

BOOKS

Review: *Of Love and Shadows*

Second novel forceful, realistic

by Harriet Wilson

Written by Isabel Allende; Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, \$17.95.

Eugene bookstores quickly sold their paperback copies of Isabel Allende's first novel, *The House of Spirits*, last winter. Her second, *Of Love and Shadows*, deserves as brisk a sale.

The House of Spirits weaves myth and magic and politics as it recounts one family's history in an unnamed Latin American country. In her second novel, Allende forgoes the myth and magic to concentrate the white heat of her anger in an attack on the cruelties of a military dictatorship. Again setting the story in an unnamed Latin American country, Allende this time weaves a love story with an account of the military government's unprovoked cruelty—its rape and torture and murder of any who interfere even slightly with their control.

Early in the novel, her account of "the switched Evangelinas," babies who end up in the wrong

mothers' arms and homes, suggests she will again involve mythic elements, but she settles quickly into more conventional narrative. The story of the switched children is integral to her theme: All the country (no doubt Chile) is one family, and what happens to one affects all. To be an onlooker, not to care for whatever child is put in your arms, is to join the cruelty.

Allende's theme so dominates the work that some story-telling and characterization are sacrificed to it. Too much background emerges through exposition, not narration or dramatic action. The lovers Irene Beltran and Francisco Leal lose interest as their romantic, and predictable, qualities take over their characters. Minor characters often evoke more interest than the main ones: Digna Riquileo, the mother who searches for her disappeared daughter and son; Hipolito, her husband, who spends half his days in a circus; Irene's father, who disappears suddenly; Mario, the gay hairdresser

who aids the underground.

But when Allende takes us inside the central action, when she lights up the shadows in *Of Love and Shadows*, the novel moves forcefully. Her portrayal of family life, especially that of the Ranquileos, the peasants who raise the bedeviled Evangelina, and the troubled but indomitable Leals, serves well as foil to the shadow the dictatorship casts. Ultimately what remain are the horror of the military government and the tenacity of the opposition to it, rooted as the opposition is in the daily lives of people who cannot forever tolerate its brutality. *Of Love and Shadows* can help us illuminate the issues as we debate our government's involvement in the lives of Latin American countries much like the one in which Allende sets her story.

[Harriet Wilson is a retired high school English teacher. For eight years she chaired the Department of English at South Eugene High School.]

Review: *Myrna Oakley's Bed & Breakfast Northwest*

Enticing guidebook is updated

by Martha Wagner

Written by Myrna Oakley, Solstice Press, \$9.95.

Three years ago travelers were just beginning to discover the pleasures of Northwest bed and breakfast hospitality. Travel writer Myrna Oakley, whose work has appeared frequently in *What's Happening*, produced one of the first guides to regional B and B travel. As B and B travel has grown increasingly popular, Oakley has continued to scout out the best places to stay. Her just-released *Myrna Oakley's Bed & Breakfast Northwest* is an update of her first book with almost twice as many listings.

Part of what draws travelers to bed and breakfast inns is the very uniqueness of each structure, its setting and furnishings. The 180 establishments listed include restored Victorians, mountain lodges, country farmhouses, beachside guest houses and elegant city homes. In Seattle you can even overnight on a converted tugboat (M.V. Challenger Bunk & Breakfast). Oakley's finds range from Northern California (Eureka area) to British Columbia and Southern Alaska, with listings to the east for

Montana, Idaho and Nevada. Seven Eugene-area establishments are included.

Oakley, who spends her vacations "inn-sitting" and lives in a Portland B and B, has visited each of the inns in this guidebook. Her book provides the generous detail you might expect to hear from a friend just returning from vacation: history of each inn, furnishings, personalities and special interests of the innkeepers, price (\$45 to \$75 is typical), nearby places of interest, and, of course, breakfast menus. If the B and B proprietors arrange rafting trips or dog-sled rides, have antiques to sell or a quilt collection to show you, the information is here. Addresses for local travel and recreation organizations are also provided.

B and B's are known for sumptuous breakfasts. Oakley's book should not be read on an empty stomach. Breakfasts often feature home-baked cinnamon rolls or muffins with homemade preserves. One of the more elaborate menus is a three-course affair that ends with strawberry blintzes at Medford's Under the Greenwood Tree. Some inns serve afternoon tea, a



The Guest House, Whidbey Island

few offer lunch and dinner as well.

Oakley's guidebook is illustrated with delightful line drawings by John Owen. The book ends with a listing of ten B and B reservation services.

If you've never stayed at a B and B, this guidebook will surely entice you. If you are already a committed B and B traveler, this book will be a valuable resource. *Myrna Oakley's Bed and Breakfast Northwest* is available at local bookstores.

Note: Myrna Oakley will sign copies of her new guidebook at 2 pm Friday, July 31, at Literary Lion, 44 W. Broadway on the Eugene Mall. She will also discuss the book with Alan Siporin on the KLCC-FM (89.7) Blue Plate Special at noon on Friday.

PUBLIC INTEREST



Feminist, activist and author Sonia Johnson.

Sonia Johnson Speaking in Corvallis

by Nancy Chapin

She was the first alternative presidential candidate to gather enough support to qualify for matching federal funds.

"On the cusp of the change, we are living in the most exciting time in the world." So says Sonia Johnson, author of the newly released book, *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation* (The Crossing Press, 1987). Sonia first came to national attention in 1979 when she was excommunicated from the Mormon Church for her support of the ERA.

Since her altercation with the Mormon Church—the "world's pre-eminent university for patriarchal studies"—Sonia has moved through mainstream liberal politics, and on to radical feminist visions of a new age.

Her liberal political experiences ("drowning in the mainstream," as she calls it) range from running for president of the National Organization of Women in 1982, to campaigning on the Citizen's Party ticket in 1984 for the Presidency of the United States.

As the first woman to run for President in this century (Belva Lockwood ran in 1884), she travelled throughout the country speaking on a radical feminist platform. She was the first alternative presidential candidate to gather enough support to qualify for matching federal funds. Her unique approach to running for president included consensus decision-making for the coordinating staff, and a recognition of the campaign as a "once-in-a-lifetime chance [to] proclaim feminism nationwide."

In March of 1984 she founded the

Women's International Disarmament Alliance in Geneva, Switzerland. She was involved in the 1985 United Nations Conference on Women, and has traveled to Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. But she says that her activities abroad don't mean that feminism is dead in the United States. She proclaims the women's movement as the greatest spiritual and political revolution in history, that it is "the rising of half the [human] race."

In addition to traveling and speaking as a "freelance feminist," Sonia has been working on her new book, *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation*. The book relays a message of radical political change and its dependency on personal empowerment and growth within all of us.

Her vision of global transformation transcends standard liberal alterations: "We are asking for new ways of looking at ourselves and at the possibilities for transforming society—not for making mere cosmetic repairs." The destiny of the women's movement is to "transform this planet, to spiral and lift the hearts and minds of the human species around and up and out of chaos and violence."

Sonia Johnson has come a long way from the woman who fasted for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment

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