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INTRODUCTION

In the forward to a collection of twentieth century women's poetry in translation, Adrienne Rich writes --

The idea of a common female culture--splintered and disasporized among the male cultures under and within which women have survived--has been a haunting though tentative theme of feminist thought over the past few years. Divided from each other through our dependencies on men--domestically, tribally, and in the world of patronage and institution--our first need has been to recognize and reject these divisions, the second to begin sharing all that we share in common as women on this planet.

As women, if we do not see each other, if we do not hear each other, if we do not meet each other, then we can never begin to recognize and reject what divides us. This edition of the Women's Studies Newsletter can be considered a series of introductions of women to each other. The introductions are brief, yet each furthers our ability to recognize and reject divisions and celebrates the beginnings of the exploration.

KATE REYNOLDS in "Black Women in South Africa: A Herstory of Power Under the Chains of 'Modernization'" writes of the continuing strength of the Black women of South Africa even though modernization and the effects thereof have attempted to make these women the most powerless members of that nation.

PAOLA MACHADO in "Quem Ama Nao Mato" ("Those who love don't kill"), with the women of Brazil, shows that U.S. and European standards of feminism, when used to categorize Latin feminism, divides women of the world.

"Military Government: Night of a Peasant Woman" a poem by ANA OBLITAS depicts the struggle of one Bolivian woman yet can be used to recognize the similar struggle of all Bolivian women.

MARY LAUDICK in "Women in Morocco" rejects the notion that the capitalist mode of production promotes a better way of life for everyone; women in Morocco lose their source of power due to capitalism.

"Jamaica" a poem by PAULETTE and SHARON TAI CHUN reflects what life is like for the women in Jamaica.

HONG ANH THI NGUYEN in "Being a Woman in Vietnam" tells of the few career options she would have if she were still living in Vietnam.

SHERILYN GEORGE in "Resisting Categories: Nikki Giovanni" recounts Giovanni's visit to Denison as part of Black History Month.

TERESA L. WOODWARD closes this edition of the Women's Studies Newsletter with "Our Ability to Claim Our Power," a reflection on the work of Audre Lorde and her recent visit to Denison.
In becoming familiar with the literature on the economy of modern-day South Africa, I have been disturbed by the strong correlation in which as "first world" and the white South African government's economies are bolstered, the majority of South Africa, and other "third world" countries, are depleted economically. This is not as obvious as it sounds, for it is under the guise of modernization and development aid that the "first world" and its representatives in white South Africa plunder. The "first world" (and white South Africa) continues to impose change in South Africa for its exclusive benefit. This model of modernization also applies directly to the black South African woman, as it is used to effectively make her powerless while rhetorically opening up her opportunities.

Modernization theory is implicitly ethnocentric: "modernization" means to bring up to date, in other words, Western advancements are the criteria for modernity and the non-Western is "behind the times." The goals of the modernization theorists are: westernization, urbanization, industrialization, (political and economic) centralization, secularization, specialization, stratification, and economic development (as measured by per capita income and GNP growth). The relevance of these habits of measurement is often nil. For example, the per capita income does not indicate the distribution of wealth across the country. As is true for South Africa, it is most often the case that a minority of the population is holding the majority of the country's wealth and income. Beverly Lindsay notes that the GNP and many other economic statistics do not take into account the two primary economic aspects of rural Africa: barter and subsistence agriculture (Lindsay,1980:79). Shelby Lewis also notes:

Development planners, scholars and government officials have historically neglected, excluded, underestimated and misrepresented women across the globe. And in spite of the abundant data that indicate that the women of Africa grow, harvest, process, market and cook the food that feeds the nation, development plans never seem to reflect women's activities accurately (Lewis,1980:32).

Modernization theory is misleading in measurement and practice, for it is not a genuine modernization or development that is sought at all, but "underdevelopment" (Frank,5).

Destruction initiated by European colonization has not ceased but increased since the "independence" of South Africa. Although the nature of their relationship has changed, i.e., from colonialism to imperialism, the extent of the marginal majority's exploitation has not. This is due to the fact that the European immigrants never attempted to gradually initiate Africans into Western culture (not even to mention asking their consent).
Rather, their arrival marked a sudden cleft in South Africa's development, in which native South Africans were forced to cease their development and support that of the Europeans. Furthermore, colonization practices were internalized by the white South Africans and set upon the African residents.

