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AMAZON QUARTERLY

Vol. 3#2

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special issue:
SEXUALITY

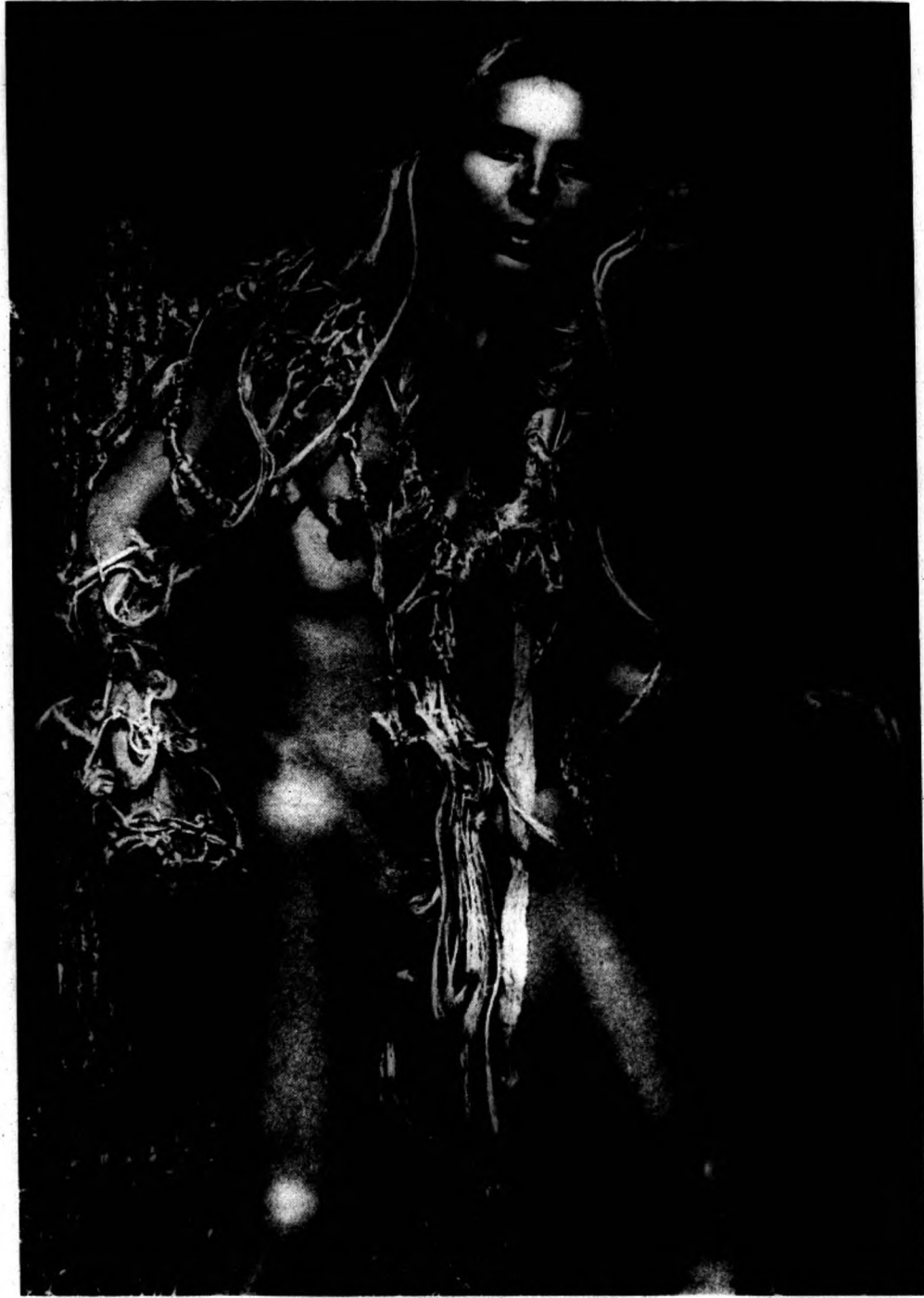


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BOX 434, WEST SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02144

All women who contributed to this issue (excepting the editors) will receive payment for their work. We have divided the money not necessarily according to merit, but according to length and our estimate of the time and effort that went into producing the work. Each of the five fiction writers will receive \$25, the poets will receive \$10, and the visual artists \$10.



by Carol Newhouse

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AMAZON

Box 434, West Somerville, Massachusetts 02144

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◆◆◆ FROM US ◆◆◆

This issue we focus on sexuality. Whether you are new to loving women or have always loved women, we think this issue provides an opportunity to discover new possibilities for growing beyond your definition of sexuality. The writers included here range in age from 9 years old to almost 60. They live in Paris, New York, San Francisco, and points in between like Ohio and Arkansas. We hope their diversity will resonate with your own.

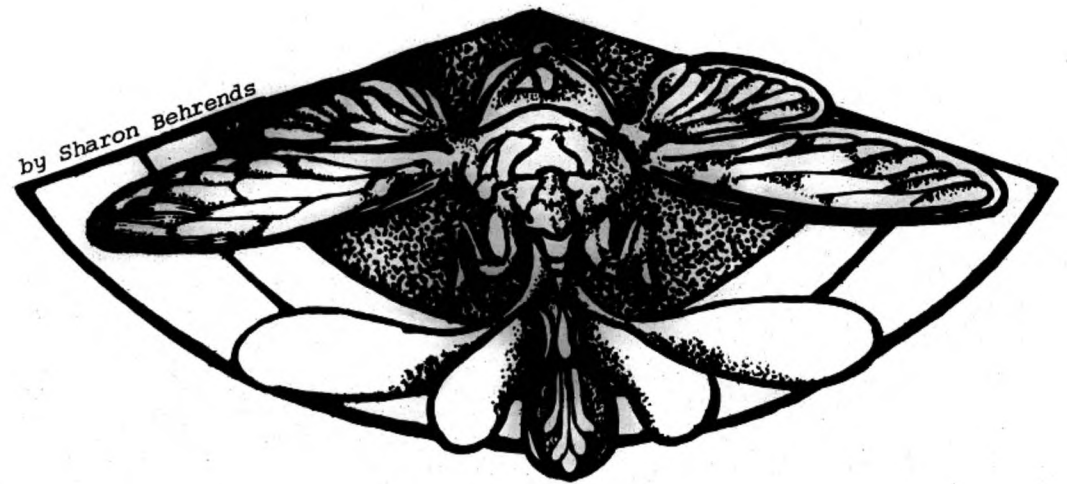
With this issue devoted to lesbian sexuality we would like to say goodbye to lesbianism as a focus for discussion or debate. We will continue to take a lesbian perspective for granted, but encourage our contributors to write about/create what passionately interests you. This could be in any area from poetry to physics. Since our first issue we have repeatedly said that *Amazon Quarterly* is not about lesbianism, that we take such a basic fact of our existence for granted.

From that we must go on to explore universal questions about how to live. In the tradition of Gertrude Stein, Margaret Anderson, Natalie Clifford Barney, Colette, Djuna Barnes, Alice B. Toklas, Violet Leduc, Renee Vivien, etc. we are writers, artists, human explorers first -- "lesbian" is a category in the mind of an outsider, he who would attempt to define and contain us.

Our next issue will be devoted to exploring ENERGY in all its many manifestations: psychic, spiritual, occult, electromagnetic, solar, atomic. Energy is energy. How do we create it, use it, share it in our own bodies, with our friends, our plants, the earth? How can we become more aware of it, use it to heal, to grow our food, or to expand our consciousness. ESP, biofeedback, hypnotism, orgone boxes, dreaming, dowsing, massage, yoga, dance, acupuncture, meditation -- how do we use and change energy? We welcome fiction, essays, art that explores ways of being more conscious through an understanding of energy. The deadline for the next issue will be May 15.

In our own attempts to gather and generate energy we are finding that living in a city is a definite liability. The next issue of *Amazon Quarterly* will come to you from the country, from wherever we chance to find a new home.

Special thanks to all of you who sent work for the sexuality issue. Many good poems have gone unpublished for lack of space. At this point, our poetry editor has asked that we declare a moratorium on poetry submissions until June 1 so that she can catch up with the backlog she has now. We are receiving about 500 poems a month. We hope this may be encouragement to some of you to try your hand at essays or fiction which we never receive enough of.



