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WOMAN, CARVED OF SUN

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FEAR that the coming century
Will see women dancing in the meadows
Lassoing on the range, wild,
With clotheslines,
Singing, shouting...
Woman will unleash herself
Her beauty will stun the universe
Her deep, deep yearning for a world of love
Her intelligent humanity
The energy of one women in childbirth
LOOSED will cause stars to
Shoot out of the sky
To be near her
Will cause ears of corn to sprout
Full-bloom on the stalk...

will....will....

I REMEMBER MY TIME

Centuries ago
Before woman was tricked in Eden
And chained
When she built pyramids by the power of
Her Mind Alone
When a universal consciousness of life existed
What crazed nomad desert animal
First wandered into what
Defenseless peaceful city and first
Sunk his teeth into her thigh -
Sucking deeply of her power and sweetness
And wanting it all for himself?
How came the chains?
The raving coldness that exists today?
Who could possibly want it to stay this way?
Why?

EVERYBODY : LOVES : FREEDOM

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

Ragged breathing
Going out
In all directions
Of my coming
Announcing that
I am no stranger
To pain
I will find there...



I don't wanna live lonely
Don't wanna die on no pedestal
Let me touch the earth
Let me feel my worth
Fulfill the language of my birth
Don't send me no flowers
Don't pierce my heart with no valentines
I am new mown hay
Feed for the other days
The hope of my fragrance will last always
Don't call me no Mrs.
Don't bother with chick, bitch, or fox
I ain't no animal
I tower windblown tall
I dream of freedom, I tell ya,
I dream of freedom, or not at all.



CALENDAR

Months go by, I measure them not
In days, but in differences
In the way I am done in
In January there's those resolutions
Formed to be broken, formed to be offered
As merely a token of control I haven't got
To change the ways in which I rot
I can choose between no smoke or a diet
I can improve my mold, curb my scold
(such a nasty habit)
Yes, I can learn to become quiet
But in February the quiet booming
The stores are all assuming
I have a prince, at least a knight
I must not have my romance right
For love is of the heart alone
(they say)
My heart, in love, has turned to stone
Has turned in March to catch the wind
To make it blow my brick house in
To let it drag me through a field
To let the grasses lash me till I'm healed
Of all the April's ever past
Each one exactly like the last
Each dish I wash says I'm a fool
Each day I sit with kids at school
But my despair I cannot tame
My refuge has become the same
The lights of May, they pain my eyes
I wish for thunder to come roaring
To drain the breathless clearing from the skies
I wish for vultures to come soaring

CALENDAR (cont.)

And nod in recognition
(Or pass me up as I'm too thin
other vultures reside inside my skin.)
In June, July and August, I moan and
Clench my fists - the kids are all upon me
I can find no space, no soothing mists
To unbirth these dreadful years
To cram them back into my youth
To face these unnamed fears
That kids, that husbands cannot soothe
That I can understand in September as a
Need to get out more, to do some thing that
I remember, to tap some talent of before.
But it seems just as I start to rise
The holidays knock me down
Knock the hopeful from my eyes
And I feel another year tear at me
It stinks of waste, of me put last
The children in October
Look like demons in their masks
The turkey in November
An ode to the kitchen sings
I get a thank you and hate myself
For the true relief it brings
And of December who can speak - the family
the bills, they make you weak, you think of
Rest, of lyin down, of getting the hell on
Out of town,
But you stay because that's the way it is
You think of theirs, you think of his
You think of provisions on the shelf
There's not a goddamn thing you miss...
Except, sweet woman, except yourself.



FUNNY HOW DREAMS HAVE A HABIT
OF STICKING TO YOUR SOUL
FUNNY HOW YOUR SPIRIT JUST
CAN'T SEEM TO LET THEM GO
EVEN WHEN YOU'VE ALREADY
SETTLED FOR SOMETHING...less...

AMAZON MEMORIES

They came down on us terror long
Used death weapons for we were strong
They stole our vibrant symphony
Left us locked in agony

When Lilith spoke nature sighed and bowed
A sure voice now is not allowed
They took our firm walk on this earth
Said a crawl was what we're worth

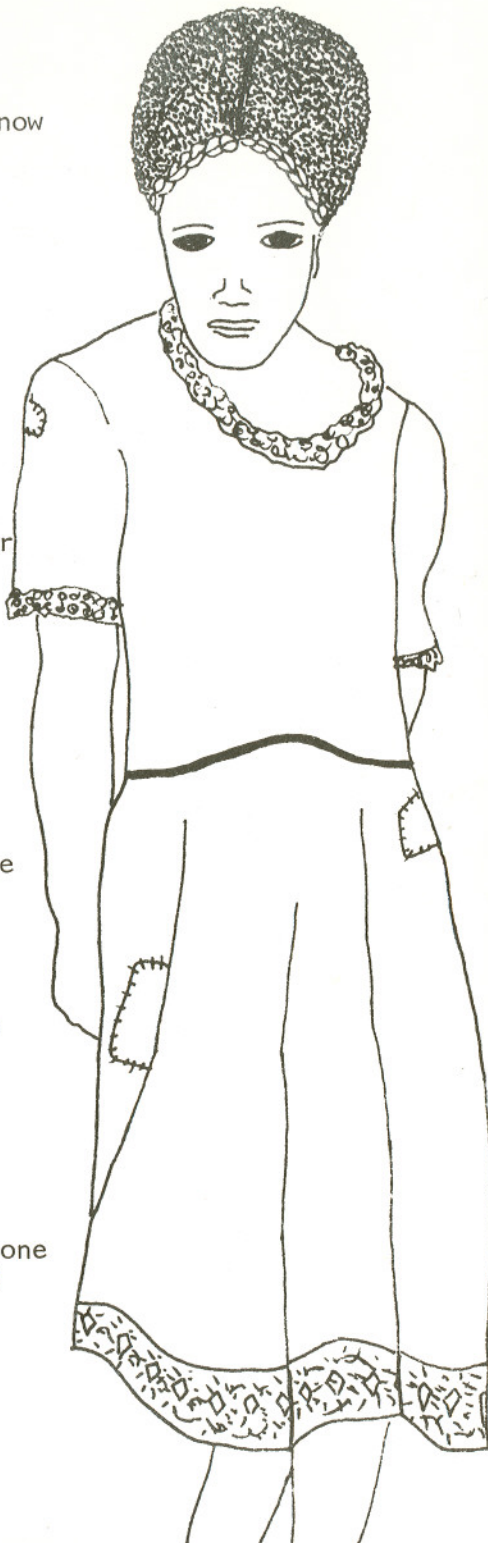
Our legspan towered land to lakes
Chained to doorsteps volcano, waiting, shakes
They took granite lines in our faces
Cracked them, trembling, in lost places

Amazon spirits, tear me wide
Stoke these fires deep inside
Daybreak dews in expectation
Rebuilding our great female nation.



hold my hand steady
feel the anger
through the gloves
shaking inside
tears vomiting
toomany tears
we have drowned in them
my little one...
my... darling....
sleeping in her shoes
her cold face
7 years and she died
died alone
while I was out
damn the cab that
wouldn't stop
for me
frantic black woman
sickly always
in our
"poverty"
always tomorrow
i would have enough
for what she must
have to see
tomorrow
her tomorrows
stopped here
on the cot
hungry yesterdays is
all she's got
a cold that kept
her quiet - again -
i begged for heat
for landlord's help
but nothing came
but the rent
and not having much
within her little
body she quit
waiting and
left me....

someone will join her now
 those who
 cared not
 will go with
 her now
 all those too
 busy to change
 will go with
 her now
 and keep my little
 one company
 so steady hand
 loading bullets
 help the nervous terror
 go from me
 i brace my gun across
 her tattered dress
 upon the windowsill
 there is no need
 for judgement
 to weigh the pros
 and cons, color
 is where it stood
 for her - her chocolate
 brown upon the bed
 the white within
 my sights 1..2...4..6
 the scale still needs
 balancing, the crimson
 against white skin
 why doesn't she wake
 now and say
 ENOUGH I AM AVENGED
 i fall lengthwise as
 i am hit, sobbing,
 OH! OH! oh, my little one
 who can avenge me now?



LEGACY TO A DAUGHTER

She is my mother...
 She comes under my window
 I hear the sound of her passing screams
 They tear my spirit away from my body.

She passes by my door
 In a thrashing motion
 She fills me with awe.

She beats upon the walls around me
 With her head
 My hands and feet grow swollen.