Because of its history of internal exploitation, South Africa could be called a "settler colony;" "the colony of this type is neither exploited in the interest of a foreign power, nor degraded to a market for foreign surplus commodities, but is characterized rather by a domestic colonialism which at certain stages might exceed the metropolitan colonies in degree of exploitation" (Adam, 1971:31). The South African white ruling group is increasingly less dependent on foreign capital for economic reasons and, therefore, can be less susceptible to outside pressure to change its domestic policies (Adam, 1971:35). Thus does modernization theory become only an absurd justification for foreign investment, because ultimately and practically, it is not in the economic interest of the white South African government to change the policy which has made it prosperous.

The Ford Motor Company serves as an excellent example of this position and its contradictions. Ford maintains that it is "in a position to demonstrate the superiority of more enlightened and non-discriminatory practices" (Litvak, 1978:12). The Sullivan principles are often cited by the Ford company, as well as many other U.S. corporations in South Africa, as one way in which it is modernizing racist labor practices. The Sullivan principles are "a set of guidelines drawn up by a U.S. minister, who is also a director of General Motors, to give some appearance of racial equality in South Africa. Before these principles were issued, Sullivan obtained the consent of the South African government and South African capitalists" (Colligan, 1981:42). Thozamile Botha, a former Ford worker, was a leader in the two and a half month "illegal" strike at Ford in 1979. He recounts Ford's policy in accordance to the Sullivan principles:

The Ford plant in South Africa is regarded as number 1 in the implementation of the Sullivan principles, but that doesn't mean anything! If you compare the Ford plant with other plants in South Africa, there is perhaps a small difference. But if one makes a comparison between a Black worker and a white there, there is a very BIG difference (Colligan, 1981:44).

Apart from the United States, South Africa's economy remains the most profitable in the world, "with margins of profit averaging 25 percent, in comparison with, say, 6.8 in Britain and 4.1 in Germany" (Lipman, 1984:115).

The modernization proponents negate African women because they define the African woman's customs as "primitive" and "backward" (Lewis, 1980:36). The modernization approach is that by changing these customs, it is felt, society can be
transformed so that women can engage in gainful employment, take advantage of educational opportunities, improve their health, and view themselves as valuable human beings... this anti-traditionalist attitude denies and de-values the work that women do (Lewis, 1980:36).

The measurement of social power is according to a Western model. Just as the development of underdevelopment is designed to keep black South Africans subordinate, so it is for women. Even the "successful" westernization of the black South African woman would make her more inferior, because she would lose the status she had had in her own culture only to adopt an inferior rank according to the western model.

As I argued earlier, colonization introduced the underdevelopment and dependency of the natives of South Africa. The changes wrought by the colonizers and their heirs were all-incorporative: from the economic and technological to the structural and ideological planes. The traditional community base and all male contributions were completely removed with the migration of men. Women were left to completely sustain the "traditional" society. The people became dependent upon an economy and structure alien to and exclusive of their own heritage. Even the beliefs and values of African culture were negated.

African women and their contributions to society were de-valued by capitalists, i.e., by replacing the traditional structure of society and excluding women from access to the new society. In short, capitalism undermined women's economic power by not recognizing their economic participation within the structure of society. Previously, women allocated resources, and owned the fruits of their own labor and the means through which their labor was carried out. Capitalism increased women's dependency on husbands, fathers and sons by creating a gross patriarchal system, social classes and private ownership of property (Lewis, 1980:37).

Dependency theory, limited to the context of the "settler colony," provides some insight into the placement of black women in South African capitalism. Dependency theory proposes that the lack of power and actual poverty of a "satellite" (substitute "appendage," a name applied to rural black African woman) is not related to isolation but to integration. The poverty of these women has been created and magnified by capitalist intervention in their lives.

Historically, black women have been the most exploited group in South Africa; however, what is often overlooked is the challenge and resistance these women have adopted as their life's task. Of course, it is in the best interest of the white capitalist patriarchy to exclude from its history that which is most foreign -- and possibly most threatening -- to it. As early as the turn of this century, black women were organizing and participating in trade unions. Unlike black men, for whom it was illegal to belong to unions, the women had no pass books and were able to organize without it necessarily affecting their employment and therefore
their housing and life. Most of the unions began by addressing the worker's rights and needs but eventually turned to demanding racial equality once they named racial discrimination as their common condition.