COMING OUT

*the first person I loved
was a woman my passion
for her lasted thirty years
and was not returned
she never let me suck her nipples
she kept secrets between her legs
she told me men would love me
for myself she couldn't tell me
ways to love myself
she didn't know*

*Mother, I would like to help you
swim back against the foaming river
to the source of our
incestuous fears
but you're so tired
out beyond the breakers
and I am upstream among my sisters
spawning*

JACQUELINE LAPIDUS writes in Paris, at present, and has contributed poems to *Hanging Loose* and other small magazines.

rolling in the mouth

First of all, everything is a sensual delight. This is the living room, the kitchen of our utopia and there is a continuous feeding, suckling, loving here, or often enough that it seems continuous, or there always is this red kitchen with wood smoke smell and jars of nuts and grains and apples and a variety of smells jars of smells so that a favorite activity becomes standing in the kitchen and sorting out the smells, passing them from mouth to mouth, passing them from open hand to open hand, finding them in our tousled hair and behind our sleepy eyes in the morning. It is wonderful to cook and eat in this kitchen, alone with the jars and smells or laughing playing with each other so engrossed so much to be in each other that we laugh at the long mornings and evenings just around the kitchen--never getting too far from the source.

We roll the days around in our mouths and the living room is round and soft and wood, fluted wood flying around the high ceiling, indeed like inside a flute, the perfect round wood grain. We live inside a recorder you see. But soft so we can sit lie roll around with each other. It is the girl scout camp tent floor and we so delight in playing touching exploring each other in our three-year-old thirteen-year-old sensuality that other roles are long since forgotten. And do you see the bedtime stories at night?

Sometimes we follow each other into the bathroom where there's a big sign saying I piss here and lots of pictures of naked women. We sit around watch each other piss and menstruate and shit and bathe or talk or well you see...

There is the space. I hope that what I am saying does not scare you because there is the space. We go for long walks alone and together and the woods the fields the mountains the stars the pools are still as we want them noisy and chirping as we want them solitary as we want them or full of animal and womanspirit playmates as we want them and create them.

There is the space in the house. Many rooms--at least one room that is us alone and I needn't even describe these. And so many play rooms, music rooms, a room where you're so big, a room where you're so small, a color room, a room with big building blocks to move around. And lots of steps, nooks and crannies, long connecting corridors lots of places to play hide and seek so we play it sometimes. Or at anytime if you looked you could find Laurel in

one room dreaming Gina in another making a pot Kathy building a jungle gym in the basement Wendy flying a kite from the roof.

We come in from our adventures hair tousled eyes bright cheeks red and slightly cold. And it is so clear so clear our eyes so clear our minds so clear our bodies so clear our backs straight our heads up no pain no stomachaches ever no knots in our bodies or soon kneaded out. We feel enormous but no matter cause there is so much room.

This terrible urgency this terrible hunger relaxes goes to play with the wind. It doesn't come from this anymore, this purpose, it comes from what we see and know and follow or don't know and follow. All the necessities are still there clear but it doesn't come from the same starvation, do you see?

Our concept of changes changes. The first week I run in and out from the mountains several times a day to make sure it's still here because it's so hard to believe. But soon we know it even our toes relax. This is sure carryable around inside us, but everyone comes back eventually. There is so much freedom in our relationships because we know we will see each other the rest of our lives. We move in and out of comfortable imaginative lovings with each other cause we have so much time and whatever it is now it will be different in twenty years but it will be.

We become so fiercely beautiful. We evolve more and more beautiful, just as women are so recognizably more beautiful than men and lesbians so strikingly beautiful even on city streets. We become so fiercely beautiful that others without purity of purpose cannot look at us or come near us--it burns their eyes out. The tangible pulsating space around each of us becomes so large that our protective shields are so far away and so effective we don't have to worry about them.

We spin out all-night dances continuous tales around fires healings purgings long birth dramas music created for the parts of our bodies song to ankle. We greet each other with any one of these extensions of ourselves how many ways can we greet each other? Nose first dreams first cashew nut first song first. We make up one million ways for this game so we are always excited.

Women visit cause they can see. Some stay. Those who cannot see do not see. And do you see the girl children, with their round bellies? And do you see the white-haired women with their spun chants and woven wisdom?

KATHY HRUBY: "I learned to make these stories as a child in brutal surroundings. This one was written the night my lover left me. I can't decide whether they are a dangerous habit or the sustaining workflow of my bodylife."

The Woman Who



Walked In The Night

by Sandy Boucher

We begin at the doorway, cut flush with the ground in the white plaster wall; outside it is the packed dirt of the yard--inside, a large room. There is no furniture in the room except a heavy table. On the floor stand large wooden and plaster figures, and smaller pieces rest on the table. Their immobility catches the breath: each of the figures seems poised at the instant before falling or taking off, each seems balanced on the edge of disintegration.

In the center of the room, where the light falls from the window in the wall, stands Laura in a loose, faded smock. Her brown hands are at work, delicately, with mallet and chisel. With slow patience she chips at the piece of wood before her. Her light hair falls straight against her cheeks, and her face is absorbed, the eyes vibrant with attention as if it were they that touched and moulded the wood.

Finally she puts aside the mallet, and lays her hand flat on the surface, moving it slowly down the hollow she has made. Then she tenses, looks up.

In the doorway, a short, muscular form is leaning, one shoulder propped against the doorframe.

Laura squints against the sun glare from outside, seeing first that the head is piled with black glossy curls, then that the creature has dark eyes of extraordinary brilliance in a golden brown face.

The visitor smiles and says in a young woman's voice, "I was just watching. From the road I heard the sounds you were making and...came up."

Laura returns the smile. She is fascinated by the golden sun-glow of the rounded cheek, the eyes intense and alert as an animal's. How old--sixteen maybe? more?

"I'm into wood myself," says the visitor. "I'm a carpenter, among other things..."

Laura stares.

"...auto mechanic...organic gardener...and I make my living as a dental technician..."

Then, thinks Laura, she is clearly older than sixteen.

"You're American," she says.

"Ummmm."

"Not many Americans get this far across the island from Palma. Are you at the pension?"

"Yes."

The young woman holds her gaze, smiling, much longer than is comfortable for Laura. Gradually, to defend herself, in the silence, Laura goes back to her work. She turns from the doorway to look at the sculpture, and lets the contours of the wood fill her consciousness again. She knows there is someone there on the other side of her absorption, but the perception is not compelling and in a few moments it is gone, and she is again working.

The young woman watches her hand lift to touch the wood. She waits as Laura picks up the mallet and places the chisel. Warmly content, she breathes the wood smells, sees the light thick and golden in the room.

Finally she asks, "You've lived on Mallorca a long time?"

Laura pauses, her mind gradually hearing the words, letting them in. Without looking at the visitor, she answers, "Ten years now."

"You're American too. Where are you from?"

Brushing at the wood with her fingers, Laura answers. "The Midwest, how about you?"

"I've just come from a farm in Northern California, where we have the healthiest goats chickens dogs cats rabbits squash corn tomatoes and human beings you can imagine."

Laura emerges fully from her work in order to look at this creature who is grinning with pleasure at her own words. She is amused and intrigued, and suddenly back in the afternoon, feeling her body hot and slightly stiff from standing, seeing the blueness of sky framing the tumbled curls of the visitor's head.

"Well, if you're an example..." she says. And then, seeing that the young woman has become suddenly self-conscious, "What brings you here then?"

The visitor shrugs. "Travelin'."

And Laura experiences an unusual feeling--the swift tug of hunger for that place she left so long ago. It was going to be for a short while, for a year or two--but the time passed, it was possible to sell her sculptures here, it was possible for her husband to do his work. The people in the village became their friends. Life was comfortable. They stayed. Now she saw that thing raw open tough and kind, in this young woman, that speaks of the people among whom she grew up. It was a childhood whose poverty she thought she wanted never to remember, but now, suddenly, she is very lonely.

"Look," she says, laying down her tools, "my husband will be

back soon from Alcludia...if you'd like to stay and have coffee with us..."

The visitor pushes herself away from the doorframe and steps backward into the sun. "Thanks," she says, "but I've got to go." The hollows of her curls hold pools of blue and red sunlight.

She moves a few feet from the door and turns. "Your sculptures are beautiful," she says, and inclines her head, speaking this opinion as a blunt statement of fact. And then she turns and is walking toward the road, swinging along, happy in her own movement.

Laura goes to the door and calls, "Come back again, if you like."

The visitor throws up her arm in acknowledgment of the invitation.

Laura watches her walking down the white road along the cliff. She wanders out of the house and herself takes the road to the cliff and stands looking out at the water growing light and misty toward the horizon. The wind lifts her hair, and she turns, glancing to her left. The young woman walks at the edge of the road, small with distance.

Laura has been troubled at night. At twilight she walks toward the sea. Her husband does not like to walk out at night; he stays in the lighted house, reading. If she looks back she can see the yellow rectangle of window crossed by black branches, and she knows that he is inside, that her life is there in that lighted box. She stands on the road listening to the trees shake languid branches in the wind, to the sea murmuring against the rocks far down.

During the day there is her work and the man with whom to speak pleasantly, there is the lightning of sun on her green smock, on the white outer wall of the house, light tangled in her lashes and caught in each object. But when the sun sinks, the cold seeps deep within her. She wants to leave the house, then, and Ralph, satisfied with his dinner, reading in the chair. She kisses his face, and he looks up at her. "Going for a walk?"

