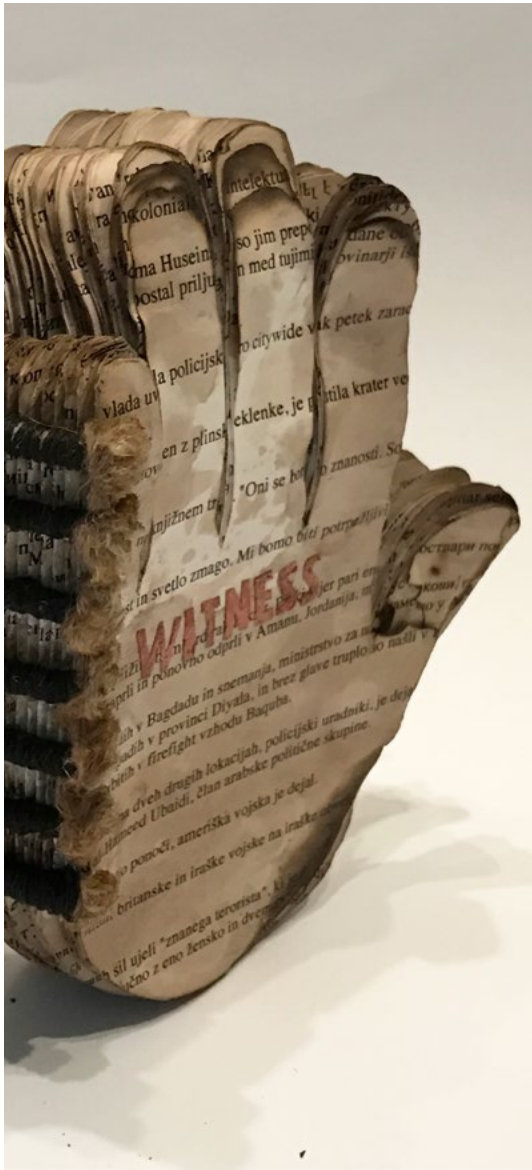


# UTOPIA/DYSTOPIA

Miriam Schaer  
Brooklyn, NY



“Bombing of Iraqi book  
street, told in every language  
on hand shaped pages.  
Destruction, loss of  
knowledge, culture.  
We are all Witnesses”

## *Conversation with Shulameth Firestone*

Single board coptic bound book created with laser prints of original texts, laser cut binder boards. 12” h x 9” w x 2.25” d

## *Conversation with My Mother*

Single board coptic bound book created with laser prints of original texts, laser cut binder boards. 10.25” w x 7” x .5” d

## *Witness*

Sewn cords bound book created with laser prints of original texts, hand cut pages. 6.25” h x 4.25” w x 2” d

### **Statement**

I began to work with the text of the 1970s radical feminist Shulamith Firestone a few years ago when I re-discovered her seminal book-The Dialectic of Sex. Firestone wrote “Women will not be fully emancipated, “until they are free from the demands of biology.” Firestone saw emancipation’s tools in concepts like artificial insemination and surrogate mothers that, back then, were little better than science fiction. Today, these and other alternative maternities are widespread. Yet, rather than emancipate women, they have added new pressures.

While making this the first iteration of this book, my 90 year old mother passed away. I had done a lot of work with her, in the past few years. I began a conversation with my mother using the text to cover each of the baby-shaped pages, with 1970s classic feminist text The Dialectic of Sex. The baby-shapes were the remnants of the laser cut pages in the first Conversation (with Shulamith Firestone) that I had earlier created

My mother, was no stranger to these arguments. Although a nurse and mother of four, she championed women’s rights and supported her children’s rights to follow their path, if traditional - or not. And their choice to be parents - or not. Though she is now gone not here, her words are always in my ears.’

Witness, uses re-purposed text toward a different end. Created for the Al Mutannabi Street Artist Book Project, Witness was formed from the initial article in the New York Times that described the bombing

of historic street of booksellers in Bagdad during the Iraq war in 2005. Taking the article, and running it thru every version of Google Translate, the pages took on new and unfamiliar forms to an English reader. Albanian, Esperanto, Georgian, Malay and Serbian now lived side by side with pages covered with French, Italian, and Thai.

The pages, where then cut in the form of my own hand, sewn on cords, then burned, buried and dyed to emulate the books that survived the initial bombing. In this age of instant news we are all witnesses. In this age of ever constant information, we all are witnesses and responsible. Claiming ignorance is not possible.

### **Biography**

Miriam Schaer, a Brooklyn-based multimedia book artist, uses garments, to explore feminine, social, and spiritual issues. She's been in exhibitions including the Museum of Art and Design in NY and public collections including the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture. She's received a NYFA Artists Fellowship, and is included in the Feminist Art Base at the Brooklyn Museum.

She taught Art of the Book at Pratt Institute, and a visiting artist at many institutions including Sarah Lawrence College, Marshall University, and Colorado College. She is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Interdisciplinary MFA Program in Book, Paper & Print at Columbia College Chicago and a 2016-17 US Fulbright Scholar to the Republic of Georgia.

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