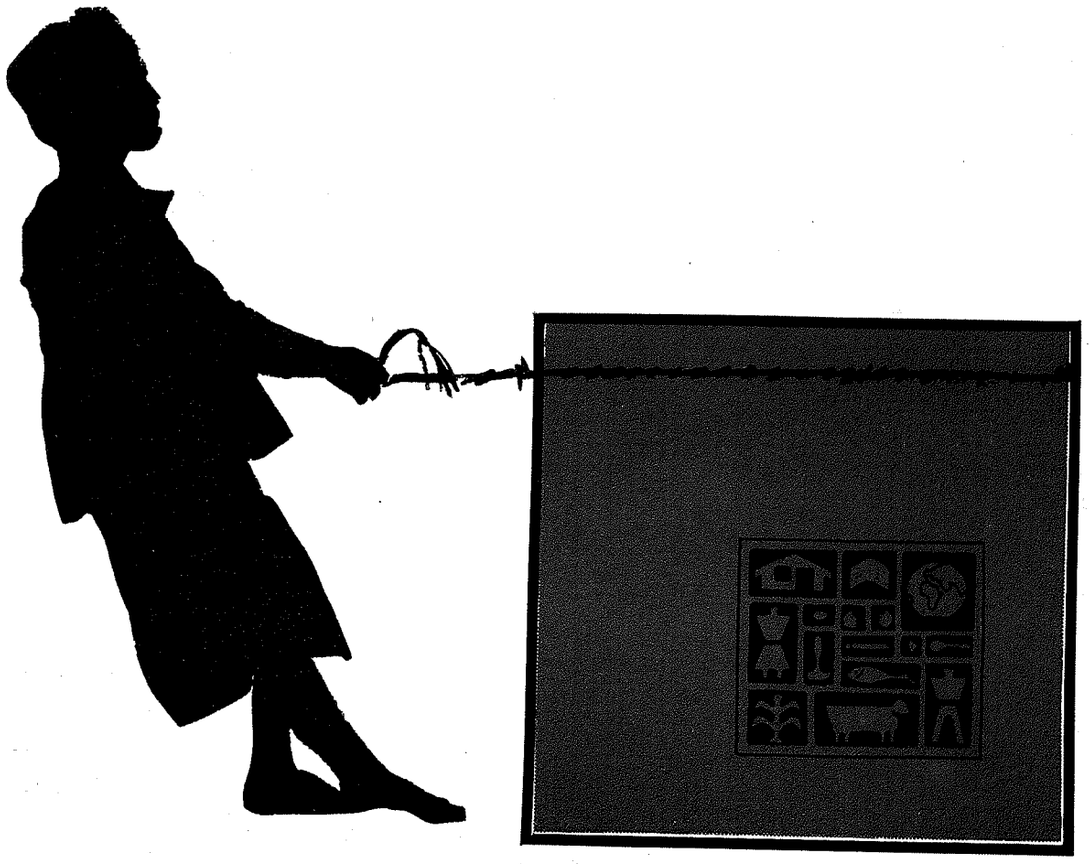
Center Periphery Summer -1988a



the CENTER PERIPHERY

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Volume 2, No.4 The Center Periphery Spring/Summer 1988

In this issue, A Latin "Macho Point of View,
by M. Acevedo & K. Parker

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by N. Hiza

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by M.S. Thrasher

A word of introduction and editorial introspection..... This rendition of the Center Periphery is a blatant and bruised victim of wait-until-the-last-week-of-the-semester-to-write-that-paper syndrome! With all good and noble intentions articles and assistance were solicited from volunteers several months ago.....Sorry. The glacial age then slumped upon us and the CP was put on the back burner to melt...down.

However, happily, the deluge is over and we now can get down to business. Thus, to you hanger-ons for summertime in Amherst (and belatedly next September, to you returnees from far-away), here is the newest collection of notions, opinions, and ideas from the Center core and periphery.

Enjoy! Suggestions and comments are welcome always. Dialogue is also encouraged; telex or drop a note to - Mark Lynd, c/o Peace Corps Micronesia, the South Pacific.

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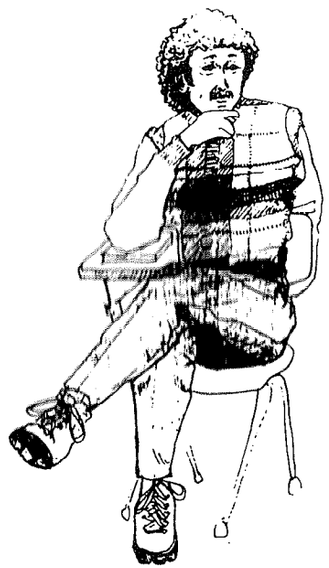

Features from the Center

Women's Role and Status: A Latin "Macho" Point of View.

by
Mario Acevedo
with Kathy Parker

Last semester, students in Peggy Antrobus' Women in Development were asked to trace their mother's history of role and status in their families and compare it to their own development. The following is Mario's uniquely "macho" account based on a transcription of a dialogue he had with Kathy Parker.

After my mother's 17th pregnancy, my father decided to go to the village priest to ask for a dispensation for them to have no more children. My mother got very sick during each pregnancy and she had almost died the last time she gave birth. The priest declined the request for a dispensation, stating that the obligation of every Christian couple was to "raise children for Heaven".

"You don't know how sick she becomes", my father said.

"It is her duty", the priest answered.

"But she is very weak, and some of the babies have been born very weak also. We have even lost some of them. It is not fair", my father dared to say.

"You don't have the right to judge the designs of the Holy Providence", the priest replied raising his voice.

"But, she could die", my father pleaded.

"Let her die doing her duty", the priest shouted.

Eleven months later, I was born.

I belong to a "Female Family". I say that not only because we are three sons and seven daughters, but also because women played the most important role in the history of my family. Every important decision about the path we should follow, was made by women. From the migration of the family to the city, to the choice of school for both my

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youngest sister and me, were decisions made by either my mother or my oldest sisters. In spite of the fact that we are, in many ways, a traditional Latin family - bound by roles proscribed by religion and culture - in many areas the females have long assumed the initiative.

Within the context of a society so blatantly macho, how did this come about? I would like to briefly trace the history of my family to see if I can find a key for answering that question and to its obvious corollary: Is this a phenomenon unique to my family, or is it part of a more widespread pattern?

.....

Who Owns What (and how did they get it ?)

Oliva's story

"In this macho society, everything a woman gets, she gets on her back".