This being pulled out into the night is not new. Even as a girl she had been drawn out from each particular house in which her objects, her clothes, her people were. She fears the cliff above the sea, for she is sucked out into the blackness. For a short while she walks, far back from the cliff, and then stands listening to the sounds, and has forgotten, in longing, all she left in the house.

The moon is high, and Laura has walked up the road to where a cliff opens straight down to a white V of beach. She sees the squatted figure at the edge of the road, facing toward the sea, and she stops, peering at it, until the moon shows her the thick curls, the bare shiny skin of knees.

"What are you doing?" she asks, feeling that her voice moves like a small furry thing in the dark.

She comes closer, wondering if the young woman has heard. The head lifts; there is a flash of teeth, and even of the

whites of the enormous dark eyes. The voice is breathy, it seems to come from somewhere beside the figure, from the grass, the earth: "You know, it's strange for me...being so separate from everything...I mean, there was always a job, or land to tend, or something to build, or repair...but this...it's like floating up somewhere between here and..." She lifts her hand to indicate the white roundness of moon.

Laura lowers herself to her knees, next to her.

"How old are you?" Laura asks.

"Twenty-four."

They sit for a time, side by side, without speaking, and then the young woman says, "I've been so happy today. I had a dream this morning that I was hitchhiking in Oregon, and this beautiful middle-aged woman stopped to pick me up. We drove along, and we talked, and then she took me to her house and we made love. And when I woke up I was so happy, and I've felt so good all day that I don't even want to go to sleep tonight."

Laura turns to stare at her, seeing the face bright with moonlight. The smile is so gentle, and the gentleness so clearly meant for her, that Laura feels suddenly childlike. She wants to run away, but can't bring herself to scramble up from the ground; she tries to be offended and cannot manage it. Lowering her eyes, she holds her breath--and when she glances up again, the young woman is looking out over the sea.

When Laura returns to the house, it is unfamiliar to her. She had come from the night and has brought it into the room with her. Her husband sitting beneath the lamp is strange to her. He looks up and smiles. His big face with its flat cheekbones like slabs of stone, his kind eyes, the mole on his cheek--there is no face that she knows better, and yet she shivers with the strangeness of it, feeling that her presence threatens him.

She does not tell Ralph about the encounter on the road. There is no way to tell it. And in the next weeks, when he has met the young woman, whose name is Sage, and in his easy way become used to her being often at the house, Laura cannot tell him what is happening, for he does not understand the night; he does not listen to the sea. This that drew her into the night has become real in Sage, and Laura knows he would only be puzzled and hurt if she tried to tell him. She does not think of what his fear might do to her.

The man stands outside the house. His big frame bends forward as he listens. The sun stretches flat on the white walls, and through the open doorway he sees the unfinished sculpture, the brownish grain snaking laterally around it. Heavy stillness of afternoon, empty door-mouth opening in, white walls unanswering. He is alone and tense with pleasure, from somewhere in the room comes Laura's voice, singing. It is a Spanish song, which her round, low tones lilt softly. He follows the thread of her voice as it carries the words, piling them, then stringing them out.

"You are tall and thin
like your mother
dark and witty
like your mother..."

He is surprised, knowing she rarely sings, and her voice brings him her body, her face, thoughtfully wound in the melody, head tilted back. The contours of her body are so embedded in him that the song's shape runs over his chest and thighs like ice.

"How beautiful is the branch

that grows from the trunk

dark and witty

that comes from the trunk..."

Quietly he approaches the doorway, careful of the moment when he will disturb her. Then he sees her, seated on the table, her legs crossed at the ankles and her hands loosely open in the billowing of green smock before her. Sage leans next to her on the edge of the table. He sees the two women's heads bent slightly toward each other, Laura's light straight hair near the wild tumble of the young woman's black curls, and he is charmed. The lines of Laura's face are soft, her eyes dreaming.

He pauses at the doorway--and then he sees that Sage's hand lies loosely on Laura's brown ankle, the fingers cupped. The gesture has been forgotten by Sage, who is absorbed in listening, but Ralph is impaled on it for an instant, seeing only this casual gesture of possession--and he is puzzled.

Though he has not moved or made a sound, Laura slowly turns to him. She looks at him for a moment, abstracted, and her voice trails off. Then she smiles at him.

"Good...you're back..."

Both she and the young woman shift to face him. He grins at them, greets them...and his spine wonders at the gesture, obliterated, vanished into air now. The room is full of the three of them; the familiar slowly buries the grain of bewilderment embedded in his mind.

They lie on the bed in the room next to the studio. Flies buzz in the yellow light in which the sculptures are caught, but in here it is shadowed and cool. They are asleep. Laura lies curled against Sage's side, her head on the naked belly that is taut and brown and smells of sun. Her face, turned to the side, is still, with a deep peacefulness, the lips full and lightly closed. The lines of her jaw and cheeks, sometimes tense and sharp in waking, are blurred into a dark tranquility.

Sage lies at full length; her open mouth gulps the cool still air, and her eyelids twitch.

So they have been sleeping for half an hour, secure in the man's leaving for Palma this morning, to return the next day. When Sage hears a sound, a scraping. Instantly her spread, sleeping mind draws in to a point, and she jerks her head up, the muscles in her neck straining. The doorway is black with a large body, is bloated with him. He grips the door frame, his arms locking him there, his head forward, and his face is gigantic, a chasm. He is speaking in a low, strangled voice, and she feels the lurching movement of Laura's rising from her, turning. She sees the woman's back and beyond it the man's shoulders locked in the doorway, his face held there like a scream.

He is speaking still as he turns, but Sage cannot hear the words. In her head leaps a wild jangle of bells. Laura is up, and slipping the green smock over her body; she turns for an instant to Sage, holds out a clenched hand as if to touch her.

Then they are outside and the man takes giant strides toward the car, his legs jerking viciously forward. Laura runs to him, tries to take his arm, but his face is a giant black rock heavy on his neck. He tries to push her away. She claws at his arm. Then his body swells and grows over her and his heavy arm slants upward, comes down and whips back and forth, again and again, with the precision of an axe. Laura falls back against the hood of the car. Her head jerks at each blow. Then she is sliding down away from him, and her body rolls over the fender and drops, the head lolling against the tire.

Laura stirs in the bed, feeling Sage's body twitching beneath her. She raises her head and gasps, for Sage's face is contorted into an anguished mask. Laura lifts her arms and takes Sage's head in her hands. The young woman's eyes open, and her body goes rigid. She stares, her eyelids strained wide, her mouth open, and then her hands lift and she touches Laura's face, her fingers moving, seeking.

"What is it?" Laura asks, "What is it?"

"Oh my god!" Sage's eyes peer, fearful, out of a face drugged with sleep. She chokes as if she were strangling, chokes and stares and touches...until finally her fingers still, her hands drop, and then she pulls away from the woman and gets up.

Laura watches her smooth brown body move angrily about the room, watches her arms lift, her feet stamp the floor.

"Goddammit, a nightmare. How could my mind do that to me?! How could it manufacture such an atrocity!! Dammit. Goddammit!"

"What? What?" Laura asks, and she trembles. Around them the afternoon drowzes, just as before, and the sculptures in the studio regain their places, poised for an instant on the edge of some enormity. The sea purrs in the distance.

"Obscenity!" Sage is talking to herself. She comes to sit on the bed, looking full into Laura's eyes, her own face scared still, under the anger. Then her hand lifts to cradle Laura's head and she leans her forehead against the woman's temple.

"Maybe I'm out of my league," she mutters.

Sage is happy. She is filled with warmth as she stands in the studio watching. The activity of working with another person or even just being near someone who is making something, brings Sage to a deep sure center in herself. This appreciation is so intense sometimes that it is like sexual desire.

The mallet lifts, the chisel bites down into the wood, the fresh chip twists away from the trunk and falls. Laura's hands--long-fingered, big-knuckled, defined--move with the certainty of a craft long-practised. Her lips are set in concentration.

Finally she steps back to rest, turns to look at Sage. Their eyes hold, and Sage feels herself spreading into Laura's attention. She smiles, and Laura, her face relaxing, lets her lips curve into a grin.

Sage says, "I'd love to be with you on the farm. There's a shed there that'd be perfect for you to work in. It would be great to have you there with us."

Laura turns to stare at the wood, her face troubled. Slowly she shakes her head.

But Sage goes on, "You'd like the others. They're wonderful women. I know they'd love you."

Her hand spread on the wood, Laura has turned and is gazing past Sage, out the window to the road leading to the sea.

They have come out into the moonless night and are walking slowly, side by side. Sage's feet scuff the stones of the road. In the open night, Laura feels the distance between herself and this young woman, and she uses it to shut herself more securely inside her mood. She has come from cooking dinner in the lighted house; they sat about the table under the lamp and the food soothed her, and she engaged with Ralph in a smooth, easy conversation, oiled by long familiarity. It slipped into the grooves worn by fondness and their long knowledge of each other. When they rose from the table, and he had settled himself to read, she came out into the night with Sage.

