbians and gay individuals in the post-war years of the 1950s and '60s.

That effort began with the birth of an organization called the Daughters of Bilitis—nicknamed the DOB. Lyon and Martin cofounded the group with three other lesbian couples in 1955, initially meeting in a small San Francisco apartment. But it was Lyon and Martin's skill and tenacity that saved the DOB from folding after its difficult first year. Members kept leaving. Potential recruits were too frightened to join.

It was a time when the few bars and pubs catering to homosexuals could be raided by police, even a private social club for lesbians by necessity had to be shrouded in secrecy. Their organization's name—Daughters of *Bilitis*?—is deliberately obscure, taken from a 19th century poem cycle dedicated to a fictional character related to Sappho.

But certain things are always visible to some. Eschewing the bars, the couple met at work. It was in Seattle, 1950, when both Lyon and Martin were hired by a construction trade magazine. Lyon, known for her welcoming smile, cat-eye glasses, and ponytail, said Martin "was the first woman I ever saw carrying a briefcase."

Martin, sturdy and tall, with a thatch of wavy, short-cropped hair hinting at her Italian heritage, was a little older than Lyon, adding to her air of authority. She'd been married at 19, had a daughter, and gotten divorced at 23 when her husband found a trove of love letters Martin had written to another woman. When the relationship with Lyon turned serious, the couple moved to San Francisco in 1953.

With childhoods deeply influenced by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal optimism and Eleanor Roosevelt's championing of civil rights and women's empowerment, Martin and Lyon believed in social change. It was this mindset that enabled them to help the DOB find its footing, opening the doors of their brand-new home for meetings, socializing, and thoughtful strategizing. They persuaded their friends to expand the idea of simply meeting other lesbians, and work on ways to integrate lesbians into the larger fabric of public life. That meant changing themselves *and* society.

They centered DOB's earliest activism on helping individual lesbians gain self-knowledge and self-acceptance. After all, Martin noted, "We were fighting the church, the couch [ie, psychiatry], and the courts. If lesbians didn't have the self-confidence to advocate for their rights, no social change would be possible."

Lyon and Martin's efforts with the DOB resulted in countless milestones. They invited guest speakers and held "gab and java" events. Lyon was the first editor and frequent writer for *The Ladder*, the DOB's newsletter. It grew into the first nationally distributed magazine dedicated to lesbian issues as DOB chapters sprang up around the country.

In 1960, Lyon and Martin organized the DOB's first national conference, "A Look at the Lesbian," at San Francisco's Hotel Whitcomb. The unflappable Martin met the undercover policemen at the door—and she was ready for them. Like other attendees, she was wearing high heels, nylon stockings, skirts or dresses. This mattered because, otherwise, you could be arrested for cross-dressing. With utter confidence,

Martin invited them to come in and look around. As one of the DOB's monthly guest speakers—an attorney with the ACLU—told the group, “it’s not against the law to *be* a homosexual.” The cops left without incident.

If you search the internet, many websites summarize Lyon and Martin’s legacy as being the first same-sex couple to be legally married in San Francisco in 2004 and 2008. What those blubs gloss over is that city officials *invited* them to take that place of honor at both ceremonies.

Lyon and Martin rose to prominence because of their courage, communication and diplomatic skills. They could put someone fully at ease or put them on notice, but always with an eye towards turning people into allies, and turning allies into friends. Across the decades, Lyon and Martin advocated for the civil rights, dignity, and safety of the broader LGBTQ+ community from their new roles as members of state boards, federal commissions, national committees and fundraisers for numerous new social services for the queer community. There is no way to tally the number of lives they changed.

Today, a more nuanced understanding of sexuality and gender has taken root. Myriad expressions of LGBTQ+ visibility have blossomed, appearing in our families, schools, workplace, streets, storytelling, media, archives, courts, and halls of power. If some consider Lyon and Martin’s approach quaint or old-fashioned it’s only because we no longer have to start the work from square one. They wrote the first draft of what had previously been *tabula rasa*.

