

WOMEN POEMS
LOVE POEMS

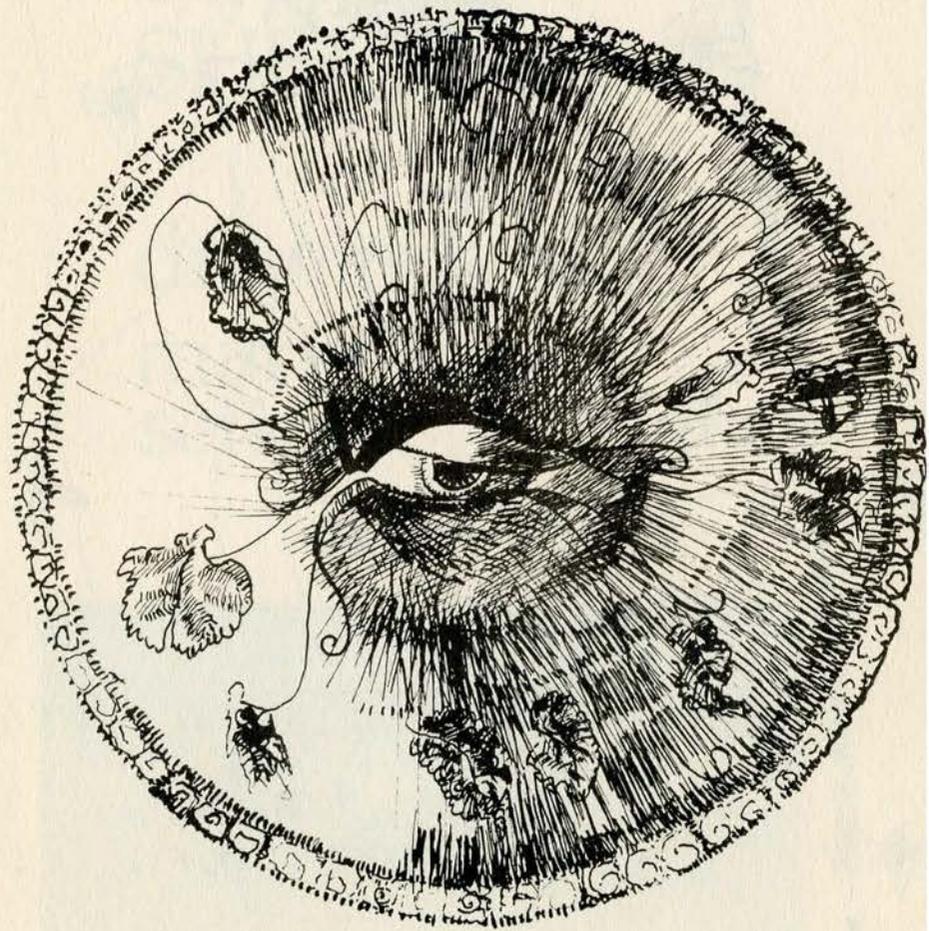
by

Susan Sherman



Drawings by María Luisa Señore

women women surround me
images of women their faces
I who for years pretended them away
pretended away their names their faces
myself what I am pretended it away

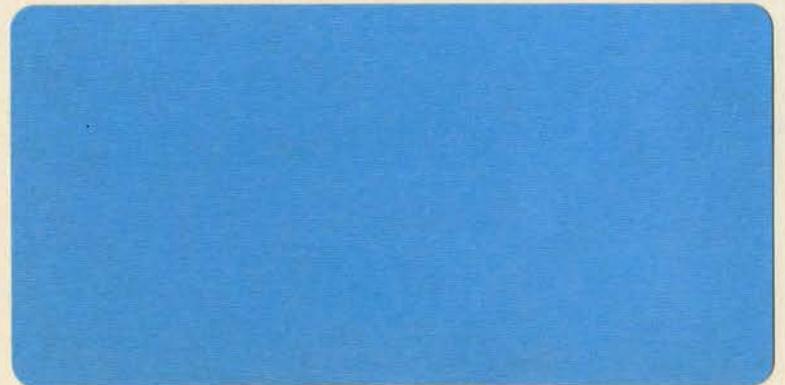




WOMEN POEMS
LOVE POEMS

SUSAN
SHERMAN

drawings by
maría luisa
señoret



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IKON
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New York, NY 10009