Now, from her distance, she begins to talk. "I suppose you don't understand what it is to love a man."

Sage glances at her, and her walk takes on a restraint; she no longer scuffs the ground with her shoes, but steps carefully.

"We have lived together for a long, long time, fondly...comfortably...until we know each other's movements...until we act together without friction, until we gauge instinctively the other's state of mind."

The two women are near the cliff now, and Laura leans against a tree, looking back at the lighted square of window which will sustain her in her slow-spoken testament.

"We have built something together, you see...we enclose within us all the years of our being together, all the experiences of those years that we have lived jointly. And because we are different--because we are man and woman, we enclose them more securely...because...we are the two halves of something that must meet."

She takes care not to look at Sage, who stands between her and the cliff. She shuts herself deliberately to the knowledge of what she must be doing to Sage, and she goes on, lulled by the

feeling of warm enclosure, from the house, that still clings to her.

"He is the wall that has protected me all these years...from... what?...from myself, perhaps. I think I could not have lived without him. I think I could not now live without him."

She had meant to go on but she stops, shocked, as she hears low burbling laughter erupting from Sage's dark form.

"Oh I love you so much," Sage says, struggling to control her voice. "Really, you're so amazing. You're so earnest. I mean, beautiful strong woman, why are you being so dramatic?!"

She is laughing, touching Laura's hand. "You don't have to explain all that to me. And your 'two halves of something that must meet'...oh that's really wonderful! But you're wasting all this on me, you know. I mean, the world has *changed!*"

She takes Laura's arms and smiles close into her face. "I'm proud and happy to be who I am!"

Laura feels like a fool. Cheated. Down below the sea murmurs under the wind that has begun to lash the cliff. She listens to it, feeling deserted--and in need.

Her voice is a whisper. "You've touched me...deeper than he could..."

The young woman looks with great gentleness at her. "So *that's* why I got the lecture on marital bliss."

Laura's mouth trembles. She turns her face away as if Sage has struck her.

"Oh no...oh no no..." and Sage's hands reach out to hold her shoulders, comfortingly. Sage's lips touch her cheek, her forehead. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make fun of you. It's just that I can't do this tragic romantic thing with you. It just feels very...unnecessary."

Far below, the waves break on the rocks and roll back into the sea, leaving the jagged surfaces bare and wet, only to rise and crash again. Laura listens intently, trying to escape the sensation of utter nakedness, foolishness, confusion.

Sage steps away from her and stands looking at her steadily. Laura is excruciatingly alone then, stripped and tall like a bare pine on the cliff. She cannot control her hollow embarrassed laugh.

Laura opens her hands and without warning the tears start from her eyes and she is sobbing. She blurts out "What now?" in a squeaky, choked voice, and leans over into the loud rough sounds of loss, of relief.

Then Sage is with her again, arms circling her back, holding her, rocking her. "Nothing now, nothing more than was, than really was. I mean, I love you. I do, that's all. It's no big thing, you know. It's all very ordinary."

At Sage's words, rage clots and rises in Laura. She lifts her arms, strikes with her elbows, jerking roughly away from the young woman's embrace, shouting "God *damn* you!"

Sage watches her, eyes wide and startled.

The muscles of Laura's face are squeezed tight, her teeth bared. Sage hangs her head. She is afraid to look at Laura now. Too heavy, she thinks, it's too heavy for me. And wistfully she remembers how she had meant to ask Laura to come with her. It had

seemed so right, so logical, before--Come with me when I return. Simply that.

Sage is stopped by Laura's standing there rigid and clenched. She doesn't know how to enter Laura's anguish with her. "Yes," she mumbles, "well...okay...yes..."

And finally she turns away, starts toward the road.

But when she has reached the road and is stumbling along its rutted surface, she knows she does not want to walk away like this. She stops and leans over, her arms cradling her chest, thinking.

Laura--her comfort, her security, is in her life with Ralph, and she is afraid to threaten that. Sage considers where her own security lies. She too has a place to be--with her lesbian friends. It is a life that is in many ways comfortable, as Laura's is. It is comprehensible to Sage. If Laura were to enter that life she would bring with her much that Sage has not experienced, and Sage realizes she is afraid of that in Laura. Finding the fear in herself, Sage is angry. In her life she has met many challenges; always before she trusted in her own courage. And at the thought of simply going away, leaving Laura there in the little house, there is a stab of grief. The loves Sage has known have been wonderful, but what she feels for Laura is different, deeper than the others. She recognizes that, as she stands in the road, unable to walk toward the pension.

Laura is seated on the ground, her arms clasped around her knees, her forehead resting on her arms, and there is nothing inside her but a space of numbness. Then she hears the sound of footsteps, and looks up, surprised, to see Sage approaching through the darkness. Dully she watches the young woman come near and squat close before her. Sage's face is grave, determined.

"Come back with me when I go."

Laura leans toward Sage, and something awakens shrieking within her. "Sage, I'm terrified!"

Sage shakes her head. "Think what it would be like if you stayed, now. Do you want that for the rest of your life?"

Laura cannot hold the young woman's gaze. She lowers her head to her knees, pondering, and hears the muffled sounds of the sea far below the cliff. She can feel Sage's presence, strong, enclosing her. Finally, without looking up, she asks in a low voice, "Are you my friend?"

"I want you to live your life. I want you to reach out and take what you need."

Laura lifts her head and looks at the face before her. Something there--the steadiness of the eyes and mouth--makes her believe, for a few moments, but then she objects again, "My work..."

Sage interrupts her. "That's yours alone. Does it depend on him?"

Laura hears her own voice, querulous. "And what about my feelings for him? What about the hurt I would cause him?"

Sage does not answer her for a time, finally repeats slowly, "What would it be like if you stayed, now."

"But I don't know how to live any other way!" and Laura's voice rises, whining. "You talk as if I had been out in the world. I've

been here, here alone with him, for so long that I don't know... I don't know if there could be a place out there for me. I don't know any other women like you, or like me."

Sage says steadily, "I've told you there's a place--the farm--and a shed for you to work in. There are women like you, Laura--lots of them now--who've come out of marriages to love other women. You'll meet them when we go back. Believe me, you're not the only one."

She can see the struggle etched in the sharp lines of Laura's face, the eyes that are too intense, the hands gripped together so tightly that the knuckles stand out like knobs. And she searches in herself for the strength to give whatever is needed.

"Do you really care about me?" Laura asks.

"Yes, oh yes." Sage goes forward to rest on her knees, reaches to grip Laura's hands with one of her own, and with the other cradles Laura's head against her shoulder. She can feel the tension in the woman's body, the energy caught there, locking it. "Help me understand you."

Laura's voice comes muffled against her shoulder. "I'm terrified."

"You are very strong and beautiful."

They sit for a time, Sage holding her, and then Laura pulls away, turning her head to the side, and begins to talk in a low, toneless voice. "In the last few years sometimes I've felt that I loved no-one, not even Ralph, that there was a pane of glass separating me from everyone and everything...as if I were merely going through the motions of my life..."

Her face goes slack as she talks, an empty, despondent look in her eyes. "Sometimes I've felt I was going to die, and that it didn't matter, because everything I did was meaningless...even the work...just repeating myself..."

Laura stares for a time at the ground. Sage has drawn back from her and sits at a little distance watching her.

Then Laura looks up at Sage, and her face goes firm once again. Her eyes are alert, and she studies Sage. Finally, she says, "I never want to feel that way again."

They sit for a time in silence, separate from each other, and Sage sees Laura's glance move to the square of yellow light in the distance that is the window of her house. She sees the woman look with a kind of mourning at the house.

"It's going to be terrible--a lot of this is going to be so terrible for me. I know it. I've lived it in my imagination many times...that's why I didn't leave, before. Now there's someplace...you tell me so, and I believe you...and there's you, Sage...lover. But it's going to be...at first...the guilt at hurting him..." She looks at Sage for a time, troubled, and then asks, "Are you certain you want to help me?"

Sage leans forward. It is difficult to speak, her voice struggling past the habit in her of trying to appear sufficient, of pretending not to need or feel too much for anyone. And in the struggle she finds the beginning of understanding how strong it will make her to admit this caring.

"I'm afraid to tell you how much I love you now."

Some nights later, the man as usual sits alone in the house. He is reading in the bright warm circle of the lamp, his left hand spread on his belly.

He hears Laura enter, and his hand lifts to steady the book as he glances up. She looks odd, the sense in him that she is enclosed in silence. Should he speak to her? or is she merely thinking of her work?

"Good walk?" he asks.

"Yes." And she sits down across from him. He can feel the urgency in her, but when she has sat there for a time without speaking, he goes back to his reading.