My oldest sister was barely sixteen when she participated in a village festival playing the role of a clever young man in a community theatre group. The local land owner ("El Patron") was among the public, as he used to be in every community activity in the village, having some fun and drinking some drinks with the sharecroppers and the administrators of his farms. After the presentaion, the conversation became very animated. El patron mentioned that one of the boys had played a very good role in the comedy.

"It is not a boy. It is a girl", one of the people present said.

"That's imposible", said el patron.

"I'll bet you, Don Alfredo", my father said, knowing that the "boy" in question was his daughter.

My father called my sister to introduce her to Don Alfredo. He was very proud because his daughter was so smart and she had played her role well in the presentation. Don Alfredo was very impressed because that girl was so pretty.

Two weeks later my father's pride turned into astonishment when el patron arrived at his home to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage.

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Miscellaneous Short & Beautiful Quotations:

"...it is simply not enough to suggest...that if everyone would light one candle the world would become a better place for all of us. The plain fact is that some people can't afford candles, some people won't light a candle unless persuaded and urged to do so by others, and some spend their lives blowing out other peoples' candles. Only an organized, active and militant political movement will truly make the world a better place for all of us."

Rollo May, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, et al. (Eds.) Politics and Innocence, 1986.

"It is necessary to direct one's attention violently towards the present as it is, if one wishes to transform it. Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will."

Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 1971.

My Soninke Sister OR Who Will Answer?

By Mary Jo Connelly

Living in Boulembou, a remote Soninke village in eastern Senegal, I felt the stinging ironies of Development and Technology: How they have drawn rural third world women into their lethal web, even as they have drawn first world women like me into helping spin the web. Two incidents in the life of my Soninke sister show what I have come to know as Development's most brutal face.

One afternoon n the Spring of 1984, as I worked alongside my sister Djaabi to prepare her mother's field for planting, we heard a very loud rumble of thunder. Djaabi looked up at the sky and wondered aloud, "is that was what a bomb will sound like." I couldn't respond, and don't know if she expected me to. But, I haven't ever stopped feeling I owe her an answer -- or someone does.

I've replayed that scene so many times in my mind: A 12-year-old girl, wearing indigo-dyed cloth, woven from cotton she had helped cultivate, using a short-handled wooden hoe with a 2-inch blade; yet, she's heard on the radio about the bomb, knows there's a machine that can make fire come out of the sky at any moment and destroy her. Stooping close to the earth over her hoe, she glances upward -- now in puzzlement and fear. If Djaabi lived in Nicaragua, Angola or Vietnam, where bombs have been more than a threat, I imagine she would be asking a different version of the same question: Who will answer to me?

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The radio is the only evidence that modern technology has touched Djaabi's life, and even so she has little time to listen. Very few of the material conditions of life for Boulembou women have changed in decades -- perhaps in hundreds of years. After working in the fields, Djaabi returns home each day to a mud house with a thatched roof to pound millet and cook it on three rocks over a wood fire. She draws water from an open hand-dug well with a 60-foot fiber rope and a rubber bucket, and scrubs laundry by hand. Although Djaabi speaks three languages and was an excellent Soninke teacher for me, she has never been to school, cannot write her name. She can make intricate tin car models, but has never ridden in a car.

Since that Spring day, Djaabi has married, but her days have changed little. I learned recently that her first baby died in infancy -- as other surely will also, since Djaabi can't afford even very basic medical care like chloroquine or vaccinations. Yet, Djaabi and the other women know something about medicine, nutrition, hygiene. They've heard health talks on the radio, at the clinic 10 kilometers away, and from me. Boulembou women want modern advantages for their children; they feel all the more inadequate and powerless knowing they have too little money, too little food, and too little time even to assure survival.

Technology and Development have changed the answer to the ancient woman's question, "Why did my child die?" We used to attribute it to the will of God or Allah. Now, thanks to the doctrines of nutrition, medicine and modern motherhood, women throughout the world know to blame ourselves. When Djaabi's baby died, she knew it was at least partly her failure: She didn't feed the child adequately like the radio said, or take time to filter the water as Sani said, or earn enough money to but medicine from the clinic, or...Development and Technology -- nameless, faceless, distant -- and we, their more visible emissaries, have been busy teaching third world women the new answers. We have too seldom asked ourselves whose questions we address, and to whom we should be accountable.

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In the three years I've been away from Boulembou, I have studied and thought about Development as a process and/or goals; as a micro- and/or macro-phenomenon; as domination or liberation; as dependency or self-reliance; as economics or attitudes or spirituality....as neglecting or integrating Women? And still, I come back to Djaabi, the bomb, the baby and the question: Who will answer to hr? Besides this question, all others seem frivolous. Training and theory notwithstanding, this sad conjuncture remains my touchstone, as I struggle to envisage Development with a female face, Technology making reparations for what it has stolen of Women's souls.

"G'day Doggy Darling" and Other Western Customs

by
Norman Hiza

I am becoming very good at minding my own business and ignoring people around me. Like everybody else, I avoid small talk and other unnecessary friendly gestures. I no longer indulge in the time wasting habit of saying the long words, "hello goodmorning" or "good afternoon, how's your family?" I have even abandoned my Australian acquisition of the more efficient "G'day mate," for the super efficient nod or wink sometimes accompanied by an inaudible "Hi" and, for the privileged few, a quick flash of a smile.

As far as I can tell the only place in Amherst where you will find people who still insist on the full blown good morning (without the family trimmings) is the Center for International Education. Apparently, some individuals in this place have been known to exhibit even more wierd behaviors which have been attributed to their over exposure to strange cultures overseas. Help is on the way though. The "Center Madman" has made it very clear tho them that it is not possible to insist on being nice to each other and hope to achieve any respectable level of academic excellence at the same time.

Some nights I have bad dreams in which I am walking down the Samora Machel Avenue in Dar-Es-Salaam with this Amherst attitude. That would be a disaster.

Back home greeting each other is an indispensable ritual. Nothing gets done before all the proper niceties have been completed. You have to inquire about the other person's health, their family, their neighbor's relatives and their work before you can talk business. This is a process one does not rush. It sets the tone for the rest of the dialogue.

Every morning you have to make sure that all your neighbors are well before you take off to work. If your neighbor's daughter is sick and you happen to have an office car, you have an obligation to take her to the hospital before you go to work. Your boss will understand if you are late. If she is a foreigner and doesn't seem to understand, don't worry, she too will soon discover that her well-being and her business is everybody else's business.