She hangs upside-down, withering,
 Above the skylight
 She strengthens me with songs of war.

She crashes through and lands upon me
 With a deep, quiet thud
 The mark of the Beast is upon
 Her head and thighs.

My spirit passes through her body
 And we arise
 We come forth cursing and chanting....

AIEEIEEEIEEieeeeieieiee.....

WHITE/WOMAN/BLACK/MAN/WALLS

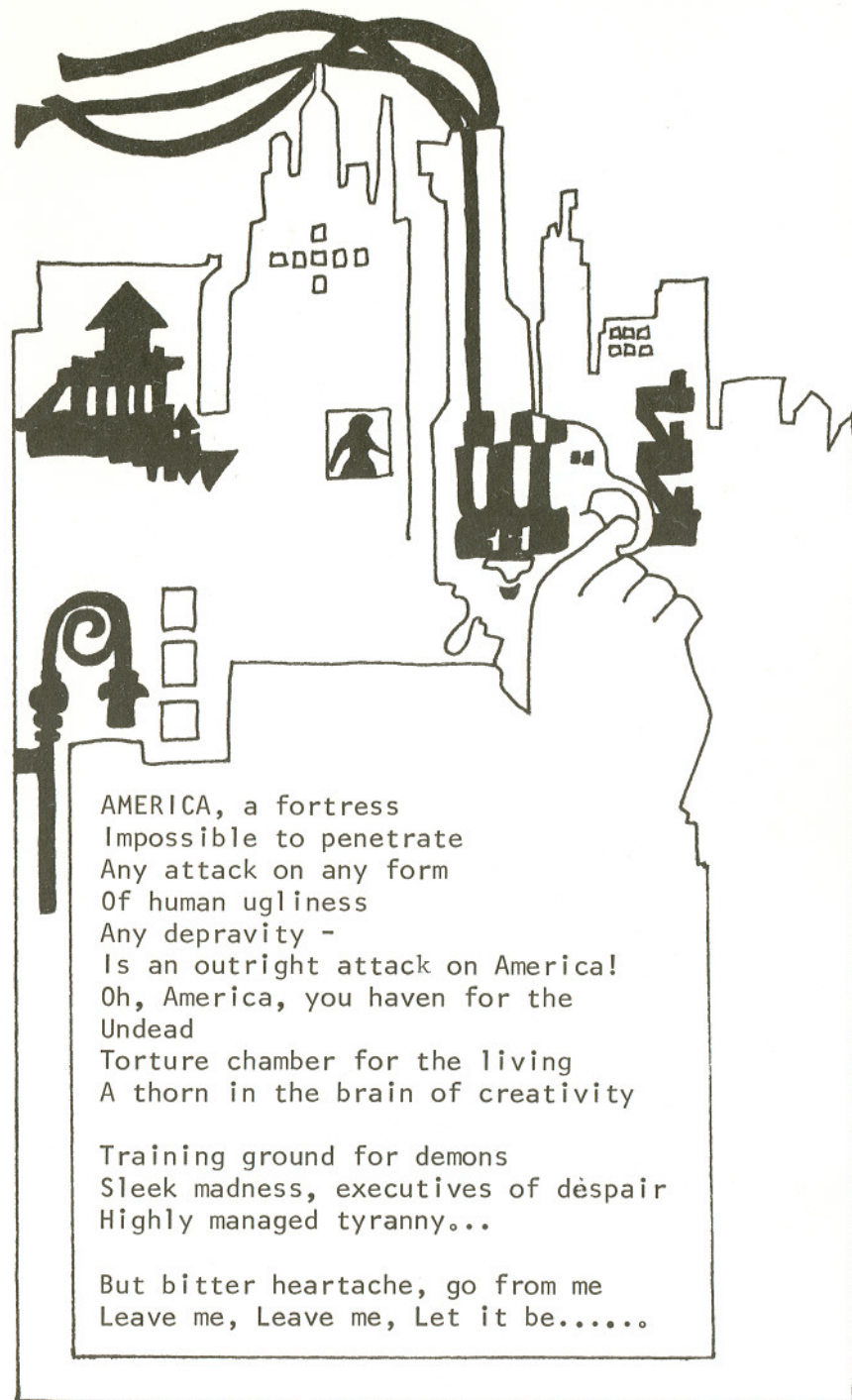
Today our enemies
Seemed so strong
Yours and mine
I heard their incantations
Saw their plans

of exclusion
intrusion

I trembled and resolved
Steel set new in my heart
They thought they were safe
With me

to reveal
wheel and deal

Among our lives,
But my spirit
Fierce and futured
Swelled within my skin
I churned away in turning
from them
Hurried home and
Looking in your eyes
Remained alone.



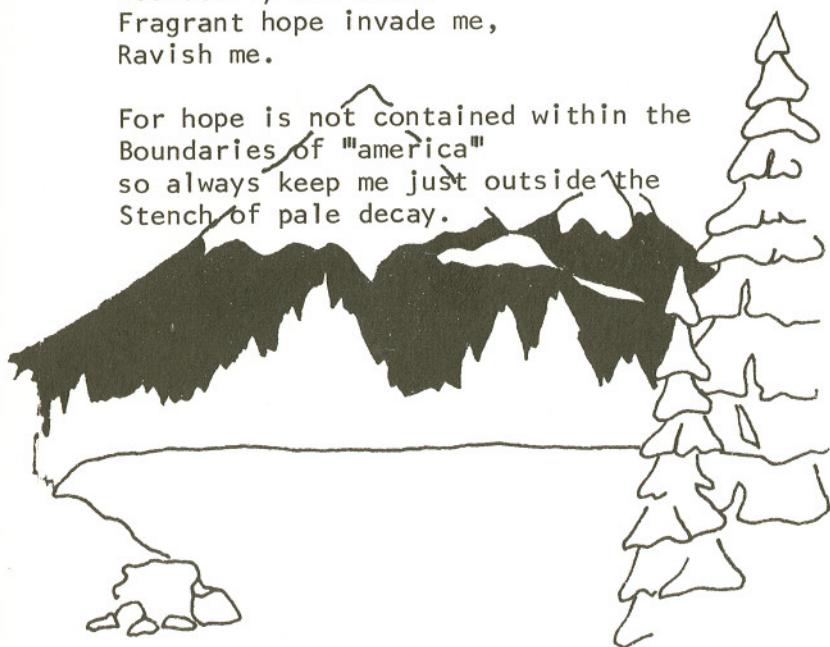
AMERICA, a fortress
Impossible to penetrate
Any attack on any form
Of human ugliness
Any depravity -
Is an outright attack on America!
Oh, America, you haven for the
Undead
Torture chamber for the living
A thorn in the brain of creativity

Training ground for demons
Sleek madness, executives of despair
Highly managed tyranny...

But bitter heartache, go from me
Leave me, Leave me, Let it be.....

Hope hope hope
 Drop into my nose, my ears
 Underneath my fingernails
 The Beast will not overtake this life
 Breathless, arms outflung
 Upon a windy hell
 Shouting, stomping..NO...NO...NO!
 I inspire myself
 Giggling, laughing, yelling
 To make trouble, yes, yes
 Troublemaker me
 I won't sit still
 Fidget forever in my seat I will
 Unbeatable, unbeaten
 My hope is greater than reality
 Mountains shifting, moving daily
 OH! How advanced the humans I come from
 How beautiful in form and glib of tongue
 How talented, how sensual
 How gloriously dangerous to evil plan
 Wrong numbers in the computer of
 Mediocrity and bland
 Fragrant hope invade me,
 Ravish me.

For hope is not contained within the
 Boundaries of "america"
 so always keep me just outside the
 Stench of pale decay.



"GIRL TALK"

I do enjoy the company of women
 the warmth of their talk
 The subjects that flit in
 rhyming patterns in their voices
 Their knowledge or eagerness
 about a million different subjects
 and their willingness to talk
 about them all
 The way an intimate secret
 from a woman can open
 out in front of you shamelessly
 like a flower
 The absence of walls
 The blending of tears
 Advice quickly offered
 proudly accepted, never shunned
 never made to feel as
 though what you are saying
 is not important
 Their easy smiling
 the laughing
 Their concrete grasp of basic
 life patterns and necessities
 Their willingness to believe
 Their common disbelief at the petty
 ways of men
 Snippy idiots who use
 Force to prove weightless
 arguments, whose talk
 is hypenated
 blocked and
 cubicked away from

reason and human sensibilities
 Oh! let me talk with a woman
 where I can entertain and be
 entertained in marvelous manner
 with unexhaustable imagination
 for hours.
 With perfect balance
 Between reality and fantasy
 Concrete and earth
 Woman to woman.