Laura, who has been staring at her hands, looks up at him, watches him read. This is a human being, she thinks. He has always done the best he could. He needs me in order to live. And she experiences a hopeless surge of love that goes back more to what he had been when she first knew him than to the man sitting across from her.

But she knows he can take care of himself. He will find another person to live his comfortable life with him, she assures herself, knowing it is true.

And she knows he will not understand how this life that satisfies him was slowly suffocating her. He will not understand this other need--to own herself--to take responsibility for her own desires--to love a woman at last, openly, as she knows now she has always wanted to do. He is not the sort of man who could understand that.

She mourns this in him, before she begins to speak, knows the pain she will cause. This anguish in him and in herself is the price she will pay, she realizes, and regrets a world in which what we need must be gotten at so high a cost to ourselves and others. That this new life will be worth it does not lessen the difficulty of what she must do. But she has chosen, already, and she begins to tell him, as best she can, about the inner life which has brought about the choice in her, something in her that has always been there and was never allowed to exist in the comfortable little house.

On the patio of the pension, Sage sits staring out into the darkness of the garden. The trees there are black huddled monsters crouched to spring, the walks curl like pale streams back into dimness. Sage shakes her head, blinking against the insistence of her tightstrung nerves. She knows that at this moment Laura is talking to Ralph, and she admits to herself, as Laura had admitted that night on the cliff, that she is terrified. Her thoughts flash briefly to the dream she had, but she stops herself, will not let her imagination go there. She is familiar enough with Ralph now to know that there will be no physical violence. She believes that, must believe it.

But there is a long night ahead. Laura has said she will stay with him until morning. Then she will come here to the pension. As soon as her things can be gotten ready, she and Sage will leave

for Palma to take the boat to Barcelona, and from there, a plane to the United States. How strange it will be, traveling with Laura. Sage thinks how, up to now, they have never been with each other for a whole night. And she is hungry for the long hours of lying together, hungry to know this woman, to be with her as she moves freely in the world, discovers herself.

A lamp flicks on in an upstairs window of the pension, and a little skirt of light changes the closest bushes from lumps of shadow into a confusion of leaves. Sage shivers. Other people, yes. There will be women back there who are Laura's age, who share her experience, who perhaps could satisfy her more than Sage can. Her mind jumps ahead. Maybe after Laura learns to trust herself, she will choose one of those women to love, will move on from Sage to someone more like herself. Yes, probably it will happen, Sage thinks, and suffers a flicker of panic in her stomach.

She returns to the days they spent together this last week-- Laura examining her feelings, finding her strength. Before she could talk to Ralph, she had to be certain of herself. She talked for hours to Sage, telling it, telling her life--her becoming a young woman in the fifties, when it seemed that marriage was the only thing to do, her meeting Ralph, and what she had felt for him then; their poverty together, the fun they had, the problems--talking, moving through the span of years she had lived with him, sometimes sobbing with the pain of how much he had meant to her once, and the sorrow that it could not be the same now, accepting finally what she already knew--that she must break out. Experiencing this with Laura, Sage was taken into areas of herself that she would never have entered, and felt the admiration for this woman struggling to begin her life again.

Sage has forgotten the fear. She looks out into the garden where the trees are still and waiting, like herself. She knows sleep will be impossible, that all night she will be filled with the ripples of joy that run through her as she awaits the morning's certainty. Laura will come, probably exhausted, hurt surely, but ready to meet her and to move on.



SANDY BOUCHER lives in San Francisco. Her book of stories, *Assaults and Rituals*, will be out the end of March from Mama's Press of Oakland, California.



Connections

Over a year ago we began publishing Connections, a quarterly compilation of women's requests. In that time hundreds of women have participated and found friends, help with specific projects, and, in some cases, lovers.

Last Spring, Katie Missett and Patsy Bass volunteered to take over the work of compiling and printing Connections. We forward all the women's requests which are mailed to AQ and Katie and Pat do the rest. Approximately every 3 months they mail out a new issue to the women who have requested it.

We would like to see Connections grow and be of service to more women. Any woman can describe herself, her project, her needs, what she is looking for in friends, a living situation, etc. and receive replies from women throughout the county. Additionally, she can read the descriptions other women have had printed--there are often uncanny matches between someone, say on page 1, looking for help on a lesbian goat farm and a woman on page 9 whose dream it is to herd goats and raise organic vegetables.

Quite often, women share their creative talents--almost everyone writes, paints, plays music, is into photography, pottery, theatre or has an interest that makes an easy natural bridge to friendship. Women exploring spiritual/occult possibilities, women involved in raising children, women in academia, women in the sciences -- the connections are limitless.

Though we were warned not to get into this "computer dating" service, almost without exception, women have shown that they are looking for friendships which may/may not develop into love relationships and that they are not interested in sexually objectifying themselves or other women. Connections is loving, positive, and refreshingly free of any attempt at exploitation.

If you want to participate in the next issue, send your description of yourself and your present needs, your age (we cannot accept anyone under legal age), and your address along with \$1 and a long self-addressed envelope with two ten cent stamps to!

Connections
Amazon Quarterly
P.O. Box 434
West Somerville, MA
02144

Katie and Patsy have asked us to remind you that Connections comes out 4 times per year and that it might be as long as 3 months before you will receive your copy depending on when they receive your request. Each issue is different--you receive the issue that your request is in. If you want to participate in several issues, send \$1 + 1 long self-addressed stamped envelope for each.

Also, though there is no limit on what you can have printed, please try to put your message as concisely as possible in the interest of conserving paper.

A new issue of Connections has just come out -- if you want to participate in the next issue be sure to get your request + self-addressed stamped envelope to us by April 1.



Katie and Patsy

SPLITTINGS

1.

My body opens over San Francisco like the day-
light raining down each pore crying the change of light
I am not with her I have been waking off and on
all night to that pain not simply absense but
the presence of the past destructive
to living here and now Yet if I could instruct
myself, if we could learn to learn from pain
even as it grasps us if the mind, the mind that lives
in this body could refuse to let itself be crushed
in that grasp it would loosen Pain would have to stand
off from me and listen its dark breath still on me
but the mind could begin to speak to pain
and pain would have to answer:

We are older now
we have met before these are my hands before your eyes
my figure blotting out all that is not mine
I am the pain of division creator of divisions
it is I who blot your lover from you
and not the time-zones nor the miles
It is not separation calls me forth but I
who am separation And remember
I have no existence apart from you

2.

I believe I am choosing something new
I am choosing not to suffer yet still to feel
Does the infant memorize the body of the mother

and create her in absense? or simply cry
primordial loneliness? does the bed of the stream
once diverted mourning remember wetness?
But we, we live so much in these
configurations of the past I choose
to separate her from my past we have not shared
I choose not to suffer yet to love her
to detect primordial pain as it stalks toward me
flashing its bleak torch in my eyes blotting out
her particular being the details of her love
I will not be divided from her or from myself
by myths of separation
though her mind and body in Manhattan are more with me
than the smell of eucalyptus coolly burning on these hills

3.

The world tells me I am its creature
I am raked by eyes brushed by hands
I want to crawl into her for refuge lay my head
in the space between her breast and shoulder
abnegating power for love
as women have done or hiding
from power in her love like a man
I refuse these givens the splitting
between love and action I am choosing
not to suffer uselessly and not to use her
I choose to love this time for once
with all my intelligence

ADRIENNE RICH writes in New York City. Her latest book of poetry is *Poems: Selected and New, 1950-1974*, from W. W. Norton and Co. She's working now on a book on mothering.

YES

You wanted love - oh make me over -
your shining vagina offering me a home
offering me a cape the cape drags in the dust I'm
out walking as usual at this hour. watch the
horses clacking by the hood of the carriage the
damp inside and your belly shining

Oh make me over I wanted love from you
I wanted devotion. You spread your legs speaking
a different language whisper to me now whisper who
we are woman whisper who we are

I wanted to escape. I built a corral with wild
horses. I built a corral, the wild horses dance and
leap their tough necks gleam sweat now sweat in my
armpits you're wearing my sweater
and my sweat coming walking
toward me. but you can't believe I've built this
thing. I am not a thing to you I am an animal who
loves you - oh make me over make me love you
make me free make me over make me love love with me
oh you did it you spread your legs and opened me
up to your gleaming belly here where the night streams
in through the window and the motorcycle clashes and
cracks and it gleams your belly like love I asked
for you I asked for me I wanted us to ride like wild
horses

ELISE YOUNG writes in New York City and has published in Apha.



SISTER LOVE YOURSELF

by Nina Sabaroff

the Snake

the snake
is the clitoris

(make no mistake)

the snake
insidious
and elusive

tempting
innocent adam
through the woman

to deviate
from one-pointed concentration

on the primitive male orgasm
known as Jahweh

the snake surely
is the clitoris
upstart offensive interruption
contrary to nature
let's pretend we don't even see it

MARGI GUMPERT lives and writes on both coasts and elsewhere.