A POEM UPON AWAKENING

Can you understand

what is in my heart

even in this season

when winter frosts the air

There is no death in love only a
waiting I have heard of an image
no one can touch & not
be warmed

I have known this image as night before sleep

How sharp
How fair

grasping the covers

waiting

Asleep we see only echoes

There is no dream

but the one

that is lived

I have seen this image upon awakening
I have heard its call

Softer than all winters

POEM TO A WORD UNSPOKEN

You pull me toward you
You fill me My body reaching
toward yours
 So full of you

I cannot breathe

It is the best part of us that loves Yet we love with
our whole selves The night filled with sleep

Only once I touched my fear Named it To this I dedicate
my poem To this And to you Remarkable to me as my own
hands As I touch them Recognize them as mine

Would I destroy my tongue Pull the lips from my mouth
This presence once existing ordering the rest
My world

 The answer is here It comes
 silently Like a word never
 spoken

 Hanging suspended

A small green thing

CHATTER

Almost legendary your name has become
Heavy and embroidered with detail
Many faceted Like a diamond

Where are you I remember touching you
Looking into your face What was
your name How faint it seems
How distant I could touch it
But my ears seem troubled
What is it they do not wish to hear

Like a diamond No Not quite like
that I reach out my hand Breathe in
Stamp my foot Is there nothing
I can do

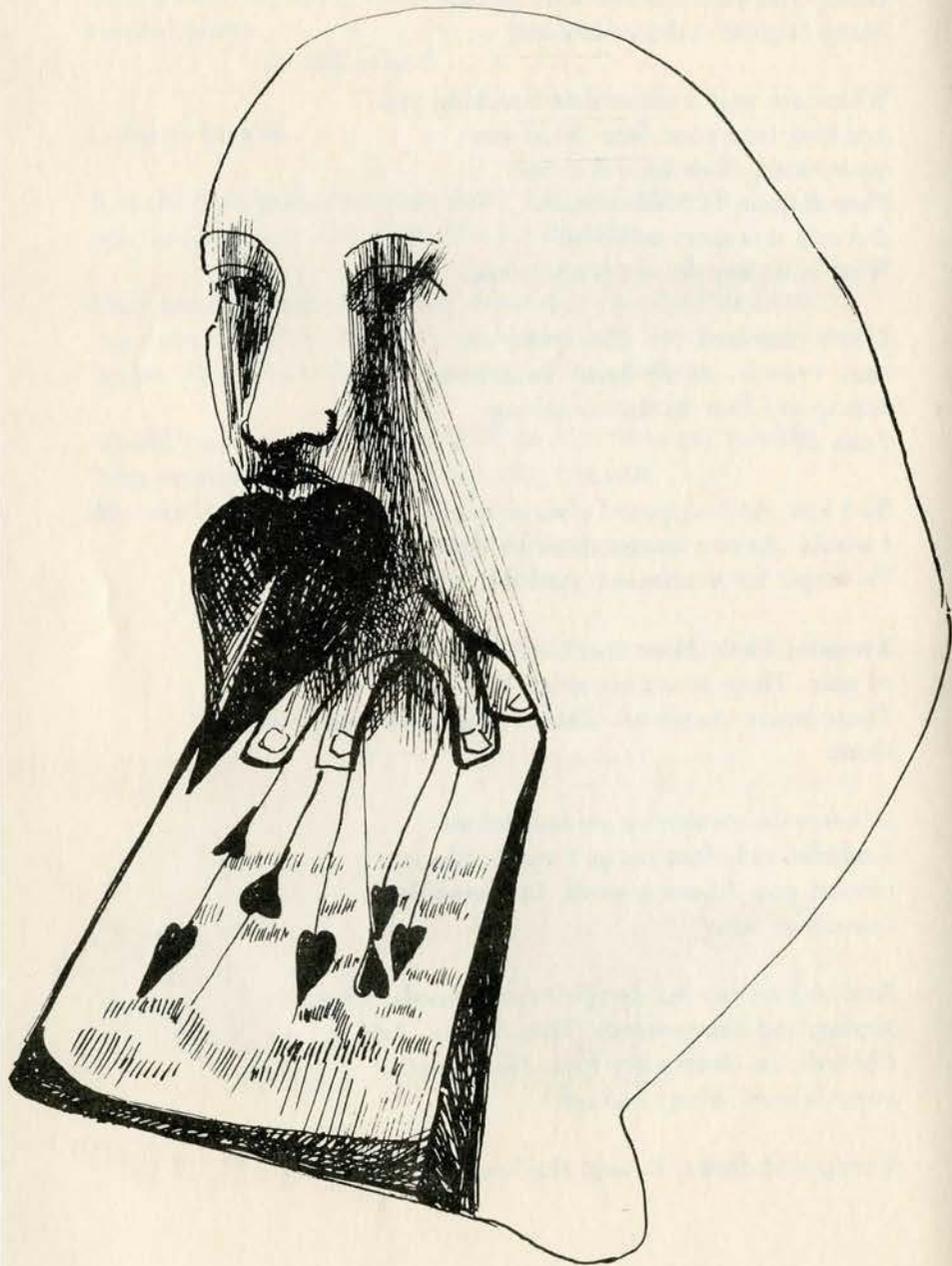
So I lost As I suppose I always knew
I would As one knows those things
To forget for a moment And fall