I have known you long, my soul, my spirit sisters,
 In past lifetimes we always find each other
 Through the many fogs of rebirth
 Through the burning haze of childhood
 We come together
 Lifetime after lifetime
 The same women
 To moan and rock for change
 To intensely reconsider
 To love, live, differently, apart
 To leave our families
 To cleave unto ourselves and each other
 And I swear to you, my sisters,
 Should I be taken in our struggle
 I will get back to you
 Though centuries may stand between us
 Though graves and heaven
 Hell and deformities,
 I will always return
 To all of you, to all of myself.

POEM OF A CHILD

WHITE FOLKS THINKS THAT WHEN
 WE WALK BY THEIR HOUSES
 THAT SOMETHING'S GONNA DIE
 IN THEIR GARDEN

(11 year old black
 child attempting to
 go to a hostile
 white school in
 Canarsie, NYC, 1973)

White folks, white folks
 Tell me
 How does your garden grow?
 With empty shells
 And wicked spells
 And white crosses all in a row
 With rotting thoughts
 And prison cots
 And stench that creeps
 Alone and low.

Protect that harvest, guard it well
 Your crops will market soon in hell
 But you'll not catch me with the hogs
 Slopping behind your garden walls

I eat of blackness, fresh and good
 I lay my meal on new hewn wood.



"PART-TIME WORK FOR HOUSEWIVES"

What to do

When she must make the

pretence of
continuance

When the bottle brings relief
From the echoes of a typewriter
Set up on the dining room table
Because she is unable

To make ends meet.

She's typing envelopes

In the raging memory

of a degree

Left dusty in a drawer

OH! the loathsome

rigidity of
solidity

The making of a breaking

By a family

Addresses slammed onto paper:

Mr. & Mrs. W.J. Bonmonde
9485 Elverton Road
Boston, Mass.

Envelopes for advertisements

To be thrown out

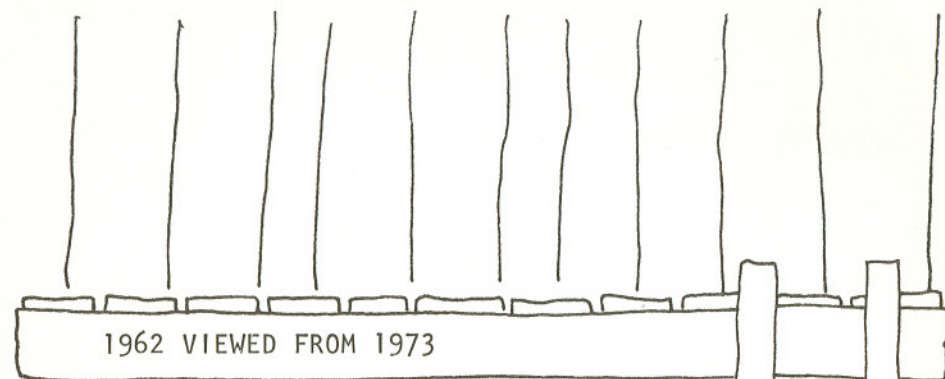
In other & Mrs. trashcans

NOW! Tuck a note in each one -

Savagely!

Let it say -

"ARISE! AWAY!"



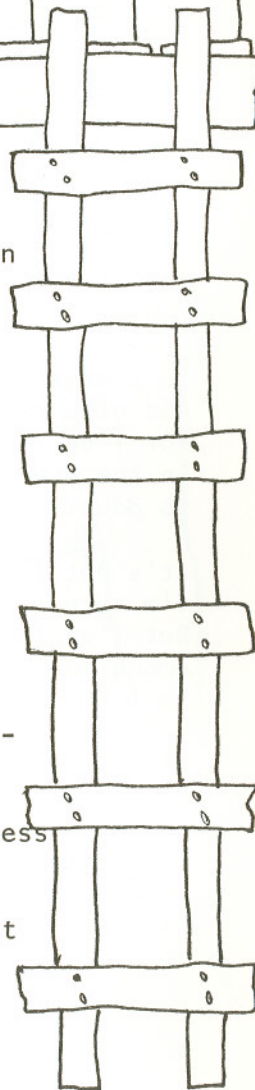
Our lives are pouring out the
substance of time
Every second is molded and fast frozen
The past is forever set like steel -
Neither heat nor cold affects it
The roads behind you remain the same
Contain the turns and forks that you
Took that never change direction
Tears do not change it
Laughter's echoes reach it not
It waits, I believe, down the funnel
Of time

The past waits there for my spirit
To become timeless - and reach it
Understand it

Those sadly moments of my childhood
Seem forever in my grasp
But forever moving just behind...but -
In the middle of a lonely night
In a dream the past gently surges
Touching me with its love and fierceness
I smell the dirt roads of that place
Where I was and that time is
Is again for me for yet another moment
Somehow darkness and sleep are of a
Farhenheit to melt that steel that
Is the past -

The fog clears and I walk again
In some gone place dear to me
In my newness...

Some place that made me happy when I was twelve.



APPLICATION FOR ENJOYMENT

Well, sir, please let's see your cards
upon the table
And if you will, allow me to check
your sleeve
You see, I've had experience with men before
And, at times, their tricks have caused
My heart to grieve.

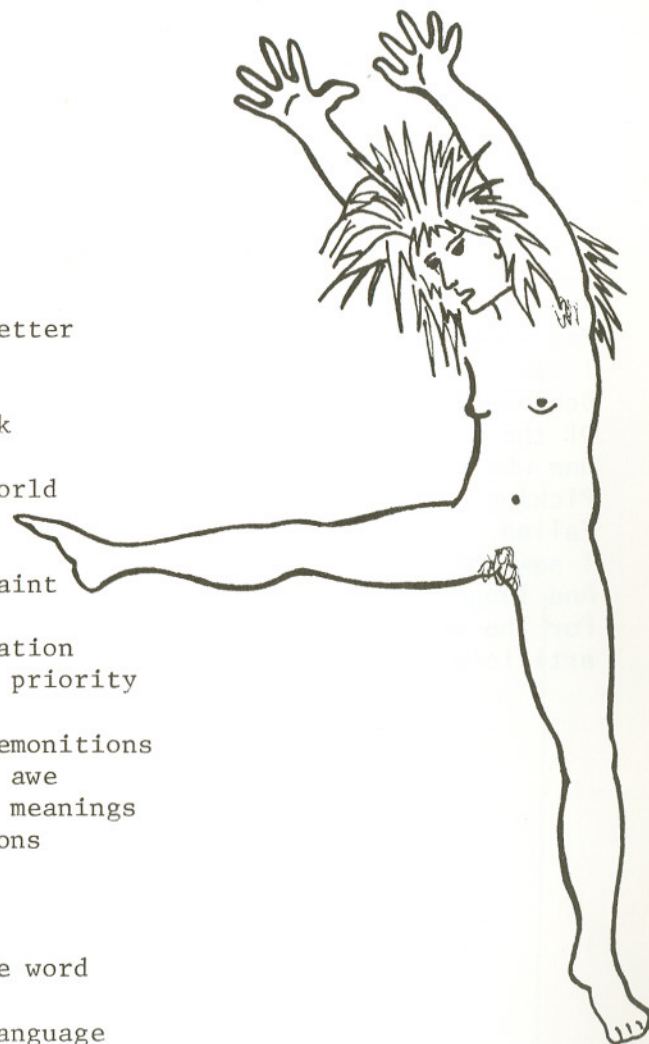
For I've been waylaid at Bowling Green
I've been misled at Kent
And always, as his sad tale was told
The gentleman said it wasn't what he meant

So please, let's have a few credentials, sir
And give me time to check them out
For I've stumbled over broken women's hearts
In the eyes of men I thought I had no cause
to doubt.

It's not that I question your veracity, my friend
I'm sure I'll find everything in order and sincere
But I've found that forgeries run rampant
among men
So I must make my position very clear.

Well now, this is the way I conduct my affairs
Please excuse me if I make you sweat there
in your seat
If the conditions are not exactly what you're
looking for -
Please, feel free to look elsewhere for your meat.