THE UNIVERSE

IN YOU:


suggestions for

sexual

syncopation

Last November, after reading about Elizabeth Gould Davis's use of a Ouija board as a source of inspiration and information for her yet-to-be-published book, THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE, we began our own experiments with the Ouija. At first we asked questions about issues in our lives, the meanings of our dreams, and such — we found the responses not only imaginative and very helpful, but imbued with an insight and authority we seldom give our conscious (or unconscious) minds credit for. Next we explored the process involved in the Ouija's translating our pre-conscious thought-forms into tangible letters, words and sentences. (We will present what we've learned about this process in our next issue, which will focus on ENERGIES.) After we had satisfied most of our curiosity about our own ongoing concerns, and understood a little about how the answers came to us, we decided to ask the Ouija to dictate a message for this issue on the interconnection of sexuality and spirituality. What you will read here was received in many one to three-hour sessions during January and February 1975. Each of the 2,000 words came through one at a time with no conscious control or editing on our part. We are pleased and amazed with the results, utterly different as they are from anything we would have written in our usual ways.

—Laurel Galana
—Gina Covina




This story is meant to be devoured slowly and seriously. Make a quiet private time and place for yourself and let each sentence sink through many layers of understanding before you go on to the next. Let your body as well as your mind digest these words by doing the suggested physical exercises as you come to them. Your intentions create the results you will find. May you hope for the universe and find it within and without you.

SPIRIT AND FLESH MADE EASY

Rigidity of beliefs does not hold you together. Beliefs may flow like water and you will remain. Do let beliefs change in their own rhythm according to your innermost, not usually outermost, feelings. Outermost feelings are often not your own.

Your thoughts make your body state. Look at both. Change what you want to change this way: Feel each muscle move and rest. Recall memories involving the particular muscle, i.e. injuries, compliments, habits. Each cell of you remembers and has its own vitality and personality. Your personality is the sum, or rather the multiplication, of the personalities of all your



cells. The scale of cells is too small for you to examine their personalities without practice. Besides, they are many. So examine the larger personalities of your muscles – also your skin, hair, eyes, senses of taste, hearing and so on – but first the muscles.

Consider the reasons behind your muscle's personality, both the traits you find good, i.e. strength or suppleness, and those you consider negative, i.e. weakness or flabbiness. Then consider that reasons are not reality but beliefs about reality. Let your muscles tell you what they want. You control their functioning with your beliefs. Let the innate joy and wisdom of your creaturehood infuse your mind and body.

Allowing your muscles the pleasure of simple desires met may necessitate large changes in your style of life as well as changes in content. Marriages may dissolve, jobs change, family ties disappear or reorganize. Most likely your friendships will need some rearranging to give your body its optimum environment. You may need to live in another part of the world.

You may think so many changes to be impossible for you because of your present condition – poverty, age, children, etc. Or you may think your body does not deserve so much attention. Examine your thoughts about what

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you have read here so far, whatever those thoughts may be. Your thoughts are not reality but beliefs about reality. If you want to change the reality formed by your thoughts, you can change those thoughts and the reality will follow. This process of change will take forever. You'll be surprised, though, at the dramatic and far-reaching changes that are possible in your life now, changes that will give you serenity and security in your creaturely self and a new communication between creature and conscious mind.

This might seem difficult work if you are not accustomed to willed change. It is indeed the most important work you can do, affecting far more than your individual well-being. It is not difficult, though. Listening to your body is easy. Living in harmony with your creaturehood will make your energies flow unobstructed. Spirit and flesh can move through your being together, as the one force they are intended to be.

MASS SEXUALITY DRESSED AS THE NATURAL CREATURE

There is considerable confusion, to put it very mildly, over sexuality in your world. We

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don't need to explain the confusion here as it is obvious to each of you in one way or another. What makes the confusion hard to dispel is the fact that whatever beliefs about sexuality you hold, there is the basement belief underneath them that sexuality is the expression, maybe even the deepest expression, of your creaturehood. This belief makes the specific beliefs you hold about sexuality take even firmer hold in you as reality, because each of you has an intuitive and often not consciously recognized sense of the validity of the body's perceptions. But do your beliefs about sexuality spring from the knowledge of your body? Most unlikely, given both the general distrust, if not loathing, of the body taught you, and the bombardment of overtly but not intrinsically sexual advertisements and such, showered on you constantly.

As you begin to listen to your body you will find that much you have been told is sexually exciting is not. You will find that your perceptions of yourself as a sexual being change drastically. In fact you will no longer find a basis for separating any part of your being from any other part. So that this sudden wholeness will not disengage your analytical abilities and cause you confusion or distress, the following sections will suggest gradual movements into

joyful creaturehood, which includes, of course, full sexual communication with yourself and your friends.

THE SMILE OF A NATURAL ANIMAL

Find yourself alone in a comfortable and private place with a mirror. Smile. Smile on, and think as you watch yourself smile of all the smiles you smile each day. How does that feel? Most likely terrible. This is not the expression of good will or pleasure, but of fear of one sort or another. Realize now that your beliefs about pleasure are most certainly distorted, are in fact distorted to the degree to which you felt terrible in the above exercise. Think on this for a moment. The margin of doubt you have just acquired will be very helpful to you in experiencing pleasure at the innocent and intense level of the natural animal.

Now, consider the amorphous environment around you, not the objects and feelings connected to them, but such important commonplaces as heat, constriction of clothing on your body, or the feel of the surface you sit or lie on. Imagine you are suspended in sea brine or a gravity-free chamber. Lie down. Take off your clothes or loosen them. Relax and imagine a waterfall flooding through you, taking with it

all your tensions and unnecessary or insincere smiles. Watch the waterfall until you are empty of all thoughts and feelings, with only the awareness of your glistening body in the focus of that powerful water's movement. Think on whatever aspect of your creatureliness you feel best about, not what any others value, such as the smoothness of skin or shapely elbows, but whatever brings you the fullest sense of health and bodily joy. Feel this joy and well-being spread to every cell of your body, to those parts that are ill or unloved by you in your usual day to day reality. Feel the one integral whole which is you in the body. Know that the spread of health and joy through every cell is not metaphor but solemn physical truth. Concentrate on the joyful song of your body until you can feel the singing in every part of you, until you are pulsating harmoniously. Then, without interrupting your awareness of the music, look again in your mirror. There — the smile of a natural animal.

ORGASMS OF THE BODY AND SOUL

What you think of as orgasm is one range of energy rebalancing picked up by your senses and interpreted in particular ways. Many cellular deaths occur in orgasm. Many elements transmute. Energy is released from your body to

contribute to weather patterns and planetary well-being, and your body's energies are redistributed in ways that provide for your continuing health and free-flowing intellectual functioning.

These energy exchanges, or orgasms, take place in many ways that are not sexually focused. They must take place somehow, and very often, for the body to maintain its equilibrium. You choose the most appropriate release for



Rising Forms

lithograph by Marcia

your body's needs and the situation, within the limits of your beliefs about what constitutes an appropriate release. Coughing, laughing, crying, sneezing, yawning — all are used often in necessary exchanges of energy between you and your environment. Sexual orgasm is meant to be a conscious form of energy exchange, one which allows you the opportunity to consciously understand the physical processes that make you and the world around you one. Sexual orgasm can provide you with a conscious experience of the death and metamorphosis of your cells, and so enable you to glimpse a sliver of the truth that unites death and life in the ongoing creation of the universe.

THE UNIVERSE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Arrange a place and time in which to marvel at your own energy balance processes. If masturbation, as it is so unendearingly called, is a common sexual practise for you, then forget your usual habits or preparations. Lie down and let the waterfall we've already mentioned flow through you, taking all your thoughts as it rushes past. When you are filled with perception of your body's vitality and emptied of all else, let your awareness include the realization that the pulsating energy which fills your body is

sexual. There are no divisions of energy — energy is energy. But for now concentrate on the energy's sexual aspect. Feel this sexual energy through your whole body. Feel its constant movement, especially out through your fingertips. The energy channels in your fingers are your most powerful, direct, and conscious means for moving energy through your body, and also out into your environment and to other living creatures. Feel the lines of energy moving down your arms and out your fingertips. Touch one fingertip to your navel and feel energy flow into the center of your body. Put all your fingers on your belly. Notice that as energy pours into your center, more energy moves down your arms and out through your fingers. Energy collects and concentrates in your center and at the same time generates an ever greater movement of energy throughout your body. Understand how in touching your clitoris with your fingers you are creating the most intense energy circuit possible in your body, one which gathers and generates energy at once. Orgasm comes when your body has gathered as much energy as its circuits at that time can contain, and when the energy has not been redistributed by any non-sexual forms of orgasm. Great amounts of energy are released into the atmos-



phere by orgasm. The energy remaining in your body is reorganized, taking stress off areas which had been clogged with excess energy and giving energy to hungry parts.

