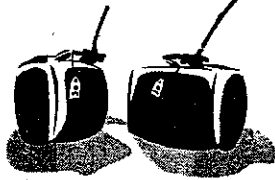


Twisted Feminist



# PHILOSOPHERS ON HOLIDAY

*Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday--LW*

Volume I, no. 4 Spring 1998



## TWISTER!

Or: what we did on our spring break

March 29, 1998: At 5:29 p.m., the town of St. Peter, Minnesota was hit by a massive (1.5 mile wide) tornado, with winds clocked at over 250 miles per hour. The tornado destroyed about 700 houses in the town, as well as inflicting considerable damage on the Gustavus campus. Ninety percent of the windows on campus were blown out, several college-owned houses were destroyed, and most other buildings suffered major roof and interior damage. Amazingly enough, the storm struck during spring break, so only a very few people were on campus. (Miraculously, only two people died in the St. Peter area as a result of the storm, despite its ferocity.)

We were on vacation ourselves at the time, lounging over dinner at the Barking Crab restaurant in Boston. Like many vacationing Gusties, we first heard of the news on CNN that evening--and didn't think that much of it, frankly. It was only the next day that we realized the overwhelming extent of the storm, as we watched the news and made sporadic contact with townspeople by phone.

See twister, p.7

## The Master's Tools--Our Muffler

*"The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Audre Lorde*

On the other hand, they'll do a hell of a good job removing a dangling muffler from an aged feminist VW.

Serendipity shone on us when we pulled off that Montana road to inspect the muffler. We pulled into a drive that led into a large field--and thirty seconds later, the owner of said field pulled in behind us, in an entourage of two pickup trucks and two large pieces of harvesting machinery.

"I bet you wanna get in here," said one of the intrepid philosophers to the man who got out of the pickup, while the other intrepid gal was down on her hands and knees, surveying the damage. "Yeah, I do, but what seems to be the problem here?" he asked, as he

proceeded to lay himself flat on his back to look at the underbelly of the car. He didn't even take off his cowboy hat. The other three drivers were soon gathered around the car to watch, wordlessly. Like a surgeon calling for his instruments, Cowboy Hat started requesting tools from his truck. In about two minutes and one tool (a second tool was deemed unnecessary), he had the muffler on the ground and was cautioning us to let it cool before loading it in the car. He recommended that we stop in at Cal's Muffler in Glasgow, if we wanted a repair job. With that, we moved our car, and he, with his minions behind him, proceeded into the field.

It being Sunday, Cal's was closed tighter than a valid argument. So we roared on past, secure in the conviction, (courtesy of Cowboy Hat), that driving without a muffler was fine, so long as one didn't drive on grass and start a prairie fire, like some other damn fool Minnesotan had done only the previous week with a bottle rocket.

Ed. Note: Being envirofeminists, we of course reused the muffler.

## If a Muffler is Lying in the Back Seat of Your Car in a Garbage Bag, Will It Muffle Any Sound?

The problem of solitary trees making any sound is of course well known to philosophers. As a result of that last adventure, however, we realized how tragically undertheorized is the problem that gives this entry its name.

## New Subscription Information!!!

Beginning with Vol. 2, No. 1 (summer, 1998), POH is instituting a new subscription policy. A one-year subscription (that's four big, big issues) will cost just ten dollars. (Okay, we know, that's fifty cents per issue more than you've been paying. But frankly, if this were a for profit operation, it wouldn't be.) Subscribe today! See p.12 for info.

### Philosophers on Holiday

**Published** when we have the free time

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## The Politics of the Armrest: An Interview with Lorraine Code



Photo by John Vainstein.