Even so, as Phyllis Lyon said in 1986: “History comes in cycles. I would like to see an end to this backlash by the time I leave this planet. We have to continue to be a presence, to educate. We can never take it for granted that people know who lesbians and gay men are.”

Léonie La Fontaine

By Godelieve Uyttenhove

A few years ago, I came across the name of Paul Otlet, a Belgian self-made bibliographer, precursor of Wikipedia. Even though I am Belgian and a professional librarian, I had never heard of him. I did some research and found that he was indeed a precursor of information science, creator of the Universal Decimal Classification System and the Mondaneum, as well as a Peace activist who believed that if everyone in the world was educated and had access to all the world's knowledge, world peace would be possible.

On my next visit to Belgium, a year ago, I went to explore the Mondaneum, currently housed in the city of Mons. When Otlet created and developed this huge collection of bibliographic records to give access to a maximum of documents in 1910, as a follow up of the first *Conférence Internationale de Bibliographie* in Brussels in 1895, the collection and its catalogs were housed in the Palais Mondial in the Cinquanteaire in Brussels, a few blocks from the neighborhood where I grew up. In 1934 it was closed and when the Germans occupied Belgium in 1940, much of it was destroyed and the rest moved to various unsatisfactory locations across Brussels. It is now settled in a museum in Mons, where walls of catalogs drawers full of cards handwritten decades ago by a team of “bibliographers” can be explored today.

Otlet was a visual learner and he designed hundreds of ways of linking knowledge and giving access to it by means of technology he imagined that didn't yet

exist at the time. He also imagined the ideal city that would be the world center of knowledge and peace, along with his close friend Henri La Fontaine, a lawyer like him, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1913. It is in the section of the museum that focused on their pacifism that I discovered Léonie La Fontaine, sister of Henri, who dedicated her life to the same goals of universal education and pacifism.

Léonie, born in 1857, was educated at home by a very progressive mother, believed in women's education and spearheaded propaganda for female emancipation, right to suffrage, and a wider access to professions. Joining the team working on the Mondaneum Project, Léonie initiated the Office Central de Documentation Féminine in 1909. She also created in her own home a library for the Belgian League for the Rights of Women, created in 1892, to help women make professional choices. Léonie had joined the League in 1892 as treasurer and was in charge of the welfare section. She edited the League's magazine. From 1893, she participated in the production of entries to the Universal Bibliographic Repertory designed by Paul Otlet and her brother Henri.

Léonie La Fontaine joined the International Union of Women for Peace in 1895. In 1924, she set up the Belgian section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. During World War I, Léonie fled to Switzerland where she took part in international mutual aid movements and met pacifist counterparts in the Hague in 1915. After the war, she resumed her militant activities and with Marie Parent, founded the Party General des Femmes. In 1914 they won the obligatory schooling for girls.

Léonie La Fontaine died in 1949, the year when Belgian women were allowed to vote. The Université des Femmes, a French association for the promotion of gender studies in Belgium, founded in 1979, named its library Bibliothèque Léonie La Fontaine.

Because I am currently visiting Belgian family and friends, and struggling with the Azerty keyboard, I am not able to do more extensive research on the subject, but I believe that Léonie La Fontaine, who lived in a period that didn't acknowledge women's accomplishments as well as men's, deserves to be remembered for her dedication to universalism as well as her pacifism and feminism.

Katherine Swynford, Anya Seton, Alison Weir

By Eloise Van Tassel

When I was 13 or 14, a serialized novel appeared in “Ladies’ Home Journal,” to which my mother subscribed. It was illustrated by an artist’s rendition of a beautiful woman with flowing red hair dressed in medieval garb. The novel was “Katherine,” by Anya Seton, destined to be a best-seller, and to be continuously in print for about 50 years beyond its first copyright in 1954. In 2003, it ranked 95 in a British survey of “Best Reads.”