Back to your fingertips: forget for now the ideas you've just read. Keep only the feeling of limitless energy moving and gathering in your body. Make complete and perfect circuits with fingers and genitals. Follow the movements of energy through to the moment when your

circuitry etches new patterns in the bridge connecting your body and the universe.

MAKING MUSIC WITH MANY INSTRUMENTS

Your sexual communication and pleasure will be greatly enhanced by your realization of your own multiplicity. In your daily life the illusion of a single unified self is often very useful to you. In intense energy reorganization patterns, orgasm for instance, this single self illusion is difficult to maintain and can keep you from having a good time. Remember, if you must, that your familiar unified self can re-emerge if and when that's what you want. Do not be afraid to dissolve in your senses, to identify as you make love not with your personality but with the ever-changing flow of energy through your field of perception.

When you make love with a friend, there's no need to perceive your bodies as separate. Energy flows freely between you, ignoring skin boundaries. Follow the energy instead of your two or three or however many personalities and you will find an exquisite instantaneous communication of delight taking place between you. You can feel the heat of her body being touched

by you, or by another friend with you, as if it is your own body being touched. Indeed it is your own body — the divisions between you are merely conventions of your culture. When you and your friends make sexual music together you become an orchestra of sensual instruments with infinite possibilities for your mutual creation and enjoyment of creaturely symphonies. Feel free to play every instrument.

BEYOND SEXUALITY: POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

After you learn to express your creaturely self in sexual ways freely and fully you may begin to wonder why you bother categorizing anything as sexual and anything else as not sexual. You may wonder why some natural energy rebalancing processes are considered better than others. (There are unnatural ways of reorganizing bodily energy and these are morally wrong and include any form of deliberate violence or objectification.) You may become, gradually of course, unable to make divisions between sexual and non-sexual. Congratulations. You are now much closer to experiencing the marvelous multiplicity and unity of the universe as expressed through your being. You are moving



beyond sexuality, not in any hierarchical sense,
but beyond the definitions, beyond the act of
defining, beyond the world in which categories
are named, and out/in to the beyond of beyond,
where you have been all along. O yes.



likeness

but with you, also, i would want it.
forget what you learned, the sums
of your arduous schooling.
that is all labor, making something,
the grass grow where it never grew before;
that is capitalism, industry, hard pleasure
consuming the planet,
prodigious and admirable work.

this is love in the mirror. the light
girdles the galaxies and falls right back.
the dark star, kleptomaniac, absorbs.
this is only the world's most natural act

and though i know your body by my own
i need to fit my disembodied hands
around the difficult answers of your bones
and want to float you always when i plunge
all the way down
to tongue you into darkly grieving waves,
not of the sea-kind, but more resonant ones.

see, i can swim can dance can mourn
can open my book my body
my eyes for you under water.

JAN CLAUSEN lives and writes in New York City.

Two Mountains

I

Once you explained your eyes
had gone lame from being gassed
you have to tighten them against the light...
but there is no sun in any of these rooms
where we sit and talk and your look
turns away from mine any sharp light here
is remembered caught through some prism of your fear

II

When I hold you in the dark woman
you shake down your hard tears
your body goes hot and soft
you change shape

and I dream
I have caught the witch at the river
embraced her she is a lion a rabbit
a fire a dove a bear
if I hold her long enough you will come back
I will wake fall into you closer

closer your voice loosens
rolls down in small pebbles
a salt mountain in the rain

III

We make love We are two mountains
I can see our bodies stretched over the plains
breasts/bellies/thighs Earth
quakes from my head to your feet
miles and miles and where your tongue
touches me like a blue flame
we are one grain of light about to explode

MIRIAM DYAK writes in Brunswick, Maine, and has recently adopted
the name of a Northeast Indian people for her new last name, as
she hopes other women will, also. She was once known as Miriam
Palmer.

SISTER GIN

A CHAPTER FROM A NOVEL

TO BE PUBLISHED BY DAUGHTERS, INC., LATER THIS YEAR

BY JUNE ARNOLD

With a late September sunset of lavendergold behind her and the smell of fish and seawater making her hungry all over, Su stepped into the inside of her love's house for the first time. The flat straw rug made the soles of her feet ache through sandals and long to be kissed. Mamie Carter kissed her on the cheek after the custom. Seizing that proximate cheek's smell with her nostrils, Su inhaled her reward and knew better than to kiss back.

They sat on the back porch and watched the sun set over Wrightsville Sound, on that old weathered porch of an old two-story beach house where Mamie Carter had spent her summers as a child, and subsequently her children and then her grandchildren, one of the few houses to withstand all the hurricanes--sat listening to the left-over summer sounds of children's water games and deploring the increasing number of motored boats each season replacing the elegant sails. The martini threw a skin over Su's brain wiping out the city as they sat in the gentle decay of the day, the house softly decaying behind them, the summer itself mature and used and gracefully marked, letting out its last few days with the dignity of a menopausal woman releasing her last few eggs, knowing that they were for form only, that the season was over but there was no hurry about slipping over into the next, it will come in its season and here, these my last are as worthy as my first.

Su felt ashamed that she had been afraid...of Mamie Carter who was as legal in all her tentacles as old Wilmington itself; of her own passion which, here on this clan-protected porch, could be sublimated into charm as if she were a real member of that impeccable clan.

Shaking her olive free from its gregarious ice, Su heard Mamie Carter's voice off her left ear asking her to fetch them each a refill, because she was alone, expecting no one but Su this evening. Su took each glass in a grip firm enough to break them--someone could still drop in, would come visit, seeing the lights, her car, could drop by for hours yet, this being the tradition of the beach, the gregariousness of ice and an island.

They talked of the town's recent rapes and the bizarre circumstances of the two rapists' being laid out, tied to a board, one on the steps of the old folks' home, one in the front yard of the councilman who pulled in the largest vote and was therefore mayor. Both rapists were white, short-haired, in their middle thirties, and were found nether-naked and tied outstretched to a piece of plywood in the shape of an x. Since the first rape had been of an eighty-year-old woman of color, it was thought that the first man's punishment was the work of a Black Klan group. The rapist had hysterically insisted that the old woman sent five old women spirits after him, but no one paid him any mind. The second rape victim had been a junior high school girl, forced at stranglehold to suck off her attacker; since she was white and since in this case too the rapist had babbled of five grannies who, though masked, had white hands, some of the townspeople wondered if there were witches still afoot.

"Posh," Mamie Carter said. "What kind of talk is that? Klans and witches. Next thing they'll be saying the freebooters are back haunting the Cape Fear."

"What do you think?" Su asked.

"I think the rapists are getting a big fuss made over them. They're not the victims."

"Do you think it was really...women who did it?"

"Old women?" Mamie Carter's black eyes glinted with laughter. She stood up. "You know, I can't wear flat-heeled shoes anymore," she said, looking at her medium-heeled sandals below white shark-skin slacks. "I wore high heels so long my Achilles' tendon is permanently shortened."

"Do you?" Su followed her strong slightly-humped back into the house.

"These slacks are from before the war. Would you feel bad if a real shark had given his skin for them?"

The inside of the house was dark after the bright twilight reflections of the porch. Mamie Carter led Su to the kitchen and flicked on the light.

"It's yellow!" Su remembered to speak loud. "Yellow is my favorite color."

"Mine too." Mamie Carter's smile was a caress. "Have you ever thought of wearing a bright yellow wig? Now don't try to talk to me while I'm fixing dinner. You know I can't hear you when my back is turned."

"Now that streak there," Mamie Carter said, nodding at a white swath across the middle of the dining room table, "was made by the yankees. They came to my grandmother's house and took everything they could. Since they didn't have any way to carry off the table, the yankee officer sent to the kitchen for some vinegar and poured it across there. It won't come off. Have some more shrimp, Su." Mamie Carter wiped her mouth delicately and smiled. "Old tables tell old tales."

"Mamie Carter," Su said, her fingers holding the ancient heavy lace of her napkin, her other fingers resting on the heavy stem of the goldleaf wine glass, her eyes staring at that bright elfin face

leaning toward her through the candlelight. "I've never eaten such delicious shrimp."

"It wasn't too hot, was it?" Mamie Carter had cooked the tiny North Carolina shrimp with sour cream, wine, onions, mushrooms, and a lot of cayenne. "I don't taste anything without cayenne anymore. Besides, it's the only way I can keep my grandchildren from eating every meal with me."

"It made all other shrimp seem bland, diluted, incomplete, wan and colorless. Unworthy of notice." All unmarked tables, unlined faces, modern clothes, new napkins, streamlined wine glasses, all young or middle-aged things were thrown into a heap of watered inconsequentiality which, like herself, Su felt to be unfinished, unseasoned, green and smooth and callow. "I think I am in love with you, Mamie Carter."

The bright elfin face smiled broadly and did not answer.