Knowing birth How much must one also know
of pain These hours are mine Not yours
These hours As we are always and never
alone

In every doorway you are behind me
And always before me as I move Always
toward you In every word In everything
I touch as mine

And so I set my hands upon these words These
strange and heavy words This chatter And so
I breathe in Stamp my foot Heavy and
embroidered Many faceted

Except the desire Except the love



JOURNEY

Entering The house is pale A stillness
Many times I have walked in this strange

land I see you Your presence beside me
You define the length of me Like the windows

of my house you open the world to me
My thoughts center on you The love

of you Your hands your arms the periphery
of my being Holding you

Somewhere in this love That which can grow
and nourish and be borne

A POEM

for you alone
built word upon word
like years
like time people share
together
deepening
growing into meaning
word
upon word
meaning
upon meaning
for you alone a poem

I know your need for form
for things to be
concrete
the way grass moves & light
the borders
of your shoes
the mountains
of your home
all these things
a kind of boundary
a definition
a name

if I could offer you the salt taste
of the sea
if I could turn your home
into a glance
a gesture
of the eyes

if I could look at you as home
speak to you as sea

there is nothing on this earth
that does not change
that does not deepen or drift
away

there is nothing on this earth
more concrete
than this feeling
I have
now
for you
nothing
is more
real

LOVE POEM 12/16/71

if I could hold you
if I could wake up in the morning
and see your face
if I could touch you
if I could see you as you go to sleep
if I could feel you close
beside me if I could reach out to you
touch you in my need

time drifts endlessly like water
like this afternoon
the breeze as it drifts
through my window
surrounds me as thoughts of you
as breath of you
as I see you
as I wait for you
the inevitability of you
as I am surrounded by you
by my love of you
as I waken into life

my words in silence
my love in silence
the quiet of the afternoon
the curve of your face
your features the way
you talk the way you drift
in my thoughts endlessly
like time

if you were to ask me what defines me
how I place myself in the world
I would say this poem
is the center of it is the core
that I reach toward the world
as I reach toward you
as one who wants to reach out
endlessly who wants to open out
endlessly who wants to feel
endlessly that question
that is our lives