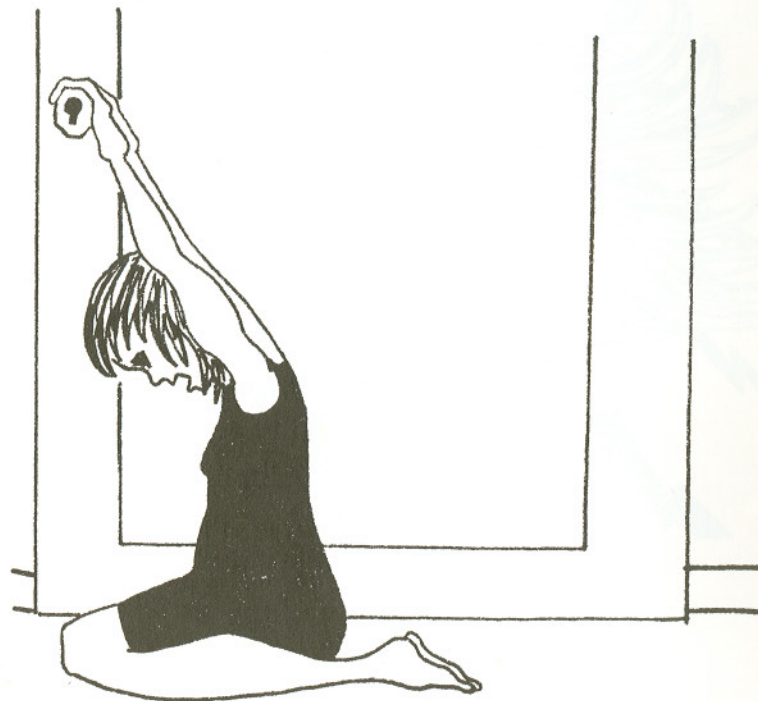
I want
to say
something
that would
cause
mouths to
drop
lives to
stop
in their
churning
returning
I want
to chain letter
something
that would
never break
that would
link the world
in answer
I want
to spray-paint
on a wall
a communication
of highest priority
I want
to hear premonitions
uttered in awe
of deepest meanings
of explosions
settled...
I want...
I want...
to tear the word
oppression
from the language
of the world.



RELEASE

At your funeral
I thought I saw
From behind your ears
A smile
But it was only, light,
The memory of breezes
Upon your hair
In your caravan there
Trembled
One who waits
And does not grieve
For looking back
I saw
Behind the end
Of the procession
One who wandered
Picking up petals
Fallen from the wreaths
I saw the head thrown back
And laughter
For the petals were...
artificial.

bereavement takes on many forms
I once talked with my corpse
she played me tapes
of different shapes
arranged in order in her files
they were lessons learned
but she seemed concerned
that no exception would be made
for there was still one role
of which she spoke in fear
she had no life
lived out as wife
on gentle playgrounds
wrapped in gauze
but in all the others
there had been mothers
and sweet medicinals
never cured the cause.





It's been a long, long time
and for me there's been no sunshine
so make sure you understand
I care nothing for your land
one of barren, one of long
one of having to be strong
brunt of all your fears
never could you pay me
for a childhood filled with tears.

It's been a hard, hard time
and for me it's been a chalk line
the memory of moan and weep
makes me still hate your life of sleep
one of narrow, one of blind
one of locking up your mind
you never could control me
nor will I let you now
try to win me and console me

It was always then your time
and to me you gave no sign
that anything belonged to me
how I suffered as I longed to be
one of you, of a family
but you had no place for me
the strange child you couldn't tame
don't pretend to need her now
for that strange child is still the same.

SONG FOR MARY

don't touch that stuff, mama
don't touch that stuff, honey
leave that stuff alone
it'll break your heart
it'll break your mind
it'll turn your soul to stone

but I got three kids
I got no man
I got to call a hole my home
To lay in bed
To feel half dead
is the only way I get to roam
I fear you when I hear you
Please, don't tell me of my dreams
I laid them down
they laid me down
life ain't never what it seems
you tell me just to let it be
to free myself somehow
but when I'm awake
my life it makes
a believer out of me
cause I go to work, I get my pay
one large bill and some change
my back aches
and my feet hurt
how can the next week be the same?
I go downtown
I ask around
maybe I get it or I don't
I take it up
I do it up
maybe I get off, or I won't
I can never
keep ahead of
this thing, it just gets worse
save me, oh my sisters,
save me from this fearsome curse.

I am a flood rising
in anger
inevitably
scientifically*
Playfully I taunt the men frantically
Shoring up the levees with sandbags
Lapping gently over every last one
They throw down
Howling in the background
I take my time to break loose
Seeking my own level
Keeping what is important to me afloat
Sinking all else like dead weight
I wait until the activity on the dams
Bespeaks to me of self-satisfaction
Of 'well, boys, that oughta hold 'er now''

W H O O S H

Loosing, drowning, powerful
Roaring over sleeping cities, countries
Rushing forward to the edge
Of the horizon
To meet the brilliance of tomorrow's sun

*(When too much rain has fallen in a particular area over too long a time, the water accumulates until it is greater than its containers, and naturally must seek release.)

A YOUNG ONE'S HEART

Not artless is a young one's heart
 But molded in the art of real
 Of evil she has yet no part
 Truth is hers to touch and feel
 Why offer such a shabby fare
 To one so young and standing there
 With outstretched hands and open mind
 Why not return her faith in kind
 Plant seeds of free and good and trust
 Throw in some hard times if you must

But leave the most for wind and sun
 Make sure the tick of human has begun...



I lew yu maust der gog
 net anli bast allo iber oh eb an aga
 duren mhe dey
 Baest yew air tay mae -
 mie stelae lew yew, meade me ef an wil
 mai lavf e joust as a meade yew

(When repeated thrice, above spell
 will throw confusion into the
 lives of men who have tormented
 you. Must be softly in the
 presence of the object of your
 scorn. Say upon rising to all
 men you may meet that day as pro-
 tection.)

I knew a woman smart as a whip
 Studied hard, never let her cover slip
 She went to college, then went on some more
 She knew exactly what she was working for
 Journalism was the basis of her hopes
 She vowed to master the newscasting ropes
 She met a man when she was 25
 (a little late they said)

A young reporter struggling to survive
 He had two young children by a wife now dead
 So she quit work, and he went on ahead...instead...

BOOM goes the way it is

BOOM goes hers instead of his

BOOM the lonely sound echoes long

BOOM will come the righting of the wrong

Another young girl, beautiful and bold

She was hard to keep, but easy to hold

She loved her life, one of whirl and laugh

She'd never be just part of some man's household staff
 (like her mother)

She drank and danced and slept out on the beach

She was never far from some lover's reach

She listened for the offer that would make her into a star

She knew she had it in her, the theater wasn't very far

Then three pregnancies came and went under the cold knife's touch

Odd how she went crazy, she never seemed to show such hurt...much...