Again, this applies to the dependency theory model, for as black women held the (perceived) threat of autonomy, the more the oppressive government created means to control them. Rita Ndazanga, a trade unionist in South Africa notes:

Employers try to blame the [black] women [for their inferior status], saying they are not serious workers, that their jobs are easy, require less skill and thus deserve less pay. But the facts are somewhat different: the real reason for discriminating against black women is that is good business and highly profitable. (Lipman, 1984: foreward)

Black South African women, often overlooked by the government because they have been rendered the most powerless, have had a strong background of resistance and continue the struggle for freedom. Because racial oppression breaks across the barriers of gender and class, this fight is a unique one, especially when the strongest surge is coming from the most oppressed, not the middle class.

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QUEM AMA NAO MATA
by Paola Machado

Walking through the streets of Belo Horizonte, the third largest city in Brazil, one cannot avoid the graffiti which read "Quem Ama Nao Mata."[1] These are reminders of the movement which took place five years ago, originating in the state of Minas Geraes and quickly spreading from the Southern grasslands to the Amazon jungle. It was propagated by public indignation and the world's fourth largest television network.

Minas is the traditional breeding ground for intellectualism and revolutionary thought in Brazil. Most politicians and the best of literature, art, and music come from this rich state, as does Brazil's first (and aborted) attempt at independence from Portugal. The people's demand for sovereignty was laudable a second time more than a century later. In 1980, men and women joined to protest not against foreign rule, but against national legislation which denied women the rights to their autonomy. The courts in Minas were acquitting husbands who, pleading that they acted to "defend their honor," had slain their wives.

In a country often associated with its Hispanic neighbors as bearing a tradition of machismo, what the law terms as "crimes of passion" generated a response from outraged men and women. Throughout major Brazilian cities, televised debates, newspaper articles, and street protests reflected the indignant reaction of the public. The incident mirrors the disparity between law, dogma, and reality.

Latin women have a history of asserting what is, for many, especially among the lower classes, a traditional position of strength and power. In a country oppressed by millenary Catholic dogma, reality opposes theory more often than not. Even though divorce laws have only been in existence for ten years; although women have only started to be allowed, unaccompanied by men, into restaurants in the last twenty years; although "jail bait" still accounts for a large number of marriages; women's economic and political power has never been completely denied in Brazilian society. In fact, the all-encompassing notion of machismo with which the so-called developed nations blanket the male-female relations in Latin America is limited in scope, being most prevalent among the upper classes. Then again, U.S. and European scholars seldom refer to the lower classes as the norm. In spite of comprising the majority of the world's population, the poor are repeatedly analyzed as either special cases or as appendages to society. The elitism embedded in this approach to the lower classes fits the Third World and developing nations awkwardly, leading to interpretations and proposed solutions which barely apply to Latin reality.

The bulk of the female population in Latin America has forever constituted an equal half of the work force, laboring in fields and mines for five centuries. In Brazil, the extended family recognizes the importance of women's labor in the home, contrary to the denial this activity faces in the U.S. where it has become a major feminist issue. If women are only now starting to occupy jobs in industries
and managerial positions it is because these are recent economic structures in Brazil. An analysis of female roles in Latin America must take into account the effect of imperialist influences in the whole of Latin society and realize that these are as true today as they were in the sixteenth century.

Men and women are now beginning to have access to skilled jobs and managerial positions. Imperialist rule traditionally forbade the existence of industries in Latin America, limiting the economic participation of Latins to agricultural and service labor. The breed of imperialism controlling Brazil, since its "discovery" in 1500, is only now being challenged by more stringent trade and immigration regulations. Because of these regulations, jobs were opened and created for Brazilians in areas formerly occupied exclusively by Europeans or North Americans.

In the notorious Brazilian favelas[2] one will find a higher percentage of working women than men. While almost every woman works either as a maid, washerwoman or clerk, few men can find jobs and a growing number of them are resorting to crime. In the fields, similarly, both men and women work equal hours under an exploitative labor system which profits from the participation of women in the work force. In the universities, women form a larger percentage than men, studying also in fields which in the U.S. and Europe are labeled as traditionally masculine. Unlike their U.S. counterparts, educated women in Brazil enjoy great respect and are praised by both the family and the society at large.