*Readers may recall that, in our Summer 1997 issue, feminist philosopher Lorraine Code's Rhetorical Spaces made a cameo appearance ("The Philosopher's Knapsack"). When we decided to institute an interview series in Phil on Hol, beginning with this Feminist issue, we immediately thought of Lorraine, who's been with us since the beginning, so to speak.*

*Lorraine Code is Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Social and Political Thought, and Women's Studies at York University of Toronto, and the author of three books. She is also an intrepid traveler, and an incredibly good sport, facts which this interview bears out.*

**POH:** *How long were you in Australia and what were you doing there?*

**LC:** I've been there three times; the first time was in 1986. I was a visiting scholar for four months and that was just at the time when all my job prospects had collapsed and I needed to be as far away as I possibly could. [I was there] for four months--Murray had actually come for the last two months (he'd always thought that he never wanted to go to Australia ever)--and we both just absolutely loved it. Partly for the physical aspects of the place as much as for the philosophy--I mean, just because it's so beautiful; the birds and the trees and the flowers and the smells and the sea and the food and the culture--we just loved the whole thing. We decided we

wanted to go there if ever I got a permanent job and a sabbatical, which looked like a distant prospect at that point.

And then, when I had a permanent job and I had a sabbatical coming up, I was invited to be the token woman at little conference in 1993, called Nonformal Foundations of Reasoning, which was a very weird and very male and very peculiar sort of conference. But I accepted that because I wanted to check out whether Australia really was the place I wanted to go for the whole year, for the sabbatical I had coming up. It was quite a nice month.

That month in Australia also confirmed our conviction that we could spend a year there. So, when I had a sabbatical then coming up, I arranged with Jenny Lloyd to become an affiliate at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, where she now teaches. I simply went to Australia without any big projects; it was just a sabbatical and a chance to go far, far away. I did a lot of papers in lots of places, and did a bit of work and had a lot of fun. I also did a lot of bush walking--what we would call hiking the Australians would call bush walking. I did lots of travelling and had a great time

**POH:** *So what are some of your favorite aspects of Australia?*

**LC:** I love the land; I just love the land. I love the way the walking trails are mapped out and kept up and maintained in almost every state of Australia. Spectacular walks, spectacular national parks, the colors are magnificent. Sydney is just a truly glorious city, absolutely glorious.... It's a kind of awkward city, because it's got so many inlets and bays. Public transportation is kind of difficult and driving is terrifying. There's a kind of irreverent zaniness about Australia that I really liked. Canadians are so absolutely serious. And you probably won't want to print this, but Americans are

sometimes kind of brash in Canadians eyes.

**POH:** *Actually that's one of the questions we wanted to ask you. How do you make sure you're never mistaken for a U.S. citizen when you travel?*

**LC:** I always have to say it. Sometimes people can pick up the accent. But not all people can. There's a little piece that's coming out in the next issue of *Hypatia* [spring 98] that's part of my response at a colloquium on cultural relativism and global feminism at the APA a year ago and in the last three pages of that I try to address a little bit about what it means for me to be a Canadian. It was actually prompted by one of the questions at the NEH seminar at Oregon [in the summer of 1996]. Somebody asked me how I saw the real difference between my work and Sandra Harding's. And never even having had the thought before, I said "well maybe it's because I'm Canadian," and it was meant to be a flippant reply, but after that it stopped feeling quite so flippant.

**POH:** *How did you become a philosopher? Let's start at the earliest point. What's the earliest thing that you remember as being a philosophical experience.*

**LC:** Probably lots when I was really young, but I can't remember any of that. I do remember my first feminist thought, which at the time I didn't recognize as a feminist thought. My parents had their children quite far apart, because--and this is the right language--my father thought that we all needed to be a university education apart so that he could afford to educate us. I was five when my first brother was born and ten when my second brother was born. I can distinctly remember when I was ten asking my mother after the baby had been born how you knew when the baby was born whether it was a boy or a girl. And it wasn't because I didn't know anatomy. But it didn't occur to me that this little appendage could be the thing that made all the difference. I remember it being a serious question, I remember even where I

was sitting when I asked her--and I remember how absolutely puzzled she looked.

**POH:** *How did she attempt to explain it?*

**LC:** I think she was so bewildered that she simply said, "well you KNOW," because she didn't like using words like "penis." It was a really profound question to me, and I can remember the total frustration at the answer.

**POH:** *A frustration which persists into the present I'm sure!*

**LC:** Indeed! Really? It's all about that little appendage? That little twig?

**POH:** *What are your most vivid recollections about holidays?*

**LC:** You want me to name the best? The best one we ever, ever, ever did was when in 1991 we rented a house in Tuscany for a month and Jenny Lloyd joined us for three weeks. And it was just absolutely utterly spectacular. It was completely a nonacademic holiday. People kept thinking if we went on holiday with Jenny we'd discuss philosophy the whole time. We probably discussed it three or four times.