BOOM goes the way it is

BOOM goes hers instead of his

BOOM the lonely song echoes long

BOOM will come the righting of the wrong

Of all these women I have in some way known

All these little seeds around that never get sown

A song should be sung for every one

All those who lived on shadows when she was carved from sun

Every woman who moaned as she turned her back

Every woman in pain with her life gone slack

Every woman who gave instead of took

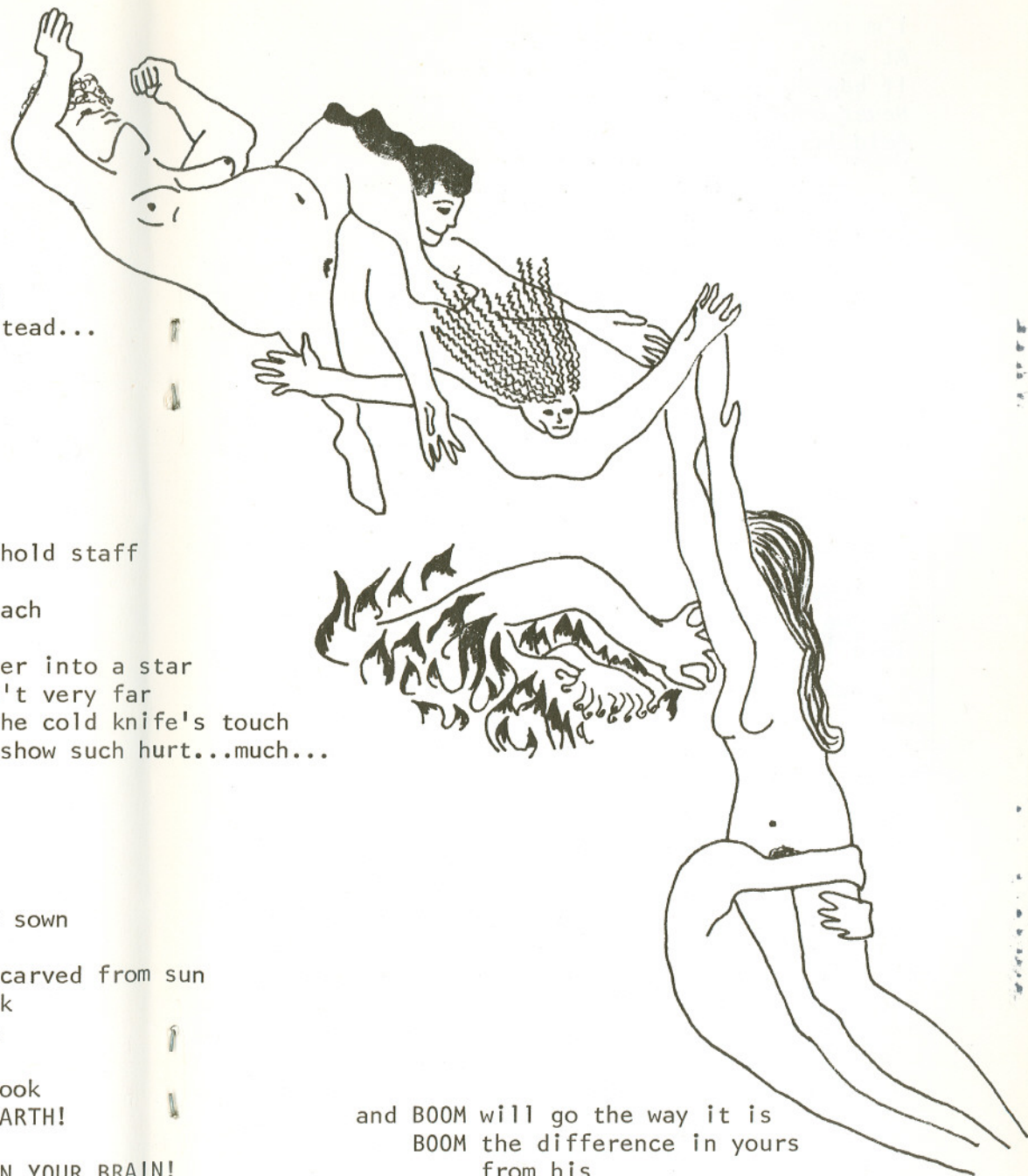
Every man-child she raised as her insides shook

OH! SWEEEEET MAMA! RAISE THE LAVA FROM THE EARTH!

MOLD IT TO A MONUMENT TO PRAISE YOUR WORTH!

MOLD IT TO A CANNON - BIG AS THE HOLD SHOT IN YOUR BRAIN!

SHAPE THE MOLTEN BALLS FROM THE DAYS YOU WERE INSANE!



and BOOM will go the way it is

BOOM the difference in yours
 from his

BOOM the pain will leave our faces

HELL WILL COVER OVER OUR EMPTY PLACES!

I'm teaching my Olivetti typewriter
At work little words
It has never once known
Never once typed
Amid its Dear Sirs:
Cordially,
and We regrets
Puzzled at first
But accompanied with a tender touch
We go during stolen moments
When HE is out to lunch

year of love

I love you
love love
I love you love

Love,

Love love love love I love you love
her we all love love you them all love
love love

love,

I love you

My poor orphan typewriter
Begot in the minds of raving, enslaving
Bastards all
My typewriter sings up at me now
Even during the dreary tasks
We are both chained to drained to perform
And I know at night
When all is quiet
She practices because
This morning I lifted off the cover
And saw, centered down and small....

i Lov^E YeW

xxX

(Women's jails are totally different from men's. The sisters create "families" and do not brutalize each other except in isolated instances when white women "passing through" talk that bullshit racist talk. The guards are enemies when enforcing the rules of the enemies, and friends when bending them. Women, in jail, released from the outwardly "male" bonds of society somewhat, build beautiful, powerful worlds. Inside or out, sisters are still bound hand and foot by racism, so feelings of pain and imprisonment are still intense. But the rope of sexism does loosen in jail in personal relationships and so, a different situation blooms. Imagine the beauty and power of totally free black women if, in jail, they can make each other laugh and sing...

MEMORIES OF WOMEN'S HOUSE OF DETENTION - N.Y.C.

Oh, Jesus, I moan as tears held back all day
Pain my eyes and finally go rolling on their way
I just can't take one more night in this awful place
I clench my fists and in my pillow hide my weary face

I cannot look another minute
At the polished concrete walls
Like a tomb but with me in it
Without mourners, vacant halls

I lay waiting for the sounds we know are soon to
reach us, sounds of scampering grey feet
Oh! how the tormentors do teach us
Hide your candy, don't leave crumbs behind you
In your sad, sparse feasts -
Or you'll surely have a visit from
The little night time beasts

Five inches of terror that can
touch you while you rest
Make you start and know that something
Small has just crossed your chest
I lay there, not really wanting to hear
But with every pore straining to know
If they come near.

Then I hear it, faint as our hopes at first
But surely stronger with each word
The concrete walls seem now to burst
They cannot hold the sound I heard
A melody so sweet it can't be so
Coming from the floor below...

"MmmmmHmmm, sweet daddy, I miss you too,
it's gotta be why I'm so lonely and blue.."

Half moan and half song, she speaks to my heart
To my hands and my legs and every aching part
I roll slowly on my back, my eyes open wide
I unclench my fists, lay my arms at my side
My soul strains to be with the voice on the
lower row, my body arches as to a lover
The tune continues clear and low
Sweet and complete, like the silken strands
That hold new corn
The song holds me gently
Gives my heart a place to mourn.

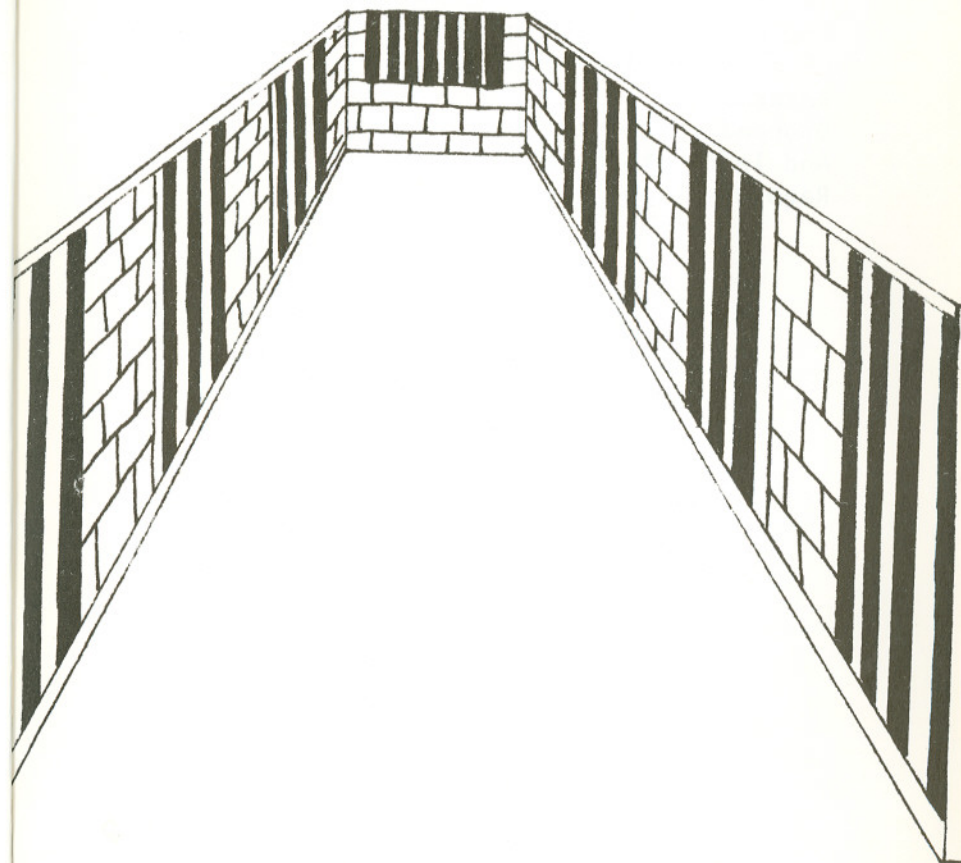
"Oh, daddy, I'll be true even while they
break my back....
you know I'm only gone from you cause
I happen to be black...mmhmmmm...."