There are, of course, difficulties to be faced by women trying to break new ground and enter the power structure at traditionally patriarchal institutions. Few women belong to the government at decision-making levels. Women continually toil with the predicament of sexism. Still, machismo is overt when it comes into play. Consequently, the solutions and choices of Latin women in dealing with this problem are radically different from those of women in the U.S., where sexism is a subtle and insidious (therefore, more dangerous) threat to women's autonomy.

Why categorize Latin feminism by U.S. and European standards? Our reality is most different from that of the Northern Hemisphere. We deserve an interpretation which bears on the complexities of our existence. The current incongruous attempts to fit Latin reality to Northern theories and models reflects the unwillingness of the so-called developed countries to respect the identity Latin America establishes for itself. To observe us from a Northern perspective is to deny our autonomy.

In Minas, the law condoned the action of husbands who denied their wives' right to independent thought and action. People all over Brazil vividly protested the incongruency of law's dogmas, showing its irrelevancy to reality. It is time that the Northern Hemisphere also listens to the voice of Latin people.

FOOTNOTES


[2] Slums
BOLIVIA
by Ana Oblitas

In July 1979, a coup d'etat brought the military into power. They established a repressive government and sought to cause fear to achieve their objective of total control. A curfew was established at 11 p.m., and martial law came into effect. Meetings or get togethers were prohibited. After eleven, every half an hour, the shots were heard, signaling that everything was all right. The military feared uprisings from the various factions that opposed them, they feared anyone who was willing to talk, even the peasants. Their secret police, SES, made sure none of this happened.

Bolivia 1980

"Military Government: Night of a Peasant Woman"

The only bulb in the room reflected shadows on the children in bed. It had never been this cold. The smoke from the coal just made her eyes water. She'd have to wash the blankets soon. The smell was beginning to get into her nostrils. Not that she cared. He did. Five children cuddled in one single bed. Their hair stuck to their forehead, covering their eyes. Shampoo was too expensive. The grease around the pot had dried. No sense in wasting coal to heat the soup again. He probably wouldn't come home anyway. Payday. She wondered if her watch worked alright. Ten of eleven. She shuddered. The room seemed to reproach her. The curfew. Where was he? The wind kept blowing attempting to invade the room through cardboard windows. The children cuddling for warmth. Talking in their sleep. She'd get shampoo tomorrow, make their hair shine. She stared at her dry, red hands. At least they meant food for three days. The laundry.
The lady would probably pay her enough. Six hours.
Where was he?
Every fifteen minutes the shots could be heard.
They had their own language, those men in uniform.
She had heard the stories, everyone had, and heard the cries in the night.
Everything is possible after eleven.
They make you hate your own mother.
God, please bring him home.
I'll forget today is payday.
I'll forget his slurring voice, as long as he doesn't touch the children.
Eleven fifteen.
Her stomach growled.
Those headaches had become more frequent lately. But she had to save some soup, in case he came home.
Pablito needed a new pair of shoes. He was growing so fast.
Her eyes remained fixed on the door, trying to stop time.
She imagined the jails, the expressionless men in uniform. And they were poor.
The smoke that filled the room, was now and then pushed back by the wind.
The shots again, disturbing her.
Where was he?
Her hands had dried blood in too many places now, they'd never look young again. The door was suddenly flung open, killing the surviving pieces of coal in one blow.
His red eyes glared at her.
He leaned on one side of the door, hesitant, unbalanced.
His mouth disfigured by numbness. She had promised she'd forgive him.
Even if today was payday.
The first blow hit her shoulder. Please, not the children. They have school tomorrow. His frustration became warm liquid in her mouth. His knees shook until they hit the floor.
It would take another hour to liven the coal again. He was alive.
The children sleeping. Her body tired. Her soul dead.
Twelve-thirty.
Last semester, when I travelled throughout Europe, I expected to discover a world drastically different than my own. I realized, of course, that because the United States and Europe are both part of the "West" they would resemble each other somewhat, but I never anticipated that the amount of American influence there would be so great. I found, though, that nearly every radio station favored American music over their own local talent; that McDonald's had virtually replaced the traditional cafe; and that even native languages had been overridden by English. Whether invited or forced, much of Europe had been Americanized.