ILLUSION

Figures move through the heat
You see my knuckles
at the edge
of each shadow

Empty
The wind flakes night in your palms

Empty
Your bed too hard
for your sorrow

You touch the pavement
press its softness
to your eyelids

I too sit
watching shadows

END-POEM

Dry silk is the color of winter
One barely shattered petal Here in my
hands How your face feels As I stroke it
Hold it gently close to mine The feeling of
winter And brown As I hold it Like what
a hundred words fail at The street as
cold dark form The heavyness of
rain How it is in front of me Inside
me How things shouldn't be like they
But they are

Abundance forms the poem But what that is
is not our choice I would rather leave
once than leave a hundred times I would rather
leave once and have it done it Proud
and even utterly wrong

WORDS

I am trapped
by words
The ones I speak
The ones I never say
My head stuffed full of dreams
My body of memories
I flounder
between two worlds
The future and the past

I wanted to write a poem
more full of passion more full
of love
than any
I have ever
written

How does one measure years
What standard does one use
to weight them

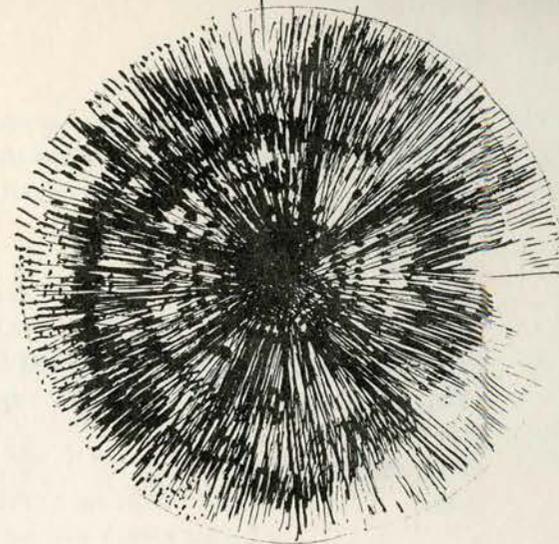
I am trapped
by time
It circles my wrists
guides
my steps

I live in the shadow of my words
They measure the moments
of my life

What part in all this do you have
What part in all this do I
To understand that question

to hold it
open
to hold it
open

until finding it
we enter
free



GIFT

Take these things Your hands
That they once touched
my flesh
Take these things Your hands
That they once were
mine

Take these things Your words
That they touched
my flesh
That they once were
mine

Where are we now
Separated by so much
Words hands and flesh
dismembered
by a gift

Take this thing Your flesh
That it once touched
mine

Take them These things
That always bore the name
of gift

TO CHOOSE THIS

This solitude To leave you Your body
To leave you To turn toward this world
This thing that confronts me
like an open wound

I would hide myself in the hollows of your flesh
In that precise place where the two bones meet
Like two rivers Like branches of water forming
a vast delta In that precise hollow of your
flesh

Where was it you went I could not follow you
into that country One arm drawn tight
across an open plain

*My knuckles are heavy
Before my eyes there is only space
I can no longer speak*

In your sleep you call my name How it sounds as you
form the words How it sounds as I know my own name
through your lips

A mockery to write of it To speak And yet it must
be spoken As if with words we could rip open
the levels of our flesh

She is who is Who chooses being Who chooses
to choose

THE MEETING

1
To touch your face
To touch your arms
To touch your waist
To touch your thighs

To touch your sex

To hold it soft against my cheek
To breathe it slow against my lips
To hold you close against my breast

My love

2
Old as the woman moaning songs
from her chill staccato walls
Old as that The touch between us
The chant filtering through coarse
night sounds The touch between us

Can I name you The words that lie against
me Soft against the night Can I call you
The night itself close upon my thighs