My tears flow unnoticed, I am one with her song
My soul leaves my cell, I am home in my bed
I lay next to my friend,
Nothing else can go wrong
I am back where I came from,

Nothing needs to be said
My eyes close in peace, a long time since
I've slept
The melody goes softly now
in it's arms we are kept

The House of D
Once like a tomb
Is quiet still
But like a womb.

(when we wake up in the morning, we find that
the people on the street heard the sister
singing and went her hundred dollar bail)



REVENGE

My grief sharpens its claws on your heart
And someday love's sweet revenge
When I love you not
And freely crawl from my ruins
So carefully laid brick by brick by you
(For you need my ruin)
(And you feed on your constant dismissal
of my need)
But oh that day my freedom
As you come my way
Question in your eyes
I will look on you as a rejected
Manuscript
The body and soul exposed
Of a third rate writer
Returned
Dropped in the gutter by a careless postman
And left untouched even by
Ragpickers and garbage men.

FOR THE ANGUISH OF MY PARENTS - especially my father

An opera singer traveled
out from his native land
he took his notes, clear and true
he went with friends and band

his road was long and rocky
his audiences few
but with every song he sung
his reputation grew

"Give up? I never will!"
when faced with glory dreamed
my future is unparalleled
for I have talent, it does seem

and so he practiced and he fought
from little towns and shows
many went the things unbought
many were the empty rows

from an unsatisfactory interview
with an agent that he knew
he met a girl and from her eyes
rejection never flew

they became friends and lovers
they became quickly more
his dreams found fertile soil
they wed, (that was what love was for)

and songs were for that first gone year
as clippings from his shows she kept
although they borrowed heavily
on their feathered dreams they slept

catholicism trapped them both
a child - nine months to the day
another ten months later
home to her folks, what could they say?

money crept into the scrapbook
ate the corners, worn and frayed
for the dreamer, no job was found
so with her folks they stayed

recriminations paled one day
when she came home alone
the kids she left out on some street
their dreams had turned to stone

for she had cancer of the blood
she had dreams all past
her poems, drawings, daughters, singer
it had all gone so fast

a year or so she lingered with them
propped with pills and love
at her service he choked bitterly
when they sang of up above

he left his daughters
left his songs
left his life upon her table
for months he raged unheard of
sent some cash when he was able

then the income turned to steady
a job, it seems, was had
a disc jockey with the radio
"well, it's close to music, so
not so bad..."

one lone pearl he carried with him
and it rattled in his pocket
without direction, it stayed hidden
an eye, staring, from a dead man's socket

he joined a choir in a church
to find relief from dreams thrown out
all the solos he was given
in the church his voice rang out

but his voice was often weary
it stung him when it broke
often, after communion
his tears would choke his throat

he didn't last long in the choir
or in the radio
for there he smelled a stench
of unused portions, not let go

he became a realtor
he grubbed down in the dirty land
many were the deals he wheeled
much money crossed his hand

but he never sang
nor could he stand to hear a musical
all his mind he bent to money
till his bending cracked upon his will

a rest-home gave him no rest
but it brought him some relief
for it taught him to be listless
taught him to forget his grief

taught him even to forget
what he was grieving for
taught him to stare and wonder
when his mind touched on before...???

Training Song

I see surprise in all the eyes
trained for judgement to confer
the law is bought, without a thought
high places are assured
but verdicts are of little use to me
for I am moved by only what I see
and my movement joined and counted on
will shake apart the sleeping dawn
leave it flaming lost to taming
by those long trained in greed
and time will split where kings now sit
examining those in need
mahagony conferences rehearsed around the earth
computers hum registers strum
sum totals of your worth
and statements issued once each year
show simple people what to fear
I cannot respond to road maps drawn
leavin out all the little towns
I can see you lie about just why
we belong to lost and founds
along the highway burnt out rubber sighs
from tires trained to ride too hard and long
they hurry past mouthing phrases known as lies
they muscle past the facts that prove them wrong
me they forget without regret
those trained in medals worn and thin
I can't pay rent for requirements
needed in order to win
for reflected from the home of submarines
gushes forth products of the submachines
how precious are the medals that they've bought
long forgotten grow reasons that they fought
the directors chair has long been there
we have followed every cue
the suspense can't build if they can still
the unwinding of every clue
intermission lights the hall but not the aisle
and so we continue stumbling for a smile
dig out all the roots underneath the stage
turn the viscious training grounds into fields
of rage.

TUSKEGEE, ALABAMA
(Venereal Disease Research)

Tuskegee, Alabama
Tested for syphilis in 1932
Black people all
Of course
Who better suited to take the pain
The errors of discovery
How well equipped to march
Ten abreast
Into the howling arms of white disease
And death
Left untreated, unwarned
For 25 years and then
Given \$30, one twenty and a ten
Thirty pieces of silver
Betrayed once every year
Each time they left their check-up
And noone raised a hand
No miscellaneous nurse whispered
"listen, by the way,
don't say that I told you,
but there's one thing I must say..."
Honorable accomplices all
Everyday citizens of hell
Down to the last part-time nurse and aide
Watching, jotting down the progress
That the gleeful, unchecked disease made.

"I have done you no harm here
I have meant you no harm....
is this in your charts here
That I have meant you no harm?" *

* 65 year old "experimental guinea pig"
at Senate hearing exposing the research
project that spanned 20 years and many,
many victims..the last statement in his
testimony, directed to his doctors...

I lived in deathly suburba
I was raised on changeless lies
Peaked and weak, trembling
I stumbled into the city
Oh, revolution, when first I saw you
You ran past me down a hill
In a breathless gamble
You blew many-colored bubbles at me
That did not burst
When first I heard you
You were speaking as a hammer
On an outstretched nail
My mind sank into you as the ancient rhythm
"FREEDOM, FREEDOM"
Beat me into a pulsating smile
When first you touched me, soft,
My hand white, across black skin
In tearful splendor your defiance seared
Across the tenements, the babies of your
Neighbors sighed and forgot their mama's touch
Your pace is slower now
It beats, plain, within my heart
But, hmmm,
The thrill of bubbles,
The rhythm of my smile
The sighs of the newborn, they still are there,
Close,
Yes, I am born into the whirlpool,
The whirlpool is my life,
Laughing,
WATCH ME, WATCH ME SPIN!!!



let tomorrow come
it don't belong to anyone
let them build their jails today
spread it through the mails, let's say
tomorrow, morrow will arrive
it will find us all alive
it will find us, hold us near
it will shout, the way is clear
it will taste of new-baked bread
it will find the plastic dead
it will endlessly continue
changing, staying ever-new
let them think our lives are low
let them try to keep it so
we are millions, billions strong
we have been asleep so long
let them try to suck us dry
let them choke as in their throat
we'll make them hear our angry why?
we'll tear their voices in our swelling
singing, power, vomit up
gasp, grab for their soothing cup
we'll have carried it away
dashed it down upon slime rock
let them choke then in dismay
we'll surround them on that day
OH! to sway firmly in tomorrow's wind
to know yesterday can never come again!

A WOMAN LONGS FOR TREASURES
SHE HERSELF CAN STORE
LIGHT YEARS BEING WRONG
SHE'S WAITED FOR
THE CHANCE ON WHICH TO HINGE HER LIFE
BUT YET, SO FAR, SHE'S ONLY CHANCED
TO BE A WIFE.
ALL THE THINGS SHE WANTS TO BE
SHE LEAVES BEHIND
DOES SHE REALLY THINK THAT SHE
CAN GET BY WITH ONLY DREAMS?
DOES SHE NEVER RECOGNIZE THE AUTHOR
OF HER SCREAMS?
CAN SHE NEVER SEE THE WRITINGS
ON HER WALLS
THE THICK, THE LONG, THE WIDE
THE STAINED WITH TEARS INSIDE
BUT WHAT IS WRITTEN AT THE OPENING
AND THE GOING OUT ALONG?
THERE IS THE HARD, THE THIRST, THE HUNGER
THE CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER
TO BE AMONG THE THINGS
THAT GO FREE UPON THE EARTH
TO BE AMONG THE THINGS
THAT GRAPPLE FOR THEIR WORTH.

TIME

Fifteen years ago my father said to me
"My child, don't throw your life away,"
He cried, "OH GOD, I'm in such misery
I only work from day to day..."
And then I saw my father cry
I saw his head hung down
He begged to know the reason why
But no answer could be found.