An even worse fate has befallen Third World Middle Eastern countries. Not only have they been subjected to these same superficial material influences (by the United States and Europe) but by ideological ones as well. Through careful manipulation, we have involved them in the capitalist mode of production, suggesting that it promotes a better way of life for everyone. Clearly, this has not been the case for Moroccan women.

Before the onslaught of modernization, Moroccan women enjoyed much informal freedom and power within their society, although they were not considered equal to men. In 1912, French colonists introduced the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism has functioned as the underlying cause of rampant unemployment, a higher divorce rate, a decrease in female status within the society, an increase in male roles, and class divisions among women (resulting in an inability to fully unite). At the same time, Moroccan women's former informal means of power have been drastically reduced, if not entirely eliminated.

The overall effect of a capitalist mode of production on the lives of Moroccan women can be seen in a variety of ways. First, by removing nomadic families from their traditional subsistence way of life, women and men did not contribute equally to the family economy any longer. Instead, male roles became more emphasized (since they are traditionally responsible for the outside tribal area) and the female role, associated with the "private realm," became reduced. Vinogradov believes that this created a weak system within the state: "In a stable system, the roles and expectations in each group tended to be complementary and compatible, making for mutual survival" (Vinogradov 1974:196). As a result of this weak system, though, the individual and his/her own survival became paramount; people were forced, therefore, to "bargain for [their] own security and protection by all the means at [their] disposal" (Vinogradov 1974:196). Moroccan women turned increasingly to magic to regain some of their power. But because of the increasing influence of western ideology, even this power was diminished by being ridiculed as superstitious, devious and unintelligent.
For the farming family (a much more common job in Morocco), modernization was also detrimental. Many of these families were forced to move to the cities to find jobs, but "jobs [were] in short supply in urban areas too, and when men [were] unable to fill their formal role as economic provider, it [was] easier for them to leave their families than constantly face their failure" (Davis 1981: 36). In another article, Davis asserts, "A recent study found that divorce is very common in Morocco, with 55% of the marriages of rural women in the sample ending in divorce" (Davis 1975:417). As a result, many women were forced to join the work force in subsequent years in a country where this is strictly taboo. In fact, a woman's status is usually lowered in Morocco if she works because "the ideal woman is a virtuous wife and a good mother and remains in her home and out of the public eye" (Davis 1978:429).

For the women who enjoyed respectable employment in her home, modernization also had a negative effect. Davis cites women carpet-makers as an example: "[carpet-making] is now decreasing mainly because of economic factors associated with centralization of carpet production in large factories instead of small, neighborhood workshops" (Davis 1981:39).

Finally, wealthy women, too, were negatively affected by these modernization ideal and structural changes. With the advent of capitalist penetration, veiling increased, especially within the upper class.

I believe that all of these roles and powers that women possess are directly related to modes of production and can be explained from a materialist standpoint. It is obvious that in Middle Eastern subsistence economies, a greater equality exists between women and men. Although each sex does, indeed, have several clearly defined roles, they are more cooperative than domineering. Among nomads, for example, women generally run the home and men are usually involved in politics and economics. Without each other, each of their tasks would be meaningless. Men raise goats and sheep, for instance, but without women to milk the goats and to weave wool into carpets and tents, there would not be any point in raising them. Because these groups are kin-ordered, too, a balance of power can be maintained; women are forbidden by religious views to socialize with or show their face to men, but with kin this does not apply. Also migration in subsistence groups allows women who have married into other families the opportunity to see her natal group or even the chance for the two groups to merge and migrate together. In this way, brothers and fathers can determine if the female is being treated well and, if not, intercede on her behalf. Access to kin groups is also promoted by kinship networks set up between a mother and her sons and daughters.

As modes of production change into capitalistic means, however, many of the sources of power for women are lost. As a result, women are no longer treated so equally. As Beck concedes, "the integration of nomads into state systems and
market economies tend to erode women's status because of the very basis of status shift from the domestic and camp arena to a wider arena" (Beck 1978:367). Unfortunately, this wider arena is not available to women. Males, though, are integrated into this system by decreasing the availability of public land (forcing them to turn to agriculture) and by raising the prices (through inflation) of necessary tools purchased in town. As a result, cash crops become the means of subsistence, and women's previously important roles become less. Perhaps the most evident way women lose power, though, is because men (who are affected by capitalism first) feel they no longer have control over their own production (land must be bought or rented) or social environment. Beck concludes, "...the seclusion and restriction of women [through veiling] by men is one means of gaining control" (Beck 1978:369).