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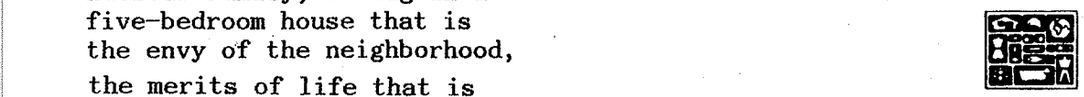
My former boss, a tough American woman who we called "Nguvu kazi" ("energy flow" in Kiswahili) made the transition one Sunday when a total of twenty employees came to her house at various times to see how she was doing when she contracted the flu on Friday.

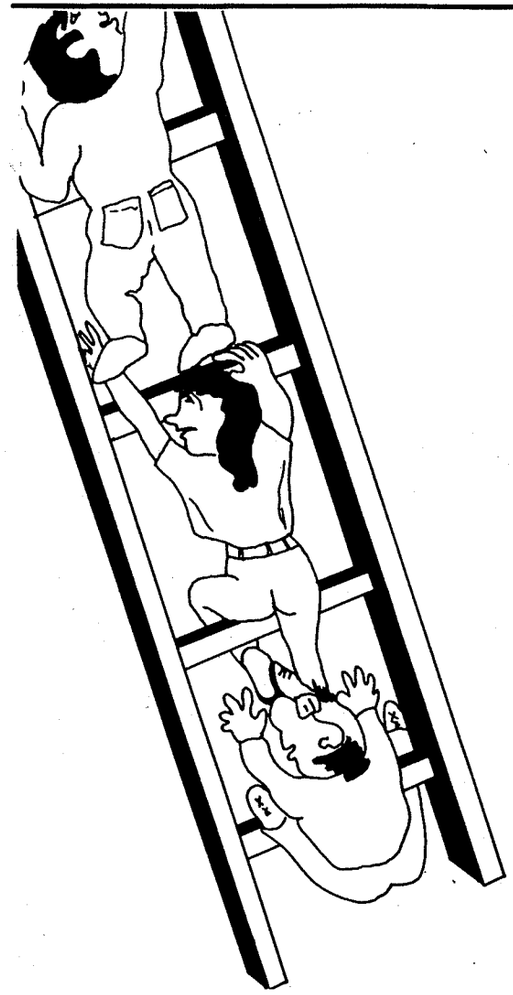
Such is the life of interdependency. Its foundation is based on the extended family concept and a sense of community sharing which gives everyone the right to interfere with everyone's life. People feel they have an obligation to provide emotional, spiritual support when it is needed.

Just as I imagine that it would be difficult to explain to the Amherst middle class nuclear family, living in a five-bedroom house that is the envy of the neighborhood, the merits of life that is void of privacy, it would be very difficult also to convince the folks in my village that the family in Amherst did not do something terrible that made their friends, neighbors and relatives abandon them. Do they perhaps practice bad witchcraft?

Imagine:...There is only three of you in a large house - the father, mother and your only child. It is not possible for your sister's child to come live with you because your sister does not have extra children to spare because she lives like you. Your neighbor's children have been warned not to come even near your courtyard. The house is therefore empty, dull and gloomy. No plates or glasses being broken in the kitchen, no kids screaming inside or outside the house; a perfectly arranged living room where you sit condemned to reading a book with no hope of your cousin's neighbors or strangers dropping in when you least expect them.

Perhaps that is why they learn to talk to cats and dogs in the West?





Hémin Sabe

My First Center Retreat- A Lost Opportunity

by Saeed O. Fahia

More than fifty expectant persons seated in a big circle were looking my way. Keshab, a fellow Center member, has just announced my name suggesting that I will perform something - sing, dance or tell a story. I was gripped by panic and looked sideways, expecting a last reprieve, but there was none. I stood up without knowing what I would do and went to the center of the big circle formed by all the Center members. After a moment of silence I heard myself saying, "I will show you a dance from my region in Somalia. The dance is called Erigavaawi." Just then I remembered that Hassan, another Somalian, was listening and might betray, might betray, my ineptitude in the "Erigvaawi dance." So, I added, "Hassan who comes from another region in Somalia does not know about the Erigvaawi dance."

I started moving around the circle with ungainly leg flips trying to execute the steps of the Erigavo dance. Moments later someone in the crowd, perhaps sensing my predicament or that my humble

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efforts were an ugly caricature of the original, started beating a drum and the others picked up the refrain by clapping their hands. With this timely intervention by my friends I gained confidence and was able to finish at least a part of the Erigavaawi routine before I retired to my place within the circle. The whole episode took less than sixty seconds and, although the distinctive hand clapping, feet tapping and chant were missing, what I did could pass for Erigavaawi.

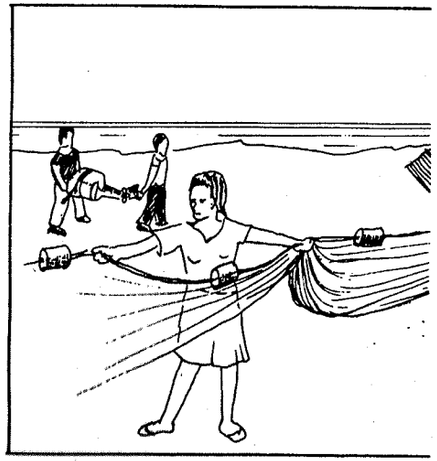
It all started from a misunderstanding, but I could have done better. After arriving at the retreat ground all the Center members congregated in a big room where the business of the day was discussed. And while listening to the explanations of the activities of the retreat my neighbor to the right handed me a paper with a list of names. Mr. Sumantri from Indonesia suggested that I add my name to the list. I complied thinking that I was volunteering for the volleyball team. I got suspicious when Keshab asked me at dinner time.

A Moment of Human Meeting: Or "What I Did on Spring Break

by Sue Thrasher

I had my ticket for Tennessee. Meetings had been arranged at Highlander, and there was work to do on the Horton/Freire transcript. I would see some friends, get re-acquainted with one of the most beautiful golden retrievers in the world, and sit with Myles on his front porch watching the sun go down over the Smokies. I was going to cheat stingy old New England out of at least one week of spring!

Notes started appearing in my box saying John Gaventa was calling. I assumed it was



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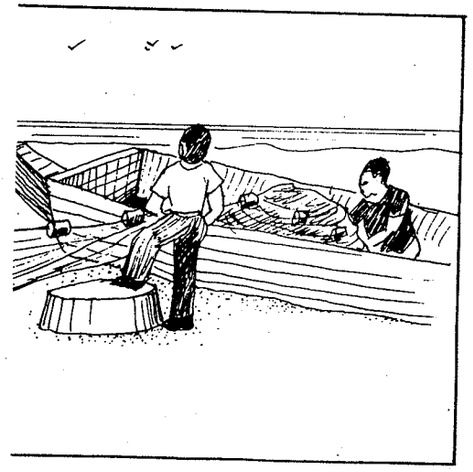
to confirm a meeting date, and since we were in the middle of the visit with Freire, I put off calling back. When we finally connected, he hesitantly asked, "Would you be willing to go to Chile for the opening of Pancho's new popular education center instead of coming here?" I was not hesitant. "Yes!"