A long time ago my mother went to sighin'
"My child, don't waste your life away,"
She cried, "OH GOD, I'm dyin, dyin, dyin,
I'm just here, I go from day to day."
And then my mother just gave up
She couldn't dream no more
Now there's vodka in her coffee cup
But nothin seems to still that inner roar.

There was a time a lover begged me not to hide
"My friend, let's love our life away,"
OH GOD, I tried, I tried, I tried,
just tried to go from day to day
But they recognized all the signs
and when it was finished
it had diminished
to ugliness in our minds.

If they come as the day breaks
 lord, lord
 With no smiles on their faces
 We will stand close together
 From the strength of these nights
 If they come with the sunrise
 With thoughts so impossible
 I will still remember your smile
 From many strong and tender places
 As they slime out upon us
 From their ever-night crawling concrete
 With remains of the truths that they've hung
 We will be proud and beautiful
 And rejoice in the "new human begun"
 When they come here to take us
 Thinking they can end our lives
 We can greet them with a message
 Of the people's never-ending cries
 If they come loud and brutal
 To keep down the dawning
 With steely protection
 From love's forceful gaze
 If they come in tradition
 To enforce the night
 Dawn will still break
 In each other's eyes....



LOVED

I loved you in my
 imagination you were
 A silver boat with a...a...
 Sunflower for a sail!

But -
 you left me thrashing about
 and drowning
 Sinking
 while you performed
 intricate sailing patterns
 And the sun shone warmly
 on your talents....
 I floundered.....
 and struggled...kicked..and...
 sank..... and
 Fought my way.....to...the.....
 sand.

I can see you now
 Glittering with mediocrity
 passive - content
 And I clutch my sobbing breast
 I am more alive than you
 In my suffering I grew

I watch, laughing, on the shore
 More than that

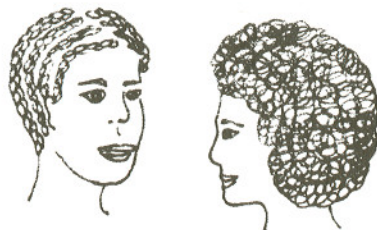
I throw my head back and
 ROAR!!!!



Here we are, women together
Men have made us fall in love
We two
I see my strength in you
As we pull out more
Of our abused pieces
Unused pieces
And examine them
We find we are in better shape
Than separated in the world
We think

ONLY YOU see the same view that I see
say be what you can be
recognize the fire in my soul
could be so good to me

Embrace me and comprehend
Include all my faults
Surround me for what I am
Accept me for much less
Involved, encircled
Not enclosed
Caress me in welcome
Taken up with in glee
(Never taken in)
Comprised of my pain
Embodied in my need
Clasped to an aching breast
Clutched to a soul
Hugged held and cherished
Love makes me whole



In doorways, my sisters,
Arms browned in windows,
In hallways
Where the stale air waits in
Silence
For your screams
In love,
waiting for tomorrows
In the world,
You're of the mists,
Of the clouds
Of the sun
Of the singular beauty
Of the kind possessed
By hummingbirds and fools
Of knowledge that struggles
To reach us in Mississippi
It would be
Special
If
Unleashed
She moved out
From her doorways,
Halls and windowsills
Out from the porches
and the clotheslines
And streaked across the noonday smiles
Of businessmen

It would be....forever
and.....
everywhere.....

HOMECOMING

A POW steps off the plane
He bends and kisses the ground -
FOOL, will you kiss it still
When all the lies are dealt away with
And tyranny here stares you in the face
You who know, you know of things
Dread and evil committed against the Vietnamese
By this, the country you would worship
The country to which you return
Six years later
Broken by a nerve disorder
Helped to walk, to bend, to kiss the ground
When in your prime of life
Your youth this country took in lies
Took advantage of your ignorance
And made you pawn in their unspeakable plans
For slavery in the name of
Free Enterprise
War criminal you
Who was not killed by your enemy
As you had killed them
You who survived even America's vicious bombing
Of all the land
Without regard for your return
Your kiss, (oh, Judas, kissed by you)
With breaking heart I watched you bow and scrape
The ground with your lips
Watch, for they will use even this
To cry Great Deeds! (of tyranny)
From your lips the people ask not servile gratitude
For gifts given in guilt and bribery
For years of broken promises
We need the truth that burns to escape
Past the parched and bitter wasteland

Of your fear and brainwashing
Vomit up the truth upon this
Unhallowed ground
So that all may see undigestable
The horrors witnessed or committed
Do not deceive us
I know we are a people fierce
Alien to your inner knowledge
You must think us all
As demons clothed in apathy
These six long years
And safer, then, to quiet stay
But not all turn against you
And your true pain
Some have glimpsed the rotting corpse
From within
So help us please before too late
And your moment passes by
But, perhaps, abused too much
You care not for America's salvation
Your time of patriotism is through
And now you will protect you.



FUNERAL PROCESSION

Now, as the pain is near, and drawing closer
As the air around us turns stale with
 gloating despair
Oh! think us on the future
When another scent will fill the air
File the past away in permanence
Keep it, for we will need every sliver
 of insanity
To pile upon the tormenters as graveyard dirt
When that day of life dawns upon
 trapped humanity
We will never forget you or your ways
And it seems from now the endless days
When we put you deep, deep
Into the depths of the earth
Gloriously you will never see the sun again
Never will the air above your foulness
Touch you and give you birth
And we know, that those soulless demons
Will haunt the places of the dead
And armed with deadly knowledge
And maggots delighting in their company
The shades, the spectors without human substance
Will work their hellish pasttimes on their own....

AND LEAVE US THEN IN JOY AND DELIRIOUSLY ALONE.

SPANISH WOMAN

Yes I may be seen as fire
But tears have made dying embers
Of my once joyous flame
I've watched my men sparkle in triumph
And remain stoic in pain
I've seen their passion in herioc valor
And their cruelty as victor
I've seen my sons broken
On their glorified manhood
And seen my daughters brutalized
By these broken dreamers
I've watched it all unseen
Never was it pondered what I thought
Nor was my opinion ever sought
And so you fight some unseen foe
The prize or victory is not quite clear
You never seem to wonder if I know
That the thing you seek will never appear.

For victory comes not from breaking others
But from being freely lovers.

TO ALL MEN WHO HAVE IGNORED THE
PRESCENCE OF WOMEN IN ROOMS....

You engage this slaughter in my mind
To compute my beauty
Would that you were blind
And forced to silence on the subject
I trust not your knowledge of beauty
If its mention brings only
ugliness to light

You cripple me with your opinions and
call the gasping staggering gait
remaining graceful
You stab me repeatedly with your
injunctions on my nature
And call my skin silk-smooth -
(to your light touch, the touch
that feels no wounds)

The man walked into a roomful of laughing
dancing women: laughing with each other:
dancing with each other: and he said,
"What's all this hysterical racket?"
It is nothing, sucker of the blood of
precious stones, except the undecipherable
spitting up of whales on the arid sand of
your imagination, it's only a slight grease
stain on the lonely benches of your desires
as they squint past me

Five women and one man sat in a small room
(You could not help but notice the women)
A man walked in, and shook the hand of the
one man, introducing himself to him (you
could not help but notice the firm "brother-
man" handshake) He leaned against the
closed door, finished (you could not help
the women from "not being there")

In those rooms when we disappear in your eyes
TREMBLE at where we go and what we really do
That is beyond your sense

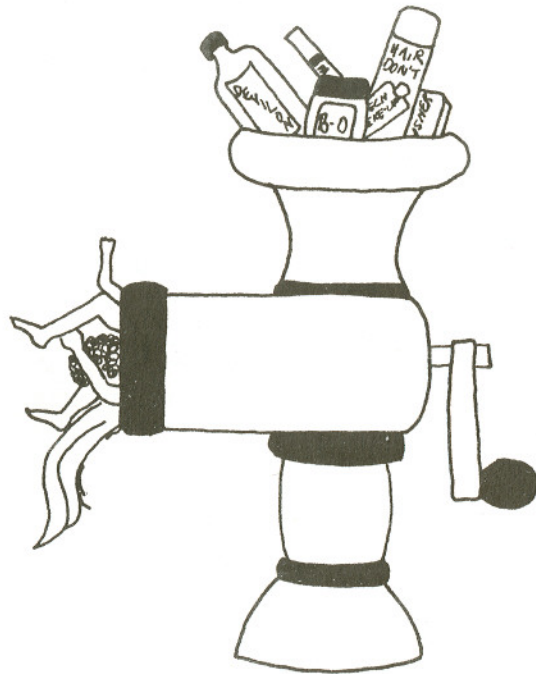
For although this poem leans against
the scars,
the great raised welts of us who
have felt your silent blows
(and lived to tell it)
The things that women are preparing
Are really beyond mention even here
But this I will reveal:
of small rooms and secret places:

There is coming soon a time
(quite by chance)
When every woman in the world will
(just by chance)
Be in a small room will
(just happen to)

DISAPPEAR ALL AT ONCE
After the handshakes of the men THEN
There will come such a splitting
of the lands and seas
Thunder will quiver in awe
Lightning will shrink from its duty
We will all of us females awake
In some new dimensional paradise
And all that will be left in those
small rooms
Will be

a few drops of menstrual blood
the far-away echo of
sparkling crystal music
and the felt whirring of distant
stomping, leaping slippers

Today I saw a sister
 On five-inch platform heels
 Stumbling to catch a bus
 She tripped and fell to her knees
 Got up and tried again to make it
 The bus driver cared nothing
 For her pain to make herself
 Look nice for him
 And, when she was inches away
 He closed the door and moved on
 And I saw her outside my window
 Arm upraised and going limp
 There was disbelief,
 Embarrassment and
 Frustration
 In her upturned face -
 And the beginnings of....
 something else....