As I have suggested throughout, I believe that economic change in Morocco (coupled with ideological change) would alleviate many of the problems of inequality in the country. In using the word "inequality" I am referring to the state in which all people do not have equal opportunities to pursue any area which interests them (usually in the form of employment). Moroccan men as well as women have been negatively affected by capitalism. Only when males and females recognize the similarities between their respective plights will any significant changes occur. An inclusive reform can only succeed if men and women band together as one group. As Chinese women discovered, revolution must involve a class struggle, it cannot be based solely on gender. After all, the inequality women are fighting is only part of the greater inequality of class and ethnic differences, which men also experience.

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JAMAICA
by Paulette Tai Chun
Sharon Tai Chun

Jamaica is a small Caribbean island about three hundred and fifty miles southwest of Florida. We became independent in 1962, and, like a child just-born, we have struggled to crawl and to stand up for ourselves. We are twenty-three years old now, and the struggle is still on. Our women have struggled from the first day that we came to this island as slaves and indentured workers. All that we have known is work. The time came when we threw off the bonds of slavery. The chains are broken, but they are still there. We are prisoners of ignorance and poverty, and we cannot escape ourselves and our society.

It hurts me when
I send my daughter
OUT
to find a man
to lay or to get
pregnant
with
but we need the
money and we have
to eat.
They give us
aspirin and tell us
it
is Pearl and we
believe it and
"Shila
get pumpkin again."
The children go to school
without
shoes and not
even a cup of
MILO.
They cry and miss mary
gi them two pack a cheese
and Trix
out of her shop.
I wash three loads of
clothes
and clean her house.
She gives me
fourteen
dollars and sardine
on dry bread for
lunch
but it is not alright.
I need the money. The
baby
cries and I give
him syrup water.
Laud Jesus
a cank tek it no
longo, the man lef mi
again.
If I were home today, what would I be like? Would I be in school, working toward a Bachelors Degree in Science? Would I be applying for medical school next year?

I am a twenty-year-old woman of Vietnamese nationality. Vietnam is essentially a male-dominant society; therefore, female roles are traditional. Women are to be faithful and loving wives, good and understanding mothers, talented and obedient daughters-in-law. Most women have "jobs" oriented towards the keeping of a good home. These were the roles of my own mother as far back as I can remember. The only work she did outside of the home was to sew; she was a very talented seamstress.

As a young girl I thought about becoming a doctor, but I was never sure if it was appropriate to think that way in my culture. I remember seeing only two women doctors during the time I was in Vietnam. My family, however, encouraged me, because education, to them, was the most important thing for both males and females. I did not get the same encouragement from society. To me, most Vietnamese women were homemakers, elementary and junior high school teachers, and saleswomen. Women held the less prestigious and less competitive jobs.

As compared to women in the United States, women in Vietnam do not have the freedom to become independent career women. Most women do not get the chance to attend schools of higher education. And this is much needed to compete in the job market. A woman in the United States can be almost anything if she is mentally and physically capable. She is no longer told by society to stay home where she belongs. She is able to attain jobs equivalent to men's. At times she may be subtly discriminated against, but the majority of the time she is accepted by most, if not all, of society. A woman in the United States may have many roles. She can be a wife, a mother, a politician, a doctor, and the list goes on. Such lists are very limited for a Vietnamese woman.

I left my country ten years ago with the hope for a better future here in the United States. I am glad I am here today. The United States is allowing me to choose freely the profession and school of my choice. I can definitely apply to medical school, and, with a little luck, I may possibly be a doctor in the near future. If I were home, I think I would have no other choice than to become a wife and a mother.
RESISTING CATEGORIES: NIKKI GIOVANNI
by Sherilyn George

It is more than difficult to put Nikki Giovanni in a nutshell. Although her reading in Swasey on February 28th included a good mix of her older and newer work, listeners got only an inkling of Giovanni the poet. Paula Gidding, in her introduction to Giovanni's tenth volume of poetry, Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day, uses Giovanni's own words to give insight into Giovanni the woman --

There is always something to do. There are hungry people to feed, naked people to clothe, sick people to comfort and make well. And while I don't expect you to save the world, I do think it's not asking too much for you to love those with whom you sleep, share the happiness of those whom you call friends, encourage those among you who are visionary, and remove from your life those who offer you depression, despair and disrespect.

