

SUNBURY 10



Jaki Shelton Green

Feature: Black Women Writers, Rosemary Mealy, Editor

Meridel LeSueur: NOTES FROM CRETE

Poems by Adrienne Rich, Sonia Sanchez, Zinzi Mandela *
Virginia Scott on Solidarity Day, 1981 * Fiction by Sandra
Esteves and Pamela Ansaldi * Kageyama on Hisaye
Yamamoto * Self-interview: Doris Davenport.
Reviews.

1981

the high crime rate we have instead of ordering women behind locked doors as daylight ends.

The most urgent reason for everyone to read this book is stated by Audre Lorde on page 73: "We owe ourselves this information *before* we may have a reason to use it." The author makes us aware of some important facts and figures covered up by the establishment, e.g., page 71, "Less than 15% of its (American Cancer Society) budget, however, was spent on assisting cancer patients." There is so much more which she has not written about that clamors for a hearing. She is the first to recognize this:

May these words serve as encouragement for other women to speak and to act out of our experiences with cancer and with other threats of death, for silence has never brought us anything of worth. Most of all, may these words underline the possibilities of self-healing and the richness of living for all women (p. 10).

Audre Lorde has weighed and considered her experience as each of us must do for our own lives to continue in a meaningful way, after mastectomy. No, we would not give up an arm or a leg or an eye in place of a breast. Yes, the breast is the most expendable organ we own (next to the appendix, and/or perhaps a finger or two). I state these words flatly, and perhaps shockingly to make a point, as the book closes with these words [page 77]:

No, I would not give up love, [and.] I would never have chosen this path, but I am very grateful to be who I am, here.

Kate Riley

THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR

Ed. by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Watertown, Mass., Persophone Press, 1981, 261 pp., \$8.95.

As a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman writer, I'd like to thank Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, and the others involved, for bending their mutual back once more, for opening their mouths publicly, for applying the smarts they've learned from no-matter-where to "use" the institutions of this system—education, writing, print—to reach each other and "us."

As second generation removed Alabama white trash, the rhythms of, say, Beverly and Barbara Smith, are not so foreign to me. I appreciate their recognition that neither race nor class, gender nor sexual persuasion can entirely define the parameters of oppression's story. Yet I also understand that our differences can no longer be smudged for the sake of an artificial spirit of commonality from which the feminist movement grows insipid.

On the other (third) hand, reading this book did not (as I'd half-anticipated) engulf me in a deluge of guilt. Not that I love hearing that black wominn basically hate my smell and stringy hair (davenport). Nor can I help twinging with self-recognition when white women are accused of not trying, not reaching out, assuming we understand intellectually what we never confronted for ourselves in the real life arena. I have not known violence, nor its off-spring—political consciousness—at an early age (Smith). I did learn early, however, about confronting the other; that it is a sensitive subject which shifts balancy. At 5 I asked "my mama" (yes, that's what I called her), Lottie, why her skin was so much browner than mine. And I remember her embarrassment, her face as she looked away, saying God made us that way. And I've put it together with what my mother

told me later (hours or years? I'm not sure): Lottie was probably worried about what my mother would have wanted her to say. Since then have been the years of guilt and confusion, and I wonder now: Was Lottie really thinking that at all?

From *This Bridge Called My Back*, I begin to understand that the problems of white-wash, of invisibility (Yamada, Cameron, quintaniles), come from the silence along all lines. Divisions are everywhere, and the bridging must begin with, heading out to span chasms that are, in an age of such close cultural clutter, splintering society. Between all colors and cultures, between rich and poor, hetero and gay, some wires are fraught more directly and heavily with histories of oppression, but the point of contact must be the air between ear and mouth, this willingness to talk and listen.

I respect the integrity with which this work was collected as a forum for and by women of color. Yet, if you don't mind, the white ghosts are listening with a will to identify with what we can, and to learn from what we can't experientially commiserate with. After all what inspires this book, over and above the necessarily pervasive anger and fear, is the tangible, mysterious diversity of lives. Through writings such as these, the differences between us and the dialectic that stems from them (Lorde) can come into the open. The energy to act will evolve from this dialogue, tripilogue, multiologue.

Anita M. Carter

THE SALT EATERS by Toni Cade Bambara
Random House

Ms. Bambara's first novel takes place somewhere in the rural south in a fictional town known as Clayborne. At first glance, this place does not appear to be any different from any other southern town. Except for one thing—faith healing is practiced in the Community Infirmary.

Everyone is gathered on this particular day to witness "the fabled healer of the district," Minnie Ransom, at work. The visiting interns—curious and unbelieving, the staff standing around betting on the time span of the session, neighbors and family members waiting for Minnie Ransom to lay her hands on Velma Henry.

Velma Henry numbly sits on the stool, wondering why, after slashing her wrists and exposing herself to oven fumes, she was still alive. Velma wondered why she was sitting listening to Minnie's humming. Velma was resistant. She did not want to join the living, and Minnie Ransom was having a difficult time.

Minnie sought guidance from her guardian spirit, "Old Wife." The spunky spirit "Old Wife" merely points out to Minnie that perhaps there is some resemblance between the two.

The story slowly unravels through a series of flashbacks into Velma's past. We learn of Velma's overriding concern and involvement in community work at the expense of alienating others. Her husband Obie begins to sleep with other women, her child, James Jr., matures at an early age. Velma eventually loses control over her life. She begins seeing things that are not there—or are they?