Back in my early teens, I was hooked. I waited eagerly for each new issue of the ‘Journal.’ Katherine’s main love interest, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (1340-1399) was dashing, noble-born and of course handsome. He was also politically conservative, a designation I had little or no understanding of back then. In contemporary terminology, he was a staunch royalist. I was a fan of period costume, a product of my illustrated ‘fairy tale’ books, helped along by an illustrated page in our family dictionary under the entry “History of Costume.” What is more, John of Gaunt was a far cry from the awkward early-adolescent boys in my hometown. Katherine (1349-1403) and John occupied a ‘calamitous’ period of history (see Barbara Tuchman’s “A Distant Mirror”).

Plot-spoiler: Katherine and John carry on an adulterous affair over about 10 years while he is

committed to a dynastic marriage (and she, widowed after an arranged one to a minor knight who conveniently dies early on). She was known by her first-marital surname, Swynford, until she and John, both by then widowed, eventually married in 1396. She bears four illegitimate children (John's) in addition to two or so legitimate ones. Eventually, true love triumphs after political tumult and spousal demise, Katherine and John are able to marry, and he legitimizes their joint offspring.

Of interest to Sitting Room aficionados of women in medieval times, Ms. Seton has her heroine traveling as a barefoot pilgrim to consult Julian of Norwich, not historically documented, but possible, given their respective dates. Katherine has been in a despondent phase, and Julian gives her upbeat, encouraging advice.

Anya Seton's own life story included two marriages, two divorces, three children, and the writing of 12 'historical fiction' novels. "Katherine" fell about midway in their chronological order and is her best-known. Ms. Seton traveled to the English settings that comprised Katherine's story and pored over what archival material she could find concerning her heroine. She died in 1990.

Hollywood considered making "Katherine" into a movie, with Charlton Heston and Susan Hayward in the starring roles. The project never materialized, due to the mid-20th century moral code that disapproved of out-of-wedlock lovemaking and parenthood leading to a happy ending. True, my early fairy tales did not include a plot line with such results. Heston and Hayward went on to other memorable roles.

Alison Weir is a widely-published British historian and novelist of historical fiction. She has written a non-fiction book called "Mistress to the Monarchy," copyright 2007, about the historic Katherine Swynford, later Duchess of Lancaster. She cites a lengthy number of both primary and secondary sources from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was a time of Bubonic Plague, Peasants' Revolt, the deposition of a hereditary monarch (Richard II), chronic wars between England and France, a dizzying array of dynastic marriages, and brides as heir-producers. Before Ms. Seton and then Ms. Weir, Katherine merited a mere one, or at-most two-sentence mentions in most histories. Yet, she became the direct ancestress of the present King Charles III, as well as that of five US presidents including George Washington and both Bushes, and of Winston Churchill. Her brother-in-law was Geoffrey Chaucer.

Ms. Weir includes several pages of genealogy tables. Her text includes frequent phrases such as "might have been," or "we may assume," whereas Ms. Seton went ahead with no such disclaimers. Ms. Weir is scrupulous in laying out her textual hypotheses. Her references and footnotes comprise about a third of her book's pages. The genealogy tables are detailed as well as accurate. Due to the existence of some of Katherine Swynford/Duchess of Lancaster's descendants who produced copious offspring, the complex pathways of the Churchillian and Bush connections are left to those inclined to more specialized genealogical research. Ms. Weir sticks to the already detailed monarchical lines.

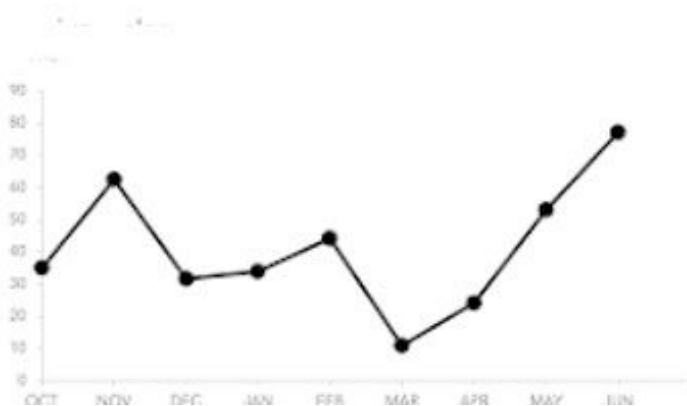
For the 'romance' version, one must go to Ms. Seton's book. To give her credit, she plucked Katherine

Swynford from the brief, often judgmental, references in conventional histories. She gave her Katherine a rounded existence as a real person. Ms. Seton's portrayal is what grabbed me in the 1950s, along with many bored housewives who needed some escape reading. These days, I find myself more drawn to the evidence Ms. Weir lays out in her documented research. Her Katherine holds up as a fascinating person.