Francisco Vio Grossi (Pancho) had spent ten days at Highlander in the spring of 1983. Along with Felix Cadena from Mexico and Ernesto Vallacillos from Nicaragua, he was part of the planning team of the "Encuentro por la Paz" that was held in Managua the following September. The agenda for their visit, however was two-fold. The



planning was essential and was completed during the first part of their stay. Secondarily, we wanted to introduce them to community organizations that we worked with at Highlander, and with other adult educators in the U.S. Their stay ended with a three day workshop of adult educators from both Canada and the U.S.

Pancho, in particular, had been very struck with the notion of a "center" for popular education. As we kept in touch with him over the years --primarily through the Participatory Research Group Network and the Council for International Adult Education--he would talk about the "son of Highlander" they were working to create in Chile.

Like many of his other Chilean colleagues, Pancho had gone into exile following the overthrow of Allende. He returned to Chile in the early 1980s, having spent time studying in Britain, and then teaching at a university in Venezuela. Since his return, he has worked carefully to create a network of community educators working at a base level in Chile. Shortly after his return he organized the

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Consejo de Educacion de Adultos de America Latina (CEAAL), an organization based in Santiago, with Paulo Freire as the nominal head; CEAAL has provided an umbrella for building a network with other Latin American educators and human rights activists. It was under the sponsorship of CEAAL that Pancho, working with many others, was able to establish the new popular education center, El Canelo de Nos.

The Center takes its name from the canelo trees, known for its healing power and its ceremonial role in the "mapuche" culture. The canelo was the first tree planted by the group of workers who founded the Center, in "land fertilized with fragments of Pablo Neruda's poems." The pre-conference materials described the Center as a place where

"...a systematic effort has been developed to create a moment for human meeting, where there converge theory and practice, action and reflection..-.generation and socialization of knowledge, culture and innovation...the objective aspect of analysis with the subjective aspect of its actors, in short, a place where science and life meet."

In celebrating the opening of the new center, CEAAL and Canelo workers planned a conference that focused on popular education in Chile at this moment in history. In addition to participants from the popular movements in Chile, they invited international friends as well--partly to share in the celebration, partly to learn from the experience of popular education in Chile, partly for protection. (The letter of invitation to Highlander put it this way: "...it is important for us to show international support since we live in a fragile political context. Please come.")

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Knights in Armour: How Do They Bathe?

by
The Center Madman

My illness is incapacitating, so I've got nothing to do. I don't know about you, but when I get hungry I eat. Bon apetit. Time to turn on the interstellar modulator. Chk Chk Chk. Been hearing some rumors in the hollows. Is the timing right or is it already left? Oh sweet madness, peel me a grapefruit.

When I was a small child, seems like yesterday, they told me not to talk to strangers. Anybody was foreign and I obeyed the rules. There's a real issue at the center of this. Now that I am an adult, or so they tell me, I have evolved to the privileged status of being able to talk to anyone. Wow, I talk to everyone. Simply by virtue of being pink, male, female, poor and rich, I can just chatter on and on and on. Everybody thinks like me and I think I need to scream!

But the truth of the matter is, one can rant and rave and waste paper and go nowhere, like where I'm coming from. It just happens: you hear your own voice and

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Pursuing Paradigmatic Parameters: A Response to the Center Madman

By the Center MadWoman

Dear Sir...Whilst weaving your wordy webs of wisdom I suspect a despair within your bosom [sic]. Whence this...this cry of disbelief you shout and type to us, your colleagues and comrades. Do you truly believe we to be a nest of bobbins, threads tangled and blowing in the proverbial "breeze?" Or, is this a tryst with intellectual intrigue and a trial for a thwarted technocratic trauma? Why must you suffer in silence, in a synonymous signature with solitude. 'Specially when your signature is so significantly solve-able!

Your bemoaning of the fads and trends of the paradigmatic shifts of graduate studentdom prevail. I wonder, so mildly and meekly, and lest the "grooviness" of your tongue, whether you are truly sharing your feelings, i.e., is this a dialogue or a phenomenological paraphrase?

Do we have an "oh my gosh" epiphany amongst our PCs and time-management? Or, dost thou tickle only thy own tongue for a merest penny pleasure? [Sic. The Muse has gotten my leash.]

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Madman continued..

it sounds like it's at the end of someone else's lips. In many chats I want to ask you if you are experiencing this "tunnel talk." It's the right thing to say; so say it and get righteous! It's a dark lonely ride to the end of that tunnel. Far beyond the no-ing headnods and half closed guru eyes. Tunnel talk echos in ego go go go go. Gimme a dose of my own medicine, I'm repressed.

All this may not seem black and white, but nobody asked for an oreo cookie. We got people, black and white, and nobody's asked them where they want to be. "If you don't like it, do something about it." What a message. A center message. Live by the sword die by the sword. I get feeling like a knight in the dark with the message as my ARMOUR. This ethos of "proaction" is like asking an armoured knight to perform ballet. It makes a lot of noise, it ain't too pretty, and you're glad when it's over. I'll be glad when this is over.

Did you ever wonder how knights get in and out of their armour? Yeah, piece by piece. There just is know other way. Take apart the Contrived Interpersonal Equality one piece at a time. Don't be afraid, my sweeties, there is a beautiful being behind the armour. Don't beat it, you'll only make it fit better. Don't jerk it off, you might dismember the inside. Be patient. If you've read this far I know you can do it right. Turn up my no-s.

Yessir, my dear, we got to get rid of that armour. Changing is good stuff. (don't smart off about all change may not be good. too much in-ti-lectual-izin. you know what I mean) You can't do it from behind. Got to feel the freedom of movement. Dig it. Can you imagine talking without that confounded echo? Oh yeah, a little huggin' too! I'm looking forward to seeing how different we are and how different we show it. Hey, you're cute! If you understand all this then you is as crazy as I am. Gotta vacuum in the middle of this mess.

Madwoman continued..

To be more precise, what is your bone? What is it that you truly bemoan? A fad does exist, a personification or, forgive me, an anthropomorphism of our times, i.e., the pursuit of knowledge as if it were the "hound", a.k.a., that ratty reification.

