

struggled daily to affirm that all the power she would ever need was already in her hands” (page 14).

“Love is an abused word,” Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz wrote in “Politics as an Act of Love.” “Men exploited it. Feminist exposed it. Lesbian feminists, remembering the mothers we had or wanted, reclaimed it, as possibility” (page 26).

In a world that was hostile to their very selves, lesbians understood the need to fight and assert their right to love and to be seen on their own terms.



Thirty years later in 2002, in the original publication of *Para Las Duras/For the Hard Ones* by tatiana de la tierra and then sixteen years later with the republication of the book by *Sinister Wisdom* as part of the **Sapphic Classic** series in 2018, tatiana de la tierra wrote that “a lesbian reclaims her power.” For lesbians, love always has been political. Daring to love, and to live a lesbian life, means taking back our power from those who would rather see us silent and invisible.



The art, writing and poetry that *Sinister Wisdom* is home to are lesbian reclamations of power. By defining lesbianism on their own terms, outside the control of heterosexual society, they made new paths for what women could do and could be. As we continue to face challenges to our humanity, let’s continue to be bold in displaying dyke love and power.



Carina Julig is a lesbian writer and journalist who previously served as an intern at *Sinister Wisdom*. She helped put together volumes 107-110 and worked to promote *Sinister Wisdom* online and in social media. She has also interned at the Boulder *Daily Camera* and has written for publications including *Slate*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Al Jazeera* and *Sojourners Magazine*. She specializes in reporting on immigration, sexuality, and religion. She is a student at the University of Colorado Boulder and will be graduating in December 2019 with a degree in journalism. You can follow her on twitter @CarinaJulig.

Sinister Wisdom

A Multicultural Lesbian Literary & Art Journal

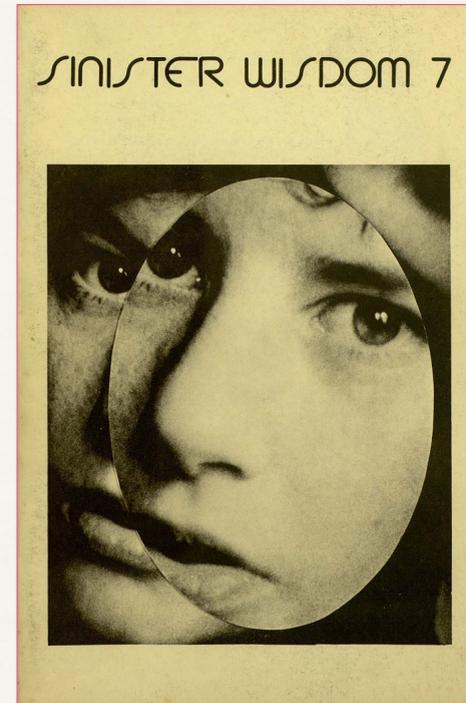
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DISPLAYING DYKE LOVE:

LESBIAN RECLAMATIONS OF POWER

Carina Julig

Summer 2019



The cover of *Sinister Wisdom 7* featuring a photograph by Tee Corinne.

Sinister Wisdom 7, published in the fall of 1978, has a visually arresting cover. No words describe the issue, just a photo of a woman staring directly out at the reader, her features broken up but her gaze no less diminished. Taken by Tee Corinne, the iconic photographer of lesbian life, the photograph betrays little about the subject. Her gaze is alluring, perhaps almost challenging, to the viewer, but it does not offer feedback in return.

The cover of *Sinister Wisdom 7* draws to mind a quotation from another pioneering lesbian photographer, Honey Lee Cottrell:

The lesbian gaze meant that there was a contemplation, a restraint, a sincerity and a warrior-quality. This lesbian look was compelling. While your heterosexual woman model might compel the rest of the world to look at her, a lesbian was addressing you.

Sinister Wisdom 7 features a photoshoot by Cottrell (1946-2015) photographing herself in all the mirrors in her house. These photos challenge the reader, asking them to reflect on the subjective nature of images.



photo by Honey Lee Cottrell

Photographs in a mirror by Honey Lee Cottrell featured throughout *Sinister Wisdom 7*. This selection is on page 33.

This direct quality is evident in lesbian photography from the 1970s, the boldness of the subjects making them no less tender or erotic.

In a photograph by Deborah Snow in *Sinister Wisdom 8*, two women are embracing, naked. They both stare out unashamed at the camera. The fierceness of their gaze is underscored by the tender way they touch each other, one's hands caressing the other's waist. To be a lesbian is to be unafraid to love, they seem to declare.

Love, specifically lesbian love, is a theme in *Sinister Wisdom 8*. In "Confrontations with the Devil in the Form of Love," poet Judy Grahn writes,

if Love means protect then whenever I do not
defend you
I cannot call my name Love.

If Love means rebirth then when I see us
dead on our feet
I cannot call my name Love.
If Love means provide & I cannot
provide for you
why would you call my name Love? (page 2)

Grahn insists that love needs to be more than a feeling, it needs to have power.

In "The Shape of Things to Come," a story about a passionate love affair between two women, Sherry Thomas writes that "Like thousands of women, most of whom she would never know, she



Photograph by Deborah Snow featured in *Sinister Wisdom 8* on page 53.