This was a wonderful old house in a fourteenth century hill village that is actually mentioned in Dante's *Inferno*. This is a tiny village where no one spoke any English. It is utterly fantastic looking out over the hills. [We spent time] sitting on the patio at night, dining and drinking. It was just a dream holiday, one of the best things we've ever done. It was in just about every respect I can think of just about the most perfect holiday you could possibly imagine. We drank lots of wine and did a lot of cooking. The house was stocked with cookbooks in English but about Italian food. There wasn't a farmer's market because it was too small, but all the stores were stocked with lots of fresh produce. We cooked things we hadn't cooked before, like fennel. And we just tried lots of Italian recipes. We had pears with peccorino for dessert. We ate in lots of interesting restaurants. There weren't

many interesting restaurants in the town, and going out in the evening to dine wasn't always that appealing because you had to drive back on these twisty roads, having had a lot of wine. We always had one designated driver, and since I don't like to drive at night and Jenny doesn't drive at all, that left Murray. He didn't like that plan because he tends to get sleepy at night.

**POH:** *You mentioned different styles of tourism. Tell us about those.*

**LC:** She wanting to do lots and lots and see everything she possibly could while being there. And he wanting to kind of hover around in one place and do lots of painting and drawing.

**POH:** *This is you and Murray?*

**LC:** Yes.

**POH:** *So, he paints? What do you do while he paints?*

**LC:** Well, usually I take a book along or I walk around more, or I take a camera.

**POH:** *That was one of those utterly unfeminist questions, I know: "what could you possibly do while your husband is busy?"*

**LC:** That's right...should I knit a few pairs of socks?

But actually last summer when we went to Scotland with these friends from Leeds, we had to go in separate cars because he has the backseat of his car full of camera equipment. And they are both philosophers too. We went on this trip with them and he would spend hours with his camera and tripod taking photographs, and what Jennifer did, which I started to do myself as well, was that she would continue walking along the road to the next place. And that was really nice because then you are both hiking and driving. You see lots of the country on foot. Then the guy catches up to you and you drive for a bit and then he stops where he wants to photograph and then you walk a bit more. So this is going to be my new style.

**POH:** *On another spin on the word "holiday," what's your favorite holiday?*

*Do you have one that you really love to celebrate?*

**LC:** I think that since my daughter has been adult and living in Toronto, the one I really enjoy most is the winter solstice now. My daughter instituted a solstice celebration in our house in 1990. And we've done it in different ways in different years. This year because I had received some honors, Murray and Jacqueline actually put on a big party for me. Other years we've done it with some of my graduate students and the kids and my mother. Otherwise, we just do it with a smallish group--we tend to do it with few enough people that you can just string two tables together and move the furniture back and everybody can sit down, because we like to start off in complete darkness and then you're supposed to have one red candle for every person present. Jacqueline likes to be the one who lights the first candle. And then you light all the candles in the whole room and it's only candles. It gets very hot, but it's beautiful. It's really nice, and we try to do a fairly simple meal for that. I like cooking at that time of year. That's the thing I like best about Christmas-- I do more cooking than at other times of the year, and nice cooking.

**POH:** *Now I think we're shifting into the odd question category. What do you read on a plane, and along with that, what sort of travel demeanor do you adopt?*

**LC:** I read mysteries and Ph.D. theses. [laughter] Usually the mystery is there tempting me. When I'm reading manuscripts for publishers, or thesis chapters, I usually count on trying to get a lot of them read on an airplane. But when it's this conflict between duty and inclination, the duty is about dissertation chapters, and the inclination is about mysteries. I usually have a lot of mysteries to read on planes.

My demeanor is extremely antisocial. Exceptionally antisocial. One of the most interesting seat mate

experiences I've had was last spring in May when I was going to Amsterdam. I was sitting in what I thought was a perfect seat, one of those just-two seats, just before the washroom, which was a slight snag because everybody who goes into the washroom tends to leave the door open and it smells horrible. But this very pucker British guy came along and introduced himself to me--I think I had to fly via London and then change to a flight to Amsterdam--sat down next to me. He was one of those guys who believes that everybody wants to hear every word he has to say. So, his first comment to me was, was I travelling to visit family?