Nikki Giovanni opened her convocation with what she calls her wind-up topic, South Africa. Randall Robinson, Arthur Ashe and others involved in TransAfrica wrongly accused her of giving a three million dollar performance in the Republic of South Africa. Giovanni did no such thing. In fact, she was visiting several countries which border South Africa, and it was mandatory that she make a "courtesy stop" in Johannesburg in order to travel from one nation to another. And no, she did not receive three million dollars for those appearances.

Giovanni is highly critical of those members of TransAfrica who were recently arrested for picketing the South African embassy. She is not critical because of the accusations they hurled at her. She is not critical because she is unconcerned about the situation for South Africa's Black majority of the population. She objects to the protesters' priorities and doubts the sincerity of their commitments. She said that Americans are always ready to intervene in some other nation when there is so much to do in this country. ("They say, 'Blacks can't own homes in South Africa,' well, they can't own homes here either."). Moreover, before their demonstrations, Giovanni informed the audience, TransAfrica contacted all three major television networks, The Washington Post, and The New York Times to insure that they would be photographed being arrested.

The recent USA/Africa (United States Artists for Africa) recording undertaking did not escape Giovanni's criticism either. She believes that that group of American recording artists would not have come together to aid the starving in Ethiopia if they were not worried about the recording artists in Great Britain upstaging them. "'We are the World; We are the Children,' What's that saying?" Giovanni questioned. "At least 'Do You Know it's Christmas?' meant something." Giovanni holds that Harry Belafonte, who was part of the leadership for that project, was seeking
publicity to compensate for the failure of the recent movie he produced. Giovanni also disagrees with USA/Africa's chastisement of Prince for not joining their organization. "...singing on an album," Giovanni said, "... isn't any good anyway." Prince chose to donate proceeds from his concerts to the needy in the cities in which he performed.

Giovanni is outspoken. Many people still associate the name Nikki Giovanni with poems on revolution. She has been called militant, bitter and hateful for the poetry that anticipated Black America's coming into its own. While it is true that during the 1960's and early 1970's her poetry expressed her perceptions of what work needed to be done and her perceptions of how to go about doing this work, she has moved beyond those perceptions.

"Revolutionary Dreams"

i used to dream militant
dreams of taking
over america to show
those white folks how it should be
done
i used to dream radical dreams
of blowing everyone away with my perceptive powers
of correct analysis
i even used to think i'd be the one
to stop the riot and negotiate the peace
then i awoke and dug
that if i dreamed natural
dreams of being a natural
woman doing what a woman
does when she's natural
i would have a revolution
(The Women and the Men, Morrow 1975)

In discussing how her work has changed over the years, Giovanni said that we grow, we graduate, we're always freshmen at something. She will look at an old piece occasionally and say, "That's all right. The poet did als right." She realizes that her vision is a little different now; she likes her old stuff, but must move on.

Giovanni's conversations while visiting Denison covered a number of topics. During our discussion at dinner she spoke about Toni Morrison's novel Tar Baby and what she sees being beautiful as entailing. The heroine in Tar Baby, Jadine, is a very beautiful, educated and well-traveled woman. A film adaptation is in the works and Giovanni suggests Vanessa Williams or Shari Belafonte be cast as Jadine because they are such beautiful women. "But beauty is a burden. From the time you're yea high, you got people kissing your ass. You never get a chance to develop," Giovanni said. From there Giovanni went on to say that it is a good thing we do not name ourselves because we do not know ourselves. She was born Yolanda Cornella Giovanni, Jr. Her older sister, Gary, named her
Nikki. Giovanni talked about her fourteen year old son, Tommy, who is thinking of attending Denison ("A joke with his math grades."). She told someone she actually wrote a good omelet. She spoke of her admiration of Tina Turner. And, she revealed her secret love for science fiction.

It does not matter whether mention of Giovanni's name brings to mind her old revolutionary pieces, or the love poems she calls silly, or the woman-oriented themes that characterize her most recent volumes. If your mind can only manage to conjur one image, you are missing something. The woman resists simple categorization.