Katherine Swynford's life is a contrast to those of Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich. These latter two stood out in ecclesiastical and contemplative fields. Both were freed to pursue their creativity by the cloistered lives then open to women. Secular women existed as producers of heirs. They faced a likely prospect of early demise due to obstetric/gynecological risk factors beyond then-current midwifery skills. Girls were considered ready for marriage at age 12 (boys at 14). Katherine produced six or seven live children and lived into her mid-fifties, a long life then, but still her life span came up short compared to that of around seventy for both Hildegard and Julian.

RATED

By Isabell VanMerlin



My mother Emily grew up in the teens and 20s of last century. It wasn't that she was underrated - women got no ratings at all at that time. You grew up, caught a husband, got married and had children. But she got bored with that; she was bright, intelligent, an intellectual; she should have been a career woman, but it wasn't possible.

My aunt Caroline - she gave up her successful commercial photography career to follow the goals of her husband, to be a good wife. She really wanted to be successful for herself - her own art, business, photographs - but was torn between her ambition and trying to be a good wife. He was spoiled, self-centered - got bored easily. And it was unusual in the 1930's to be a successful business woman. Maybe it would have diminished him.

Is everything - - - rated - - - ?

WHY?

Who started the rating, grating, berating, super-rating,
overrating, gyrating

suppurating hyper-rating curating derating
aerating

It's all opinion-ating.

It's all opinion-rating

Who makes the call?

Who makes the claim?
takes the blame?

Who

Why does there have to be a rating
system?

Does somebody want a better rating?
rating change anything?

Does

**It's like a mountain range - - up, down, higher,
lower, sharper, flatter**

It's all judgment. a line graph
And if nobody is looking?

WHAT'S TO RATE - overrated
TO COMPARE?

WHAT'S

underrated

**Mountains have a reason to be higher
or lower**

And they're only "rated"
if you're a climber.

WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT RATED AT ALL?

I don't really want to write about 'underrated' because to me it's just creating another hierarchical box of opinions. Can't we just BE somehow? BE *who* we are; BE *what* we are - which is always perfect and magnificent and UNIQUE??!!

Sappho: Precious Fragments of Burning Complaint

By Tim Wandling

This essay is an homage to the ephemeral, the backwards glance at the transitory and the fragment. To grasp at Sappho, one must use one's imagination, for her texts were quite literally lost to time and fire. Her lyrics burn with desire; her texts burned with time. The title of this essay comes from a phrase Thomas Hardy jotted down in his *Literary Notebooks* (ed. L Bjork). He took the phrase from John Mahaffey's 1874 *Social Life in Greece*. I read the phrase in the 1990s, the power of the image refracting through time. As I do not read Greek, nor are there full poems of Sappho, she comes to me through glimpses offered by other writers. The figure of Sappho more than her poems is the focus of this essay – how she matters to the genealogies of women writers, queer writers, and celebrants of the erotic -- the ephemeral flames of aesthetic and erotic moments. Coming to “precious fragments” as I did, is one such genealogy. For centuries before Hardy transcribed Mahaffey's phrase, the textual tissues of Sappho's words were available only through citations in other classic authors. Indeed, even a modern collection is not really so, as it is a compilation of quotes and translations that have, improbably, leapt down to us through time as citations in the literary criticism of ancient writers.

In "Resisting Amnesia," Adrienne Rich writes that we must people a revised herstory with:

Our theory, scholarship, and teaching must continue to refer back to flesh, blood, violence, sexuality, anger, the bread put on the table by the single mother and how it gets there, the body of the woman aging, the pregnant body, the body running, the body limping, the hands of the lesbian touching another lesbian's face . . . (21).