And I said no, I was going to conference. He said, "what did my family think about this?" I didn't have the wit to ask him what his family thought of his travel. Then what ensued was really interesting. I was reading a book that I wanted to finish before my presentation that I was giving. Because there were only two seats, we each had an armrest that belonged to each of us, and then there was a shared armrest.

**POH:** *Oh no. The elbow imperialist.*

**LC:** Well, this was the politics of the armrest in a big way, because I decided I was damned if he was going to have the whole armrest. So, as I was reading this book, it was kind of awkward to keep my arm--it was my right arm--on half of the armrest and still continue to do the underlining I had to do. But I was determined that he was not going to get more than half of the armrest. [laughter] So, it was a very, very serious, and quite tense struggle until finally he turned to me and he said, "you know I really don't think this is working." And I said, "oh, well what do you think we should do? How do you think we should divide it up?" And he was absolutely flabbergasted, because I think he thought I was going to say "I'm sorry" and move over and give him the armrest. So THEN he got all kind of blustery, the way only a Brit can--he's an army officer as well--and he said well he

didn't think we needed to be quite so formal about it. But it really was quite interesting because it alerted me to the politics of the armrest which, with a male passenger next to you, is always an issue.

**POH:** *And leg space as well.*

**LC:** Well that too, but the armrest is worse. It really is. I mean, I was able to measure that his shoulder actually came over halfway across my seat, and he may have been broad shouldered but he had a completely empty bit between him and the wall beside him. He didn't need to be doing this. I was really just infuriated.

**POH:** *What do you do if a Chatty Cathy is beside you just talking?*

**LC:** If the person is beside me I say I'm really sorry, I have some work to do, and then I have to let the mystery go.

[laughter] It's not so bad actually, because then it forces me to get the work done.

**POH:** *Anything else that intrepid philosopher gals would want to know?*

**LC:** Well, a lot of my travel is for conferences, and when I get invited to a conference, I immediately plan a holiday around it. For instance there was a wonderful conference in Amsterdam several years ago at which I was invited to speak, and the minute I was invited, I though not just about how nice it was to be invited to Amsterdam for a conference, but that Murray needed to come too and we needed to travel to Brugge and Ghent and Antwerp and all those places that I'd never been and always wanted to go. I was very surprised when I got to the conference and found that some people had literally flown across the Atlantic for two or three days. It's not worth it.

I'm going to L.A. on Wednesday. I got a thing from Air Canada last week; because of all my travels last year, they turned me into a prestige member. I got four tokens for updating to first class. To go to LA I have to use two of them each way, but I'm going to do it. The armrests are really wide!

## Twister, cont.

So, we cut short our vacation, and returned to our battered town, to help our friends move out of their condemned homes (we averaged a house a day for the first week), and to haul storm debris. At night, we hosted impromptu dinner parties at our own home, which was out of the path of the storm, and which featured the luxuries of heat and light, amenities the town didn't have for weeks.

On April 20, two weeks later than scheduled, Gustavus reopened its doors to students, under dramatically different conditions. Several buildings remained closed, and what had once been a parking lot was now "FEMA Village," featuring rows of mobile homes provided by the Federal Emergency Management Assistance, which were put into service as offices and classrooms. The cafeteria and post office were moved to the basketball court, and students were warned to wear shoes at all times, because glass remained embedded in the ground everywhere.

By going to school on Saturdays and eliminating finals week, we were able to complete the semester on schedule and graduate our students on time.

So...that's why this "spring" issue of *Philosophers on Holiday* comes to you so late, and that is how Peg and Lisa spent their spring "holiday". We don't recommend it.

## Georgy Porgy Redux

*We are thrilled to reprint this early feminist doggerel penned by Lisa Heldke in grade five. Like much of our foremothers' great work, we feared this treasure had been lost or credited to some man.*

Georgy Porgy corn and grits,  
The girls kissed him and he had fits,  
When the boys came out to play,  
All the girls said was, "forget it.  
Why bother even kissing boys,  
When they treat us like we were toys."  
That's what the indignant girls all said,  
"Getting married is what I dread."  
Instead of Georgy walking away,  
When the boys came out to play,  
The girls gave up.