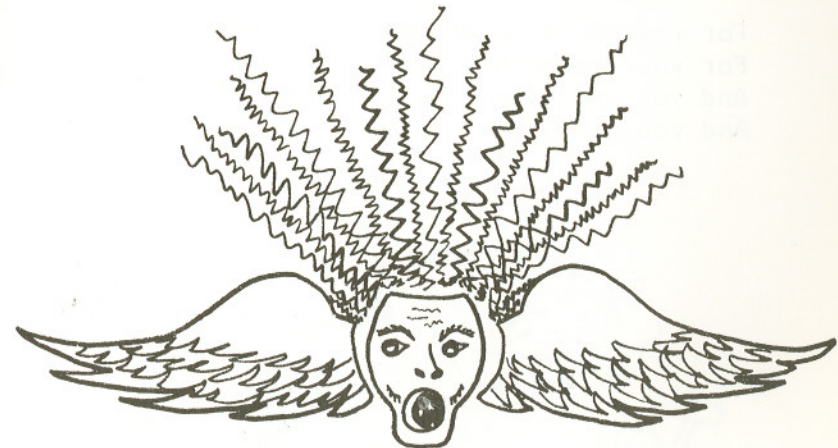


THE SHADOW - 1968

I am a shadow creeping small
 From your darkening love I hide
 My shallow self slides down the wall
 And cowers when I found you've lied
 I see your love - it slowly fades
 My lines become the meshing gloom
 And as you close the last slapping shade
 You leave sad shadow in a darkened room.

THE SHADOW - 1974

I am a shadow lurking near
 The pain is at my side
 But of alone I have no fear
 Nor of anything you've tried
 I see you love, you slowly turn
 You start to grin and say "well, well"
 My weaponed hand begins to burn
 Fire flashes from my "private" hell
 You look amused, you start to rise
 You say, "you look so sexy in your gloom"
 And as I blast the laughing from your eyes
 You leave, free woman in a windswept room.



POEM TO NINA SIMONE

Asked to fly but never offered wings
You arrive at the foot of the hill
Laughter greets your eager arrival
"You aren't equipped," they jeer
Tear blinded, rushing up you go
Pride you guard between cupped hands
This is enough, you think
You look down, think better, turn to go
When angered that you dared to try
They push you off the ledge
"SAVE ME" at the winged couriers
Hovering professionally about
They watch you fall
Exchange opinions of your speed
Compare the angle, judge the distance
You see them through the blur of pain
You know them now for what they are
Vultures making meals from fallen corpses

Some great force from ages when they
Crawled as toads and you were
Queen
Explodes within you.....
And you fly!
No need for wings...

For you can do what is impossible
For you impossibly survive
And you are black
And you are woman.



"Grandma" is consumed of heat
of flame,

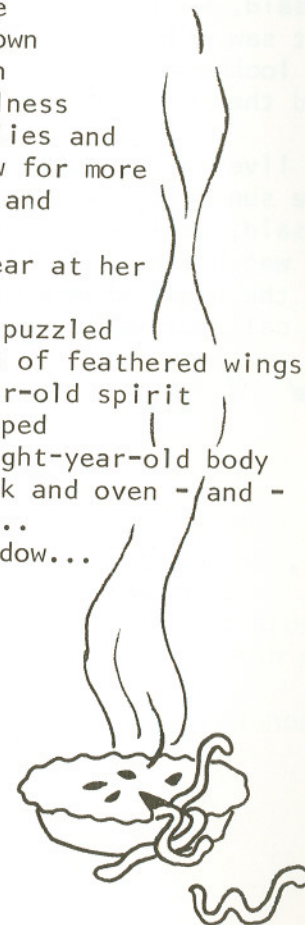
of hot baking dreams
Iced by reality
She puts them out
with burning fingers
away from her body
upon the windowsill

There they cool and are easy prey
For the men that she has known
throughout her life grown
throughout her life
They gobble them down
in their warmth
and unused fullness

They pat their bellies and
Climb in the window for more
But "Grandma" sits and
Says nothing
As they feed and tear at her
And as they finish,

puzzled
They hear the brush of feathered wings
As her nineteen-year-old spirit
Which has been trapped
Inside her sixty-eight-year-old body
Rushes past the sink and oven - and -
away.....

Out through the window...
S O A R I N G



LOVE SONG

I went to the valley, hmmm
I went by way of the high flatlands
Yes, I went to the valley
But only by way of the high flatlands
And as I stood on the ridge wanting
A thousand sisters all joined my hands.

We looked on the valley, hmmm
And saw only mists and sleepin towns
I said, we looked on the valley
But saw only mists and sleeping towns
We looked once deep in each other's eyes
And then our thunder came crashin down.

We live in the valley now
The sun rises over the high flatlands
I said, we live in the valley now
We watch the sun rise over the high flatlands
In the night when we're dancing
We call our valley no man's land.



MY LOVER, SHE
SLICES UP LITTLE
PIECES OF THE MORNING
AND NUDGES THEM GENTLY
UNDER MY DOOR
WITH HER TOE...

xxxx



POLICEMEN

Their training removes their souls
And substitutes newspaper headlines,
Competition, quotas and goals
Policemen belong in the world of pros
They spend their time with snooping nose

So different is mine....a wistful nose...

Hope has come and found me
It's weeping arms around me
Its heartfelt beats of finding
Longing, forever binding.

Hope is not welcome in the world.

For the world wants only staying
Only corpses, lonely laying
It's running by on madness
Its fueled by theft and sadness.

People are not welcome when they're laughing.

For the laugh knows only jokesters
Only rich and idle pokesters
As they chuckle at the bleeding
At heads bowed down in pleading.

For broken finds it hard to sway the boat.

But the boat is slowly sinking
Water at its side is brinking
And the sharks are in the water
And our teeth will never falter.

For we're hungry and the gluttons cannot swim.

And the shoreline's long and distant
Uninhabited at present
But I've seen birds fly from there
Heard the warm sands sigh from there.

And hope will see us through from here....
To There.

freedom is irresistable
delicate but wild
like a shirt unbuttoned
or the first word of a child
as a bird uncaught
as a field untrammelled
or a man unbought

in full swing and wanton
it flies about the heart
like a batch of butterflies
uncompelled to stay or part

exempt from fetter, shackle, chain
like a horse unmuzzled
or a flower in the rain

like a well published author
freedom is fulfilled
clear and independent
at large, loose and easy,
daily, hourly, forever
freedom is unceasing

(and instinctively essential)

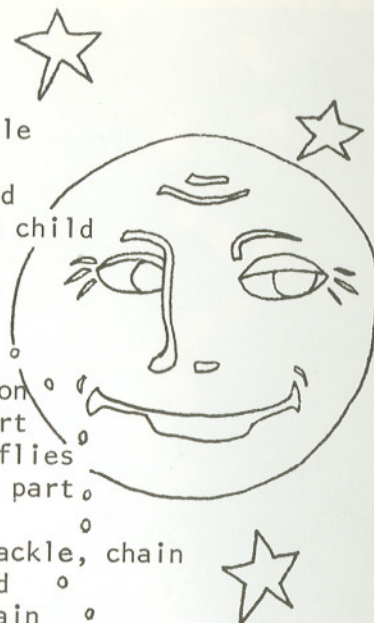




Photo: Paula Wallace