I have always taught Rich's passage as a call to use our imaginations where the record may be scant or not yet documented. This is true of so much of woman's expression and experience in the patriarchal canons of literature and history, although much great work has been done to expand Women's studies since Rich wrote that essay. Still, the figure of Sappho remains emblematic for the fragmentary nature of both woman's experience and lesbian poetry. We resist their erasure by joining our vision to the fragments found through the fires and closets of patriarchal history.

The wonderfully lyric and bisexual Victorian-era poet Mathilde Blind was once asked who the great women authors were. She listed the usual suspects, Eliot, Sand, and Browning, before smiling and reflecting, "of course, Sappho should have been named first" (Diedrick, 224). Awareness of Sappho's work was growing at this time, due to the first collections and translations of her fragments in complete volumes. Blind was an actual new woman, in her politics, poetics and life. In the *Ascent of Man*, she wrote "songs of love" without pronouns, describing her

body “athirst” not for wine, but a lover’s eyes: “I hunger, but the bread I want, Of which my blood and brain are scant, Is your sweet speech, for which I pant.” Her verse centers female desire in the Sapphic tradition beginning to be celebrated in her London literary circles.

In Thomas Hardy’s take on Sue Bridehead as a “New Woman,” he also evokes Sappho, using the recent translation (1885) from H.T. Wharton: “For there was no other girl, O bridegroom, like her.” To Jude, and to the narrator, Sue is also something of a negation, or a fragment – a woman with “untranslatable eyes (90). Hardy’s famous New Woman evokes the fragmentary nature of woman’s experience not yet fully represented in the patriarchy, nor by his own male gaze. A good reason to read contemporary New Women authors such as Blind, Mona Caird, and Olive Schreiner alongside our Hardy.

The fire spreads. A generation later, Amy Lowell wrote in “The Sisters” (1922):

There's Sappho, now I wonder what was Sappho
I know a single slender thing about her:
That, loving, she was like a burning birch-tree
All tall and glittering fire, and that she wrote
Like the same fire caught up to Heaven and
held there

Lowell images Sappho as a “leaping fire” – a too slender collection of texts that crosses to us over time. The fire and burning of Sappho’s verses leap into Lowell’s verse here, as they do also with H.D.’s extrapolation of Sappho fragment 31: “I know not

what to do: / to turn and slake / the rage that burns.” H.D. imagines the burning rage of the divided mind of the first line of this famous fragment – like many writers who augment the fragment with their utterance of rage.

Of course, I cannot do full justice to it here, but Adrienne Rich would have us feel and see the force of that burning rage and the burning desire of the fragmentary genealogies I’ve traced here, through the fires. (I haven’t even mentioned Byron’s encomium to her in *Don Juan*). To conclude: T.H. Wharton translates fragment numbered 31 (35 for other translators) as “I do not think to touch the sky with my two arms.” The fragment urges us to imagine what those wide-open arms do long to touch. As I like to finish with a song, I will have Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls queer this image for us: “Lift me through my love and anger . . . My arms are burning, but they’re open wide” (“Keeper of my Heart”).

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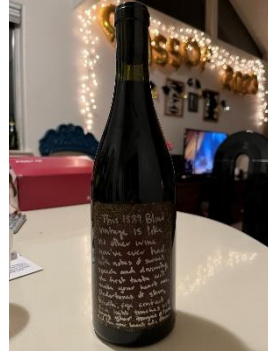
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Eunice Newton Foote (1819-1888): Climate Scientist

By Kathleen T. Willett

Are you familiar with the Matilda Effect? Perhaps you don't recognize it as such—but possibly you've seen the film “Hidden Figures” about previously unsung NASA mathematicians Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson? Or the play “Silent Sky” about long-forgotten astronomer Henrietta Swan Leavitt? Or perhaps you know about chemist Rosalind Franklin's unacknowledged, yet critical, contribution to the discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA?

The Matilda Effect is defined as a bias against acknowledging the achievements of women scientists and inventors whose work consequently gets attributed to male colleagues. The term was coined in 1993 by science historian Margaret Rossiter and named after Matilda Joselyn Gage (1826-1898) who published an 1870 essay titled “Woman as Inventor.” The Matilda effect has been around a very, very, long time.