## News Flash: Virtue IS Rewarded

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Imagine Lisa's surprise when she received a \$100 check in the mail--just for being good! And here she thought virtue was its own reward. Of course the check really is for her article in the wonderful new anthology *Daring to Be Good*, edited by Bat-Ami Bar On and Ann Ferguson. Look for it from Routledge.

## Award-winning recipe: Okra Dabs

After the St. Cholester edition of PonH, readers were clamoring for Jenifer Ward's recipe for Okra Dabs, the winning entry in the "Creative" category at our 1997 St. Cholester party. Thank you, Jenifer W., for graciously sharing this recipe with our readers!! Kids shouldn't try this at home.

- 1 lb. okra pods, fresh (must be purchased south of the Mason-Dixon line)
- 1/3 c. sorghum molasses
- 1/2 c. cornmeal
- 1 c. flour
- 1 egg
- 1/3 c. buttermilk
- 1/3 c. lard
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 t. soda

Cut ends off okra and reserve (to fry for dinner later). Squeeze as much okra slime as possible out of the pods (I recommend wearing disposable latex gloves for this step), and chop pods. Set aside.

Cream lard, molasses and sugar together. Add eggs and beat until light. Add buttermilk, into which soda has been added, and beat well. Stir in cornmeal and flour, then fold okra GENTLY into batter.

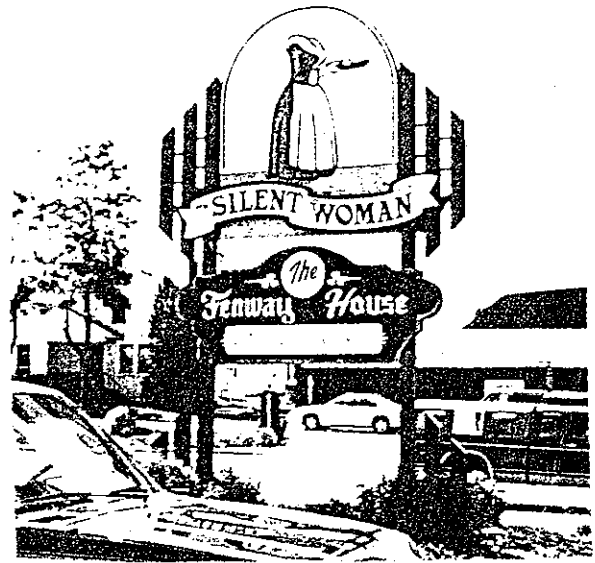
Okra is very temperamental, not unlike most things and people from the SOUTH, so handle delicately.

Drop by teaspoon onto greased cookie sheet, place in 350 degree oven, and sing "I'll Fly Away" through the fifth verse, at least. The okra dabs should be ready at this point.

Eat hot, with sweet iced tea, the wine of the South.



**Support your local woman-owned restaurant!**



## Restaurants We Never Visited Need we explain why?

**SHE'S A CLASSIC!**

DELICIOUS FOOD  
INVITING ATMOSPHERE  
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

## At the Video Store

Roving reporter Barb Heldke is back, this time with a movie review:

*The Boxer* (110 minutes): Remember *The Crying Game*? Substitute boxers for transvestites and you have the picture. Don't see in a funk. Serious downer.



## The sexual division of labor

"...Socialist feminist theorists remind us that the sexual division of labor assigns to women work that is very different from that of men." Alison Jaggar

*Peg writes:*

As a feminist, I have read much about the sexual division of labor, especially in the home. I have even participated in it. But in disaster relief efforts after the tornado, I experienced it in an entirely new way.

MaryLue's Yarn Shop was a two-story cement building. The 29 March tornado blew off the roof and caused one of its sides to collapse. The debris from a collapsed cement building is substantial. The debris from a collapsed building in which much of the interior has been blown out is worse. Worse still is when the debris consists of exploded knitting machines wrapped in miles of wet yarn. Debris removal was made even more difficult by the snow and rain which fell steadily during the first three days of cleanup. When we weren't tripping over the yarn, we were slipping in the mud. It was truly an explosion of color, but nothing about it was beautiful.