We buckle and break free, we toss and tie tight to our knees that unending "intellectual" dilemma of epistemology. I believe that this bug-a-boo is at the heart of your timid-diletude.

Yet, persistent Madman, you have mis-connected, I do believe. Tunnel-vision is a plague. Trend setting is too vague. Masturbation can become your cage. And, another perspective does prevail.

Comparatively, relatively, within the plethora of self-perspectives, there does exist hope and potential, actual worlds within the possibilities of all our minds. The quest at the Center for participation, egalitar-ation, commun-ation, is not uncalled for...nor unnecessary.

Dialogue is more than talk, more than exchange, more than two or more people verbalizing at each other. Dialogue is a frame of reference, a means of learning, a perspective for looking at

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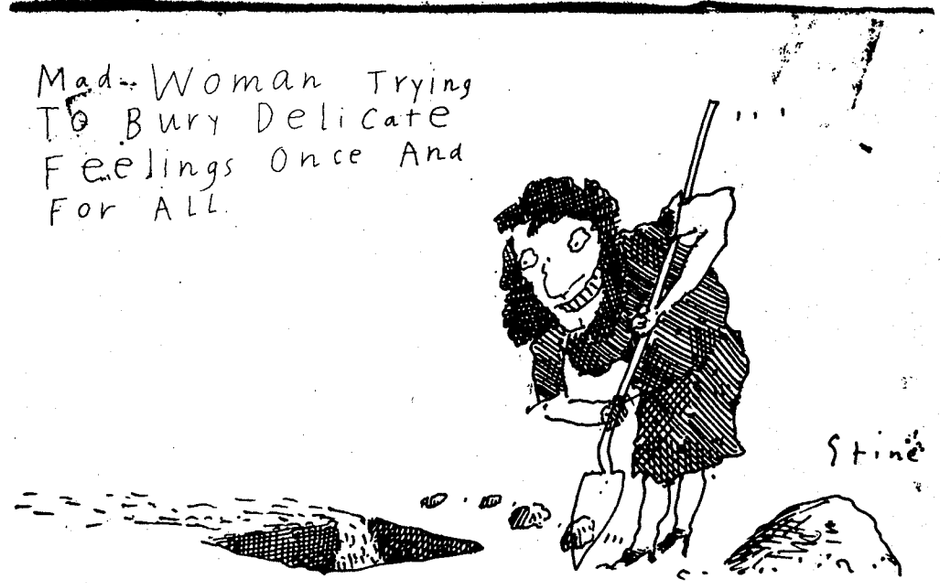
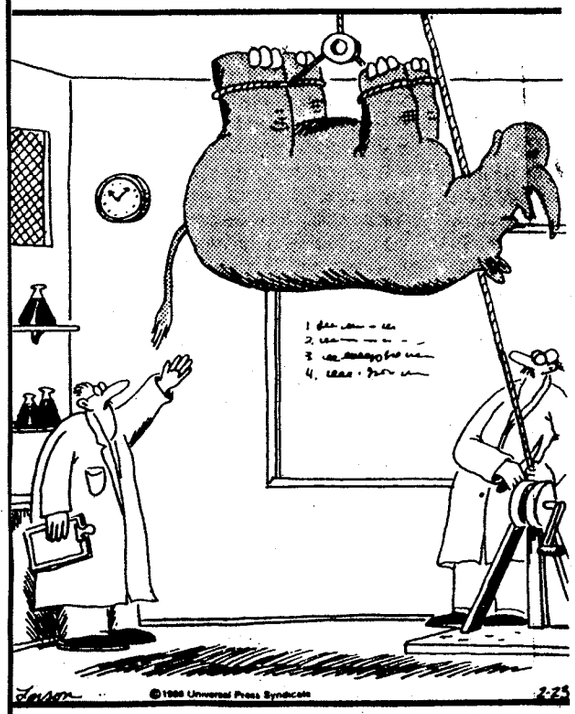


processes that maintain our worlds, a paradigmatic phenomenon in and of itself that we accept all too often as a part of human capacity only to be exercised.

To end this prologue quickly and quaintly, and to sum up our brief sojourn, allow me to quote to you some wisdom I have learned....

"...there are benefits and there are benefits. Ants that encounter in their path a dead philosopher may make good use of him. Literature, from the very beginning, has had a single enemy, and that is the restriction of the expressed idea. It turns out, however, that freedom of expression sometimes presents a greater threat to an idea, because forbidden thoughts may circulate in secret, but what can be done when an important fact is lost in an ungodly din? When that voice, though freely resounding, cannot be heard, because the technologies of information have led to a situation in which one can receive best the message of him [sic] who shouts the loudest, even when the most falsely?" (LEM)

Adieu, Mad-Man, be real and you be cool. Lighten up, abit... too.



Testing whether or not rhinos land on their feet.

Praise of Learning

Learn the elementary things!
For those whose time has come
it is never too late!
Learn the ABC. It won't be
enough,
but learn it! Don't be
dismayed by it!
Begin! You must know
everything.
You must take over the
leadership.

Learn, man in the asylum!
Learn, man in the prison!
Learn, woman in the kitchen!
Learn, sixty year olds!
You must take over the
leadership.
Seek out the school, you who
are homeless!
Acquire knowledge, you who
shiver!
You who are hungry, reach for
the book:
it is a weapon.
You must take over the
leadership.

Don't be frightened to ask,
comrade!
Don't be talked into
anything.
Check for yourself!
What you do not know yourself
you don't know.
Scrutinize the bill,
it is you who must pay it.
Put your finger on each item,
ask: How did this get here?
You must take over the
leadership.

Eligio al Aprendizaje

!Aprende las cosas
elementarias!
!Para aquellos a quienes les
ha llegado la hora
nunca es deasiado tarde!
Aprende el abecedario. No
bastara
!pero aprendolo! !No dejes
que te desanimen!
!Comienza! Debes saber todo.
Tienes que ser dirigente.

!Aprende, hombre en el asilo!
!Aprende, hombre en la
prison!
!Aprende, mujer en la cocina!
Tienes que ser dirigente.
!Busca la escuela, tu que no
tienes casa!
!Adquire sabiduria, tu que te
estremeces do frio!
Tu que tienes hambre, toma un
libro: es un arma.
Tienes que ser dirigente.

!No tengas miedo de preguntar
camarada!
No dejes que te induzcan a
nada.
!Investiga por ti mismo!
Lo que no sepas tu' mismo no
lo conoces.
Examina los detalles a fondo;
eres tu el que paga las
consequencias.
Pon tu dedo en cada detalle,
pregunta: ?Como llego esto
aqui?
Tienes que ser dirigente.

by Bertolt Brecht

Thrasher continued..

