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Poetry Reading: Third World Women Poets

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The end of May is a time I look forward to: finals are over, summer school is yet to begin, and the quiet IU campus is made more beautiful by the abundance of trees and flowers in bloom.

This year, though, spring downpours were late, arriving the same week as the Convention. The usually unperturbed Bloomington campus was a squall of rain, buses, taxis, and T-shirts with feminist messages. As I watched woman after

woman, old and young, arrive in the rain and get settled in, excitement and anticipation began to grow.

I was especially gratified that efforts to attract press people seemed to be paying off. There were several representatives from newspapers and radio stations in Indiana, and it was a pleasure for me to meet and talk with Ruth Sullivan, *Ms.* editor, and Janet Hook, assistant editor for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Our organization needs

media exposure. If we hope to be successful in changing the nature of education and the world, we must not forget the importance of spreading the news of what we are doing.

If I am beginning to sound polemical, it is because I believe that many times we in women's studies forget that the vast majority of the reading public see our efforts as either ridiculous or arcane. Again and again in dealing with representatives of the press, I find myself having to answer the

POETRY READING: THIRD WORLD WOMEN POETS

One of several poetry readings at the 1980 NWSA Convention included the following poems:

Of Course

*"My roots have been yanked out, sold by the pound
and expected to sprout in a vacuum world."*

Of course

I resent/repress and resist
groping dark
in this place of acid light
where the stench of burning roots
is perfumed with jasmine
and everything is freedom, fraternity
and fraudulent

Of course

I resent/repress and resist.
I also cry.

—Mary E. Gibson

Love Story

He called her "Reina"
And in it thought himself kingly.
He gave eight children to serve her
While he traveled summers and falls
Leaving her with purpose—
Food to be found,
Garments to fashion.

Old, he stayed home
That she might bathe his arthritic legs,
Listen to his last breath.
Later she told her daughter
That he had loved her, "Reina,
In my own way." And that
Was enough for the queen she was.

—Antonia Quintana Pigno

Noni Daylight Remembers the Future

"We are closer than
blood," Noni Daylight
tells her. "It isn't
Oklahoma or the tribal
blood but something that
we speak."

(The otherself knows
and whispers
to herself.)

The air could choke, could
kill, the way it tempts
Noni to violence, this
morning. But she needs
the feel of danger,
for life.

(It helps her remember.)

One morning memory
came to her in saguaro.
It was early spring
west of Tucson, her other
home, saguaro forest.
She talked with the old ones,
ancient saguaro people, who
spoke from underground roots
that burrow into a dry darkness
to drink.

"The dreamers will survive,"
they said,
"the many changes."

Noni Daylight knows
there is meaning in all
of it,
but it isn't easy.
She smokes cigarettes
watches the grey dawn
from a room in Albuquerque.
She dreams her otherself
next to her.

She feels the sky
is tethered to the changing
earth, and her skin
responds, like a woman
to her lover.
It could be days, it could
be years. White Sands
or Tucson.

She asks,

"Should I dream you afraid
so that you are forced to save
yourself?"

Or should you ride colored horses
into the cutting edge of the sky
to know

that we're alive
we are alive."

—Joy Harjo

Mary E. Gibson is a Social Service Consultant in the Indianapolis School System. Her poems have appeared in several journals and in *Poems by Blacks*, Vol. II. Joy Harjo is Cree; she edits the newsletter for the New Mexico Indian Environmental Education Project in Albuquerque. Her work includes two collections of poetry, *What Moon Drove Me to This* and *She Had Some Horses*. Antonia Quintana Pigno directs the Minorities Resource/Research Center at Kansas State University. Her poems have appeared in *Rocky Mountain Review*, *Writer's Forum*, and other journals.