On the Wednesday after the tornado, a group of women was working together at MaryLue's to clear away the debris. Each of us would take something from a pile, and carry it to the sidewalk. Front-end loaders working in teams like monstrous dust pans and brushes picked up the wreckage. The delicate and precise movements of these huge machines belied their size. Our manual work, on the other hand, was slow and hard, but we developed a rhythm.

That rhythm was quickly shattered by the arrival of a group of men. No matter what their age or physical strength, each and climbed to the top of a debris pile and began to randomly pick up objects and

throw them down so that we little women waiting below could haul them to the street corner. I noted that the higher the men's age, the higher the pile they tended to climb, the larger the debris they chose and the farther they tried to throw it. I appointed myself the task of warning others when a "Thrower" was about to launch a motor or a display case in their direction. Many of us spent a lot of time ducking the flying objects. At one point I observed to one of the men that all his throwing was not helping but rather was hindering the removal process, but this had little effect on him.

There is no minimum age requirement to be a thrower; the category also includes adolescent boys. They, too, demonstrated a predilection toward climbing and throwing behavior. At a destroyed apartment complex, one boy started throwing two-by-fours from destroyed garages into the area where people were sorting through debris looking for anything salvageable. In this case, I could assert my authority as an adult and tell the lad to stop throwing things. This was effective, though it did mean that a group of fourteen year old boys frequently scowled at me.



Send your tales of the poolside for the summer issue of *Phil on Holl*

## Tornado twistings

*Brian T. Johnson is Associate Chaplain at Gustavus Adolphus College. Since the tornado plucked off his roof and hurled his bedroom and garage into the neighbor's yard, we've been lucky enough to have him as our housemate.*

You discover quickly,  
when a house disappears,  
and belongings vanish,  
that home can appear  
just as quickly,  
belonging to what  
seemed invisible.

Even though lost,  
the discovery is  
being found.

A place to forget  
and remember  
and a time to be heard  
when nothing can be said.

A clean towel  
whipping cream  
a light awaiting arrival  
meals  
conversations  
sleep  
a sustaining life  
behind, around,  
and in the midst of  
the life dismantled

given and received

Prodigal parable  
homecoming and housewarming  
remembered and cherished

"What is essential  
is invisible to the eye"  
what has been given  
is visible to the heart.

(an ode to Philosophers on  
Holiday authors  
putting up with  
a chaplain thankful  
for a roof and generosity)

## Chapter 12: My Life as a Tornado

*One night, as a group of us lingered over dinner, Brian asked, "If this tornado were a chapter in your autobiography, what would be its title? After days of slinging wet belongings into boxes, and moving pianos in pickups, the twisted humor emerges. Here are some of the choice offerings we came up with.*

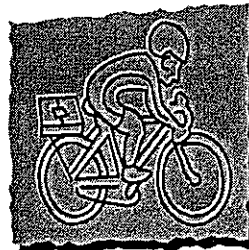
◆My Life as a Tornado: It Sucks◆

◆Little College on the Prairie◆

◆Twistin' the Night Away◆

◆Every Time You Close a Door, a Window Blows Out◆

◆You Say Tor-NAY-do I Say Tor-NAH-do◆



Be on the lookout for the Summer issue of POTT, featuring tales of our bicycle trip to Ireland!

## Where are they now?



We've been in many conversations with feminist philosophers that began, "Whatever happened to Shulamith Firestone after she wrote *The Dialectic of Sex*?" But all along, the answer was right before our eyes--or at least right underneath us, as we toiled down the road. Shulamith, like many other philosophers, feminist and nonfeminist alike, realized at a young age that the uses of theory were decidedly limited. On the other hand, put a good set of steel-belted radials underneath you, and you can really go places!

-----

\_\_\_ Yes! I'd like to subscribe to *Philosophers on Holiday* for a whole glorious year! I'm sending you ten dollars, which assures me that you will not go out of production at least until Summer, 1999, because you are such honest girls and would never cheat me out of my hard-earned cash.

\_\_\_ No! I'm really not sure how I got on this mailing list, but I really really want to get off!

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