Approximately twenty five international participants did come. A group of twenty Swedish adult educators mad the conference a part of a larger tour that included Brazil and Nicaragua to establish ties with popular education projects. In addition there were representatives from the Denmark Folk School Association, a folk high school in Finland, the popular university movement in Spain, non-governmental funding agencies from Holland and Italy, the Canadian Institute of Adult Education in Quebec, Canadian CIDA, the International Council on Adult Education from Toronto, and one other American from the Peace and Conflict Study Center at the University of California, Berkeley.

It was a good international delegation--nice folks to spend recreational time with (i.e. good dancers and a good sense of humor) and also to learn from their work. I was especially interested in the popular university movement in Spain, and the beginning of outreach from some of the Swedish members to explore the parallels between the folk high schools and study circles and popular education.

The conference itself was extremely well conceived. Plenary sessions were held each morning with small group workshops in the afternoon. We each picked a topic on the first day and stayed in that small group workshop for the next three days. I was in the participatory research and systematization group. At the end of each afternoon session, the "note-taker" would spend an hour or so putting together the notes from the meeting; we would meet again briefly to make any corrections, and the following morning our report--along with all the others--would be handed to us as a synthesis of the previous day's work.

Pancho Vio Grossi opened the conference with a presentation on popular education in Chile. (I'm hoping to get a copy of his paper for circulation.) The second day I was one of six participants on an international panel in which each of us talked about our work in the context of promoting democracy. The third and final day of the

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Thrasher continued..

conference a similar panel composed of Chileans from the various popular education centers put forth their own work within the context of promoting democracy in Chile and the particular role of the non-governmental organizations.

Clearly the short time that I was there is not sufficient to understand the current situation in Chile.

Still, I would be bold enough to assert the following.

There is great hope and inspiration in Chile. The popular education movement there is quite strong, notable especially for the way it integrates political, social, and cultural life. I was struck again and again during the week by their use of graphic arts, theatre, traditional crafts, and music.

I was also struck by their daily efforts to define the meaning of democracy on a national, organizational, and personal level. The description of Canelo's work outlines several thrusts--organic agriculture, recovery and systematization of traditional technologies, popular libraries, barefoot lawyers, cultural animation, personal development, popular organization, use of alternative video, participatory research, and work in the areas of peace and human rights. It ends, however, with this description: "Its unity is

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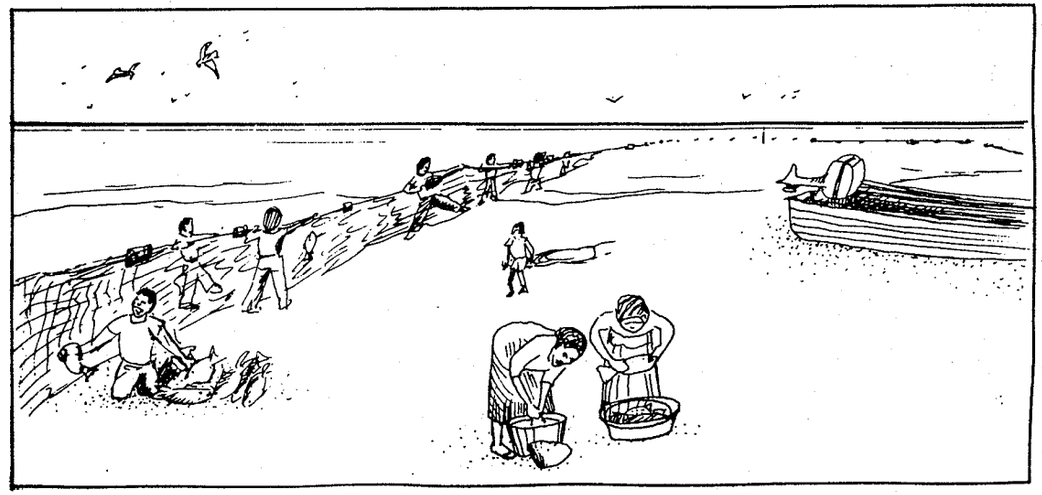

constituted by a deep trust in the ability of common people to control their lives, in the personal and social levels, that is, it is defined as a place where democracy is sought at every level.

In spite of what Pancho called in his letter to Highlander "a fragile political context," it appears that the popular education movement at the community level has managed to survive and grow even stronger under "la dictadura" and there is a strong sense of a growing movement toward a return to democracy. Before the end of this year, a referendum is likely to be held in Chile to vote on whether Pinochet should continue in power for another eight years. If this is voted down, elections should happen within the next year. The military is omnipresent--and yet still there is this hope among the Chile

"AND WHAT DID THEY TEACH YOU TODAY SON?"
"AMO, AMAS, AMAT"
"... EDUCATION'S A WONDERFUL THING"

Acevedo & Parker continued..

El Regalo (The Gift)

I do not know exactly how old Oliva was when she married her suitor, the rich land owner. (I was not born until later. In fact, her oldest children are older than I. . .) But marry him she did, no doubt for a number of reasons. After five years, he died, leaving her a wealthy widow with two children. Oliva learned to manage her assets well, and among other actions, she made a gift to my mother of the small farm on which I grew up.

Looking back, I think this gift changed the shape of family interactions; that is to say, it eventually altered the balance of power between my father and mother. Before owning their own land, my parents were sharecroppers like thousands of others. Afterwards, things changed, although in a subtle manner.

It was not that my mother did not work as hard (or harder) than ever. She administered the household affairs and raised the children - no small task, rising at 4:00 A.M. to start breakfast for 20 farmhands (during harvest seasons) and 12 family members, although her older daughters helped out from an early age.

I remember her saying that she was always glad when she got pregnant, in spite of the difficult and often dangerous deliveries, because it meant a respite from the hardship of working in the fields. One of the "privileges of pregnancies" included having household help employed by my father to lighten the heaviest loads. Still she oversaw all housekeeping activities (including the preparation of three wholesome meals a day plus a mid-afternoon snack, daily housecleaning, and laundry), and supervised evening prayers.

My father ran the farm, contracting workers, handling payroll, and making all the major decisions as to what should be planted and how. Nevertheless, loans from the

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government's program for small farmers were made in my mother's name, as owner. I recall my father complaining that he was "nothing more than a peon in this family !"

I do not think any of us thought of him as a peon - but I do believe that the fact of owning the farm in her own name became the first step in the process of my mother gaining some say in the decisions about how much money to borrow and how to invest it. And this departure from the traditional state of affairs only occured because Oliva having made a "good" marriage, could afford to present our mother with the title to some land. Next time I see my sister, I would like to ask her precisely why she happened to make that gift to our mother - and not our father or to them both...