To hold you near
To touch your lips
To hold you close as my own breath

3
Touched so deeply that tears come
unnoticed And without pain That once
were central And only pain

It is here between us Not ourselves
But what is here In this space

Touched so deeply that love comes
unnoticed And without pain That once
was central And only pain

4
Rain glides in two dimensions The window
holding it to my face As I hold you As I
place my knuckles to your forehead Moving from
my touch

The vision two dimensions The surface
rigid As we reach toward it To find it
different But still there cool under
our touch

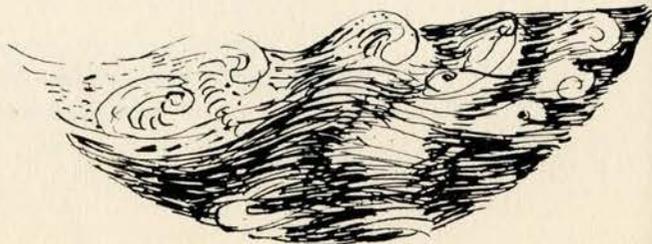
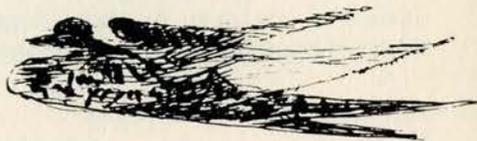
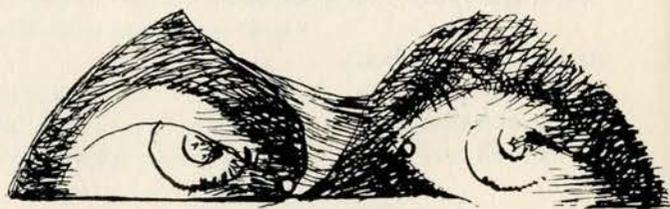
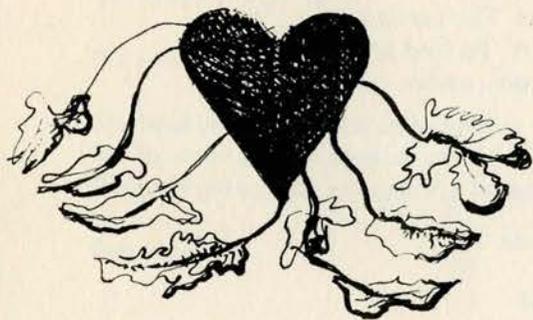
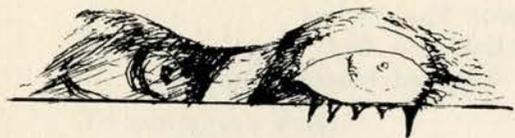
5
I would hold you gently
Throw myself against you as
the rain Talk to you of
small things As you would
touch a child Or yourself
small and vulnerable to even
the slightest breath

6
No longer afraid The touch of you deeper
than any fear Deeper than your naked form
The single syllable of your name

As I touch your body
As I touch the earth
As I touch this paper
As I touch each word

It is everywhere This night and the
outline of our form As we are together
Without boundary Without dimension

As I touch the depth of you
My love



THREE MOMENTS

1

Since you have gone
my heart has become no larger
than a touch My days are as
moments I peer cautiously
through the door
I see only the sun

It is hard this waiting
Since you have gone

2

Because I can no longer hold you
Because your words cannot contain my name
Because you are far away forever from me
Because other voices now fall on my ears

Do you suppose
you are less to me than before

3

Where has the summer gone?
It has faded into the clouds

Where has the night gone?
It has dissolved into the trees

Where has my lover gone?
*Hidden Hidden behind the flower
of the moon*

RETURN

It is hard to remember
what it was I touched
Your body the faintness
of leaves
There was a person once
behind that longing

Notice how leaves
seldom quiver together
How the wind dispassionate
selects them

It is hard to remember now
Night hides the leaves
The wind shut out
by shadows

It is hard to remember now
what it was I touched