Eunice Newton Foote experienced the Matilda Effect, and in her case, it persisted for more than 100 years.

In 1976, science historian Sally Gregory Kohlstedt came across Eunice Newton Foote's name as a participant at the 1857 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a robust organization of scientists and science journalists still in existence today. In 1857, Foote was

the only woman participant. Further digging revealed that Eunice Foote had also submitted a paper for the 1856 meeting that was read, instead, by a man. Apparently, at that time, women seldom presented their own work. Science journals were more open-minded. The 1856 edition of the *American Journal of Science and Arts* published: "Circumstances Affecting the Heat of the Sun's Rays" by Eunice Newton Foote. In this paper, Foote scientifically demonstrated for the first time, by *any* scientist, what has since become known as the "Greenhouse Effect" of climate warming.

Credit for the initial discovery of the "Greenhouse Effect" of atmospheric carbon dioxide was historically given to a man (of course) named John Tyndall whose work was published four years later than Foote's. But what Kohlstedt first uncovered in 1976, many other historians since have reaffirmed: Eunice Newton Foote was the first climate scientist to prove this phenomenon.

Foote was an amateur scientist with a laboratory she built for herself in her home. She also published another paper in the *Proceedings of the AAAS* in 1857 on static electricity that represented the first time a work in physics had been published by a woman in that journal. And she was an inventor, as was her husband, though many of her patents were filed in her husband's name since, as a woman at that time, she would not have been able to defend her patents in court. However, Eunice did file two successful patents in her own name in 1860 and 1864.

And Eunice Newton Foote was a staunch supporter of women's rights, which may have been at the very

heart of her motivation and inspiration. She attended the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention on women's rights as a member of the editorial committee and was also a signatory of the resulting Declaration of Sentiments, as was her husband.

How was this 19th century woman able to accomplish so much, in several different fields when so little opportunity was available to women of that era?

In the mid-1800's, New York state was a hotbed of social and political movements: abolitionists, women's rights campaigners, dress reform activists, mystics, and temperance advocates would all have been well represented. It was in this environment that Eunice Newton was raised and educated. She was the eleventh of Thirza and Isaac Newton Jr.'s twelve children. A distant relative of Sir Isaac Newton, her parents were more highly educated than most, and while her father died when Eunice was 15, she was nonetheless, well educated.

From 1836-38 she attended a pioneering women's prep school founded by feminist Emma Willard: the Troy Female Seminary, where she was also encouraged to attend classes at the adjacent Rensselaer School (now called Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI)). At the time, the Rensselaer School was led by an advocate for women's education, Amos Eaton, whose innovative curricula included not only lectures in scientific theory, but also hands-on experimentation in the laboratory. So, while Foote did not have a PhD, she had practical experience in the scientific method and knowledge of physics, chemistry and math

In 1841 she married Elisha Foote, a lawyer, and had two daughters born in 1842 and 1844. Her husband became a judge and subsequently had his own law practice before working for the US Patent and Trademark office in 1865.

Fortitude and courage, intellectual curiosity, and a healthy regard for one's own innate capabilities and professional aspirations would all have been required of Foote, just as they are today, to achieve all that she did. But possibly the other ingredient, the big hand-up factor, in my opinion, might have been the unequivocal support she received.

Family expectations and assistance, regardless of gender; community attitudes, social and political movements; and wide-ranging educational opportunities all supported Eunice Foote in her pursuit of a fulfilling livelihood at a time when that was simply out of reach for women. Both her family of origin and the husband she chose supported her intellectual curiosity and encouraged her professional development.

We have made strides as women in our society, yes, thanks to Foote and others like her. But, as we all know, and see illustrated daily on a global basis, there is more work to be done. As women, in this society, at this moment, support for one another seems critical. For Eunice Newton Foote, the Matilda Effect no longer applies. I am hopeful that will be the case for all achieving women in the years to come.