Our Ability to Claim Our Power
by Teresa L. Woodward

It was four o'clock in the afternoon on a typically cloudy Ohio day. Faculty and students, gathered in an informal group in the Faculty Lounge, were engaged in discussion. This was not an unusual gathering except for the person at the center: Audre Lorde. Lorde, a dynamic, quiet-spoken, energetic, powerful woman, was a visiting lecturer. Her charisma and ease at speaking, however, made us feel as though we were family or friends rather than a group of people she had never met.

Lorde began the informal discussion by naming herself. She named herself Black, Feminist, Poet, Lesbian, Mother, Professor, Warrior, Audre Lorde. She explained that it is important for her to identify herself so that we may know who she is and from where she draws her strength and joy. It is important, she said, that she—Audre Lorde—be the person who affirms her identity. If she does not name herself, someone else will, and that naming may be to her detriment. Lorde spoke to us of her identity, the strength she found in claiming it, and the joy and sorrow she experiences while continuing to discover and challenge it. She encouraged us to begin to identify/name ourselves. She explained that externally defined positions, roles and identities alienate us from ourselves and our power. And we are, she feels, the most powerful weapons we could ever possess in the struggle for survival. This survival is not assured, Lorde said, as we face the problems of pollution, cancer, world hunger, violence and the threat of ultimate destruction from a nuclear war. Any chance for survival comes from our ability to know and name ourselves--our ability to claim our power. Otherwise, we are giving, if not throwing, our power away. And what we discard may be, and often is, used against us. Therefore, it is vitally important that we claim our identities—that we begin to define ourselves from within. If we do not, then we will be defined according to convenience, and convenience often has little regard for truth.
It is this struggle for survival, this struggle for self definition, that makes Lorde a warrior. And her weapons are her wit, charm, intelligence, identity and poetry.

Later that evening, Lorde had dinner with a group of Black faculty and students. She explained to us that she felt it was important that we recognize each other as Black women. She wanted the opportunity to hear from us. She was interested in our concerns, perceptions and experiences at Denison and the world at large. The discussion included many topics--male/female relations, the need for political activism among students, the strengthening of the student community and Black/White relations at Denison through the years. She gave an ear to our concerns, fears and hopes, and gave us suggestions from her unique perspective. She also told us that many of our concerns were echoed in the community at large, the world. We discussed the changes in the family that have led many to say it is disappearing in the face of the women's movement and the climbing divorce rate. She cited her own family as an example of the survival of the family, though hers is hardly an example of a traditional, nuclear family. Some of us commented that we, too, had come from non-traditional families, single-parent households or extended families. We all recognized not the disappearance of the American family but the need for it to be redefined. And as we begin to redefine the family, Lorde added, we must redefine our lives, the communities in which we live, the structures of our society. While this might seem an impossible task, its accomplishment rests on our ability to envision ourselves and our future. Lorde shared with us her vision of a future where we, as an entire population, shall be able to form bonds with each other that go beyond the restrictions of race, class, gender, religion, politics and sexual preference.

That evening we were able to experience Lorde's other visions and feel her power in the clear, melodic tone of her voice and the unmistakable passion of her poetry. She made it clear at the beginning of her reading that we were not to passively take in her words; we were not to allow her words to float through our ears and across our brains and not touch our hearts. She expected, if not demanded, that we allow ourselves to feel her words and be moved by their power. By doing so, she said, we might become a little more aware of our own power. She spoke of the alienation from our personal power that we have experienced by removing our hearts from our hearing. We must not relegate passion and emotion to another realm of experience, but must consider them active, enriching parts of the whole. (These concepts are similar to the ideas she puts forth in her article "The Power of the Erotic.")

As she began reading, I found myself drawn into her words. I found myself in South Africa caught up in the struggle for freedom. Her poem "Harriet" reminded me of conversations with my sisters. "Litany for Survival" was a chilly reminder of the danger in silence as well as the danger in speaking. The experience of listening to a poet read from her work became lost to the experience of actually feeling the works read. By the end of the reading, I felt exhilarated and moved. I had been touched in an
entirely new way. I was glad I had suspended the analytical part of my mind in order to listen with my heart. My heart heard and answered.

Even though I spent only a few hours with Audre Lorde, I felt as though I gained insight into her work and into myself. Audre Lorde gave to me and to others here not just a simple reading of her poetry but something of herself. And in giving of herself, she gave me something more of myself—a new vision for the future.