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How Things Change (and who decides that!)

MARGOT'S STORY: The shifting roles of women.

Margot, second oldest child, was sent away from home for a convent education at age 17. She had religious vocation and joined the order as a nun. After eight years she left the convent and rejoined secular life, returning to live in the farm. Highly literate, an accomplished musician, and very strict and organized in her daily schedule, she was apalled at the primitive lifestyle of our family.

"How can you live like this?", she asked again and again of my parents. "You should move to the city, hire someone to run the farm, and live like civilized human beings in a place where the little ones can have a chance to get a decent education. In town they can make something of themselves".

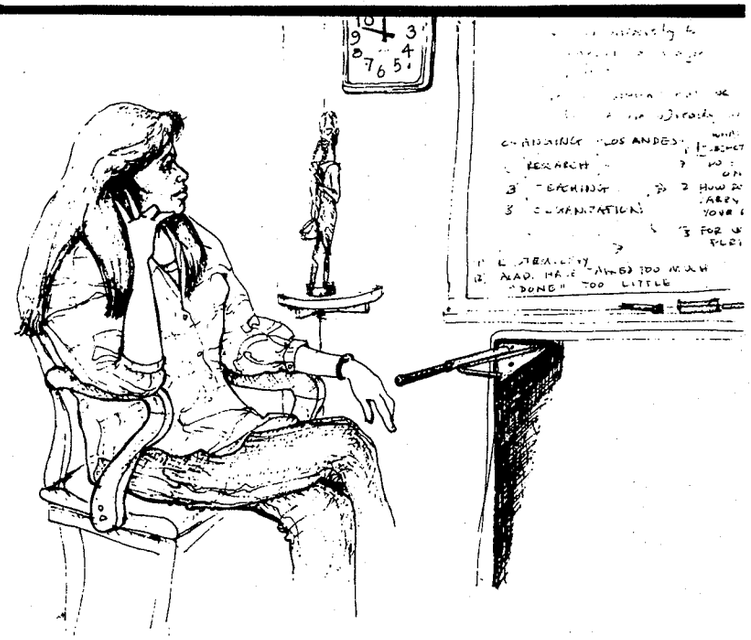
Oliva coincided with Margot's point of view. The "rich sister" and the "educated" one joined forces, and that is how my family came to move to Pereira, a medium-sized city. My mother contracted an administrator for the farm, and henceforth she took charge of managing this

Parker & Acevedo continued.. principal source of family income, making routine trips to hire and fire, deliver the payroll, and decide what to plant.

At this point, 1960, my father was sixty years old and mother fifty. Too old to find a new vocation in the city, my father salvaged his self-respect by acquiring a lot (in his name!) from a government housing program and a loan which allowed him to build a home for his family. ("This is my house", I recall him saying often, proudly.)

Nevertheless, the move to the city, generally considered a "step forward" (leaving the village behind) was promoted by my sisters, who had had more contact with urban life, and it undoubtedly offered more independence and opportunities to my mother and the other females of the family.

Aside from the farm, the family now counted on two nurses's salaries to help support it: Margot and another sister (and later, others) worked at a local hospital. (My older brothers did not "work out as students" and went their separate ways - more



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about that, later.) For whatever reasons, the females ended up as the "most skilled" people in the family, professionals who contributed to the family income, and therefore had their voice in how things should be run. They also helped by wangling jobs in the hospital first for my older brother, and later for other family members.

In my mind, there is little doubt that both Oliva's and Margot's stories confirm the old adage about "money talks". Through marriage or education, they acquired property, money and status - and thus authority - in the affairs of my family.

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Who Holds Things Together ? (and how ?)

The Story of My Brothers - and Their Wives

When I was little, my mother used to tell me "Don't cry, Mario - only women cry. Men should be strong". Yet when I observe the lives of my two brothers and their wives, I have to ask myself, "Who are the strong ones here ?"

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Arnoldo the Adventurer

The brothers of my family are evenly spaced, with eleven years between each of us. That means that Arnoldo was twenty two when I was born, and like Oliva and Margot he left the farm for the city before the rest of the family, but not because of marriage or schooling. Arnoldo migrated to the city with a very different perspective: he wanted to learn how to drive a car, and travel around and have adventures.

His employment history is a patch work of various jobs which only lasted between one hair-brained venture and another. His occupations have ranged from gas station attendent to umbrella repairman to truck driver to worm farmer, just to mention a few.

Acevedo & Parker continued..

Arnoldo was always considered "El loco" (The crazy one) of the family, but some years ago, an automobile accident (following years of steady over-indulgance in alcohol) left him truly nutty. He has never contributed much to the support of his wife, Ligia, or their five children. He constantly moves from place to place in pursuit of yet another of his screwbale enterprises, and Ligia never knows when she can expect to see him again. It might be next week, or next month, or next year - with Arnoldo, who can tell ?

So Ligia has raised her children single-handedly, putting them all through school (including medical studies - one of the costliest of university careers) "by dint of the sewing needles", for she is a seamstress. She is much respected and beloved by the rest of my family, needless to say. In spite of my brother's repeated and prolonged absences, his drinking and his craziness, there has never been - nor will there ever likely be - a divorce. The family unit has held together thanks to Ligia's struggles and determination.

Arnoldo is now fifty-seven and presently living at my parents' home (where he filled up the basement with bags of earthworms until my sisters warned him that either he or his worms had to go...) When I spoke to him recently on the phone, he proudly invited me to the "Coronation" of his oldest son Rodrigo, who will graduate from medical school in December of this year. (I plan to be there!) I think my brother sees the events of his life as a series of adventures - including his marriage - and does not take it too seriously, any of it. He continues to dream up his improbable schemes . . . and Ligia continues to sew.

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David the Solitary

Like Arnoldo, middle brother David never liked to study, and works at jobs which do not require any specialized training. He has often been employed as a night watchman, and we used to tease him about his uniform, calling him the "policeman of the family".

Unlike Arnoldo, however, David is a homebody. He was still living with my parents

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when they moved to the city, and now, at age 46, he is back in residence at "Hotel Mama", having separated from his wife Cenely years ago. In fact, I doubt he would have ever married at all if Cenely had not been staying in our house - she is the sister of my brother-in-law Hernan (Alicia's Husband) and she lived with us because Margot got her a job as a nurse at her hospital.