On Not Having Read a Novel Called “Northwood”

By J. J. Wilson

On my 40th birthday, I took the day off to read, at long last, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” written by Harriet Beecher Stowe and published in 1851 in installments and as a novel in 1852. It was a runaway bestseller and, in Abraham Lincoln’s famous words, “started the war” -- the 1861 Civil War. Well, it is a heckuva read, despite all the stereotypes and other criticisms.

Why then did it take me until my 90th birthday to read “Northwood”? Perhaps because I am a Southerner and a non-Christian. The novel, originally published in 1827 to acclaim, was republished in 1852, for obvious reasons. By a Christian and a native of New Hampshire, “Northwood” also fueled abolition fires, comparing North and South through the story of a family who experienced both. It is a measured not melodramatic account where slavery is acknowledged as “a stain on our national character” and it is hoped and prayed “the time may come when they can be emancipated without danger to themselves or this country.” (Chapter X)

No enslaved people are developed as characters in the book (as Uncle Tom is); their “otherness” is conveyed instead by a very flawed character’s fear of being welcomed by them when she came to South Carolina with her new husband:

“...I was so frightened, thinking some of them might have knives in their hands to kill

us, that I could not help shrieking ...and I hardly know what happened next, for I believe I fainted. I am sure if I had only known this was a negro country, I never would have come here.” (Chapter III)

Her husband, also flawed, claims to abhor the system of slavery but regrets that “due to peculiar circumstances” we are stuck with it for the moment...

This push/pull is a recurrent theme, but the author saw the major conflict in her book, and indeed in society in general, as one between materialism and simplicity, keeping a balance. Her most positive images in this book are of “domestic bliss”, the family seated around a table together at a harvest feast. She also proclaims: “Literature is the star and garter of a Yankee”, ending her long book by an impassioned plea for the special freedom of literacy. The narrator is sure that slavery “would be melted before the gushing streams of sympathy and charity, as the ice of the polar seas yields to the warm rains of summer.” (Her less lyrical conclusion is: “Liberia has solved the enigma of ages. The mission of American slavery is to Christianize Africa.”)

And I hear you, dear readers, calling for the name of this so principled author. Let me assure you, you already quote her when you sing the “Mary Has a Little Lamb” lullaby. “Northwood” was penned by Sarah Josepha Buell Hale who also, sound the trumpets, invented THANKSGIVING.

For the details of Sarah Josepha Buell Hale’s long and illustrious life, check out Wikipedia. Curious to read “Northwood”? Wonderfully it has been re-printed by Legare Street Press because it is “culturally important,

and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it.” And, of course, the Sitting Room Library will soon have my copy on its amazing shelves.

Unfolding Life

*after Hildegard Flanner, American poet, essayist,
playwright and conservationist.*

By Leonore Wilson

Defend trees, praise them—
the California redwoods, firs,
oaks of all types; praise
the curve of their boughs,
the sudden poetry
of their flowering;
be the guardians
of birdsong and bees;
touch their bark affectionately
where an entire century
rests; defend them all
before the tractor roars
and hits again
and again as mild limbs
begin to tremble, and roots
break with a heavy

snap and the beautiful little
snakes flash their tongues
under the medallions
of lichen, and where the madrone
and manzanita offer
a serious kind of joy
in the peace of their shade.

Adaptation

By Marion Wrenn

When Shelly Duvall holds that cigarette steady
and recounts how her character's husband

cursed and yanked their boy's arm
from its socket by accident of vodka,

Kubrick's got her by the throat.
Her mouth's a rabbit's twitch;

she has her Wendy aim for insouciance
as the social worker grows curiouiser

and curiouiser and the ash grows
impossibly long yet refuses to shatter

into TV static. She wants to flee this
scene, the director's diabolical hunger

for something more, the umpteenth time
he's held her to it as if waiting for something

wicked in her to muscle forth. No surprise
when she's swinging a baseball bat

from the Overlook's stairs Jack turns
to Kubrick and says stop, man, just stop.

Wendy, harrowed, realizes her marriage
is a trojan horse, her faithless husband

has an ax; the actress chops
the air between them,

every muscle taught to be afraid,
so afraid, she clutches closely to her craft.