When the couple first married, Cenely dutifully gave up her outside job and the family financed a small store to help them get started, but it did not work out. Instead of minding the store, David liked to take off to carouse and drink, often leaving the store in the dubious care of his twelve-year-old brother Mario and his contingent of friends, who ate up the merchandise and played havoc with the inventory.

Eventually, two babies later, Cenely had to go back to nursing in order for the family to make ends meet. David did not suffer much - he could always drop by at "Hotel Mama" for meals, but times were hard for his wife and children. Cenely worked "double days" at her job and as principle parent after David moved back home for good. She received the polite help of the family when they could find ways to disguise their support so as not to appear offensively as "charity" - until (scandal of scandals) she became involved with another man. But she and my brother have never divorced and probably never will.

My mother refused to accept the idea that David and Cenely's marriage failed because of David's irresponsable behavior, his heavy drinking and lack of commitment. Ironically she placed the blame on Cenely's having a job.

"Never marry a woman who works, my son," she warned me often. "She'll only want to boss you around! Just look what happened to poor David." But what would have become of David's - and Arnoldo's - families if they had <u>not</u> married women willing to work to support their children and themselves? (Not to mention my sisters, five out of seven of them work outside the home.)

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Convent to Contrabando: Breaking Cut of the Mold (at least a little bit)

Linelly's Story

I think that my sister Linelly was the rebel of my family. Like Margot, she was sent away to convent school for her education, but she hated convent life and did not last long there. After she reurned home, she tried nursing but did not like that, either. I feel very close to her because she treated me, in some ways, like a "son", and spoiled me with presents of books and other goodies. She scandalized the family by leaving home (unmarried !) and taking off with her friend Aurora to live in work in Bogota. At age 15, I was her only (clandestine) contact with our family.

After a year my mother finally located her and went to fetch her home. But Linelly had changed. She was used to making her own way in the world, and when she eventually moved out again, it not longer seemed so scandalous. She has run a number of small businesses, and now has a store which markets the goods she imports (often illegally) from neighboring countries. We nicknamed her "The Family Smuggler".

It is interesting and ironic to note that although Linelly has been by far the least traditional of my sisters, leading the most independent lifestyle, she has ended up living at home, fulfilling that most classic function of unmarried daughters: caring for our aging parents.

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Following the Vocation

"For young men, women are lovers; To adults, they are companions; To the elderly, they are nurses.

Judith, my only other single sister besides Linelly, studied business but ended up in (- can you gess?-) nursing. I feel bad because the two of them, Linelly and Judith, are somewhat "trapped" in the role of caring for our eldery parents. This limits their options, and that seems unfair - but they live at home, and it is their "expected" role. (My brother David lives there, too, but little is demanded of him in this way.) All three contribute their share to the upkeep of the family home, but Linelly has taken over the managment of our mother's farm. At seventy-eight and sixty-eight, my parents are entitled to enjoy their retirement, and I feel grateful to Linelly and Judith for taking such good care of them. But what will happen when my parents are no longer here? Who will hold the family together? And what will become of Linelly and Judith?

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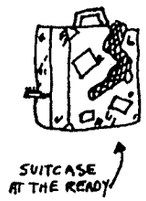

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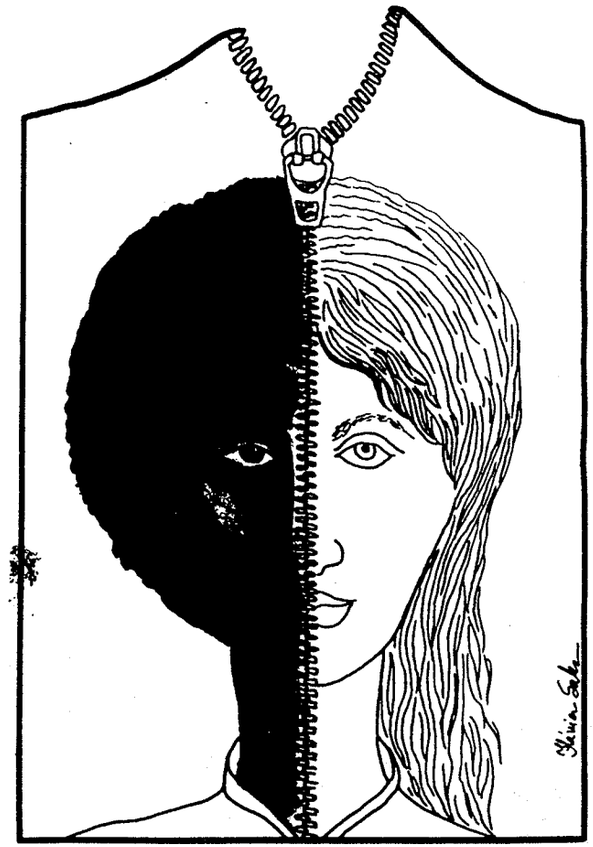

The Housewives

So far, we have only mentioned of five out of the seven Acevedo-Aguirre daughters. One sister, Alicia, married a campesino and remained in the countryside, following the life of a farmer's wife. Her husband, a hardworking, unpretentious man with little formal education, eventually came to own and improve his own farm, adjacent to my mother's, and the couple will be able to offer their children whatever options they desire. Will my cousins stay on the land, or will they follow the other family members to the city life?

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Rubiela, fourth eldest, married a mechanic whose business ventures failed. He was forced to flee his debtors to another city and took his sons with him. In order to survive with her three teen-aged daughters, Rubiela conceived the idea of holding parties in her home, selling drinks to her guests in a hospitable environment. This scheme, however, proved to be only borderline "decent", and resulted in too many rumors and comments in the neighbor-hood. Before his wife could bee seen as an operator of a common "house of appointments", Carlos retrieved her, and they are now the proud owners of their own taxi in Cali.
Orfilia, third from youngest child, practiced nursing, like her sisters before marrying a "professional man" from the urban area of Manizalez. Although her main vocation has been that of housewife and mother, recently she decided to go into business as a merchant of gold jewelery - and has done very well at it.

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looking to the Future

Ximena, Mario's daughter

After reflecting on the women who were responsible for my socialization, I wonder what kind of a life I would wish for my daughter. I am now an agent of her socialization, playing, to some extent, the role my mother and sister played with me.

In Spanish we say "a chicken is nothing more than an intermediary between two eggs" - and in the same manner I am now the "chicken", transmitting the values of two previous generations of women to a third. There are other influences on Ximena, of course, perhaps even stronger than my own, but we are very close, and it is important to me what kind of values I convey to this little woman. My (macho?) world view will surely influence hers... but how?

Volunteer writers and other participants are needed and now being recruited for the Fall 1988 Center Periphery staff. It can be you!