Had she heard? In this pocket of the past, within dark wood and the dark saltiness of a September tide coming in and the faint rust smell of old screens and occasional sound of wind flapping the awnings, Su felt herself suddenly dead. She doubted that she had spoken. She had been switched into afterlife where words did not need to be spoken. She had left her amorphous dully-young fifty-year-old body behind and drifted through the indefinite world of the dead, the epitomized grave, the capsule of self which carried in its concentrate all the love she had ever sought. Mamie Carter did not need to hear; she would know.

A spare hand marbled with a bulging network of veins reached for Su's. "I know."

"Of course you do," Su said, laughing within death, unable to move her own hand caught in a cave beneath that perfect antique one.

"I've known for a while."

"Of course you have!" Su's smile was as stiff as her body balanced off the touch of that hand. "I should have known you'd know."

"Mamie Carter?" She held that final face taut on a thread of sight. Her hand closed across the silk bones that were Mamie Carter's hand, curled upreaching on a free patch of sheet in the middle of a Queen Anne bed. Memory was already claiming the sight of her dimpled flesh, infinite dimples winking in their softness, skin so old it had lost all abrasives, rid itself of everything that can shield the body against the world; skin vulnerable, non-resilient, soft forever--Su's fingers had to resist the longing to take some of that flesh and mold it.

"Yes, perfect?"

Su sunk her face into the ageless curve of her love's shoulder and smothered a giggle. "There is one extraordinary thing about us that I have to say, even here on these romantic rainswept sheets, even at the risk of hearing your 'posh'...your silk is matched only by our exquisite ability to prolong swallowing, our mutual toothlessness allowing for such a long balance on the tip of flavor: I just never imagined that the delights of old age would include the fact of endlessly drawnout orgasms. Did you al-

ways know?"

"You like it, too?"

"Without leaving us with a mouthful of cotton wadding. Without wearing down flavor. Without diminishment. With the loss of nothing at all, in fact, except fear."

"I always thought, if old age could be beautiful, life would hold no more terrors. Now if you'll stop talking a minute, Su, I want to get up and put on my negligee."

Mamie Carter swung her legs out of sight, turned her beautiful back and slipped into a charcoal-red robe--really slipped, but then she had had sixty years' practice. Su saw in her mind her coveted breasts, bound flat to her chest when she was in her twenties to produce a flapper fashion, hanging now from the base of the breastbone like soft toys, too small to rest a head upon, fit for a hand to cuddle very gently like the floppy ears of a puppy.

Memory moved her hand to Mamie Carter's belly--skin white as milk, finely puckled like sugar-sprinkled clabber; memory dropped her hand to Mamie Carter's sparse hair curling like steel--there was strength between her legs and no dough there where the flesh was fluid enough to slip away from the bone and leave that tensed grain hard as granite and her upright violent part like an animal nose against Su's palm. The impact of memory bruised. Su said, to the back that could not hear, "Don't you dare die, Mamie Carter Wilkerson."

Now, as Su was feeling wicked lying in bed while Mamie Carter sat up in her little armchair with the rose-colored skirt, a flash began in a tiny prickling over her upper skin. Last night, just as she had reached to kiss Mamie Carter the second time, reached toward those lips as to a dandelion, she had felt this same beginning prickle and a tear had dropped down each cheek, prewetting the hot flash with despair.

"You're flashing, Su," Mamie Carter had said.

Tears streamed as if they would flood out the flesh and Su said helplessly, "Why now? Why why why now?"

"Why not now?" Mamie Carter had said gently, laying Su back on the bed, circling her shoulder, stroking her cheek and neck and breasts. "Why not now?" she had said, kissing the shame from Su's flushed lips, sliding her cheek over the sweat of Su's doubly-wet cheek and slippery forehead. Her arm had reached through Su's legs and she had held her in an infant curve, whispering again, "Why not now?" as Su slipped down into the abandon of hotly wetting herself and the flash had raged, burst, and slowly subsided.

Now, lying wickedly in bed, Su slipped under the prickles and welcomed the flash as it centered her whole extraordinary body within this vivid fever of change.

"What about Bettina?" Mamie Carter said and Bettina's voice echoed in the room, her blue quilted robe accusing.

I'll always love you, Bettina had said twenty years ago, when always had been forever. Now, with always cut in half, it seemed she had exchanged her mobility for a foundation of quicksand which would suck the house in after it. But still Bettina had said it, and even now the words made her feel safe inside their sucking sound.

"I'll always love you, Su," Mamie Carter said with a small dry

laugh like a kick. "Now Bettina's old enough to know better than to compare her 'always' with mine...certainly old enough to know better than that and I naturally know exactly how old she is since her mother and I had our first babies the same month." Mamie Carter held Su's flailing head. "When I say always, perfect, it's an underbid."

"Mamie," Su said, to feel the impertinence of using that bare name. "Did you really fall in love with me?"

"No. I just wanted to get you in bed where I could hear you."

"Now you sit among the yellow and read the paper. I'll fix breakfast," Su said, wishing Mamie Carter were fragile so she could perch her on the breakfast table in a vase. Her hand met an upper arm as muscular as her own.

"That's yesterday's paper."

"Well, I didn't read it. I was out all day. Doesn't news keep?"

"You didn't read the paper yesterday?"

Su put coffee on to perk and squeezed two glasses of orange juice as if this kitchen were her own. "Why, what's in the paper? How do you like your eggs?"

"Quietly in the icebox."

A bumping along the boardwalk and cry of o-cree! o-cree! fresh tomatoes and o-o-o-cree! came into the morning. Su sat down with a temporary cup of instant coffee and pulled the paper over. "What's in the paper?"

"What we were talking about last night. There."

BOUND SOCIALITE LEFT ON CORNWALLIS STEPS

Clayton Everett Eagle, III, Wilmington socialite, was found tied to a board early this morning by a fish merchant, Rowland Livers. Mr. Livers called the police, who reached the scene at approximately seven o'clock.

Mr. Eagle, who declined to comment, was apparently the victim of the same person or persons responsible for similar incidents in the past month. He was found tied, partially nude, to a piece of plywood and had been placed on the side of the steps of the Cornwallis house some time early this morning.

The most puzzling clue was a note pinned to his shirt reading, Shirley Temples Emeritae. When a reporter asked police if this might indicate that the gang responsible included some members of the fair sex, Captain Francis Colleton, who described himself as an amateur Shakesperian, said, "If fair is foul and foul is fair."

The question still unanswered is the reason for Mr. Eagle's pillorying. The previous victims of the gang had been an alleged rapist and an alleged sodomite. The choice of the Cornwallis house might be connected to the fact that Mr. Eagle recently moved to this area from New England.

"Isn't he related to you?" Su asked.

"Connected. Or was. He's kin only to Lucifer."

"Who do you think...?" A non-North Carolinian herself by birth, Su felt the reflex of an outsider who would never be able to say ho-oose (house), giving the word its full Chaucerian dipthong like a native. Although she was not a yankee, she wondered if Clayton Eagle had gotten himself labelled "outside agitator" and prepared to draw in her liberal skirts against this Temple gang.

"Now that's just damned nonsense, Su. We're not still fighting the War Between the States here. You know we'd already voted not to secede, but when they opened fire on our cousins, then we had to. South Carolina was family--we weren't even separated until 1729. I think Mr. Eagle has more to answer for than his misfortune of a birthplace. Heheheheh. The Temple Gang."

Driving back across the causeway that separated land from land, Su threw her words wide so they could skip across the gray glass of Wrightsville Sound: "Change of life by definition refers to the future: one life is finishing, therefore another life must be beginning. The menopausal armies mass on the brink of every city and suburb; everything that was is over and there is nothing left there to keep our sights lowered. See the rifles raised? This army doesn't travel on its uterus any more. Bettina, you must see that to stay back in that young section with you when I can reach out to age itself, lust after a final different dry silken life and so much grace and elegance from all that knowledge of days...There is no more beautiful word in the language than withered."

JUNE ARNOLD is the author of *The Cook and the Carpenter* and is a co-founder of Daughters, Inc.

ARTISTS THIS ISSUE:

- The photograph on the front cover is a self-portrait by ELLEN DENUTO, who lives in New Jersey and is a member of a women's photography group called Women Vision.
- CAROL NEWHOUSE (photographs on pages 1, 49, and inside back cover) "I am living in the country with women and working toward the creation of our new feminist culture. My photographs are an expression of our experience."
- SHARON BEHREND lives in Little Rock, Arkansas.
- NINA SABAROFF (photograph on page 25): "I've been photographing women for four years, and am presently teaching sexuality at a community college."
- MARCIA, whose lithographs are on pages 34 and 37, lives in Kentucky. The prints (which are made of striking colors and textures not caught in the photos here) are for sale, through AQ.
- RUTH MOUNTAINGROVE (photograph on page 62) lives in Wolf Creek, Oregon, and works with *Womanspirit* magazine.
- The back cover's photograph is by CAROLYN CARLSON, who lives in Hartford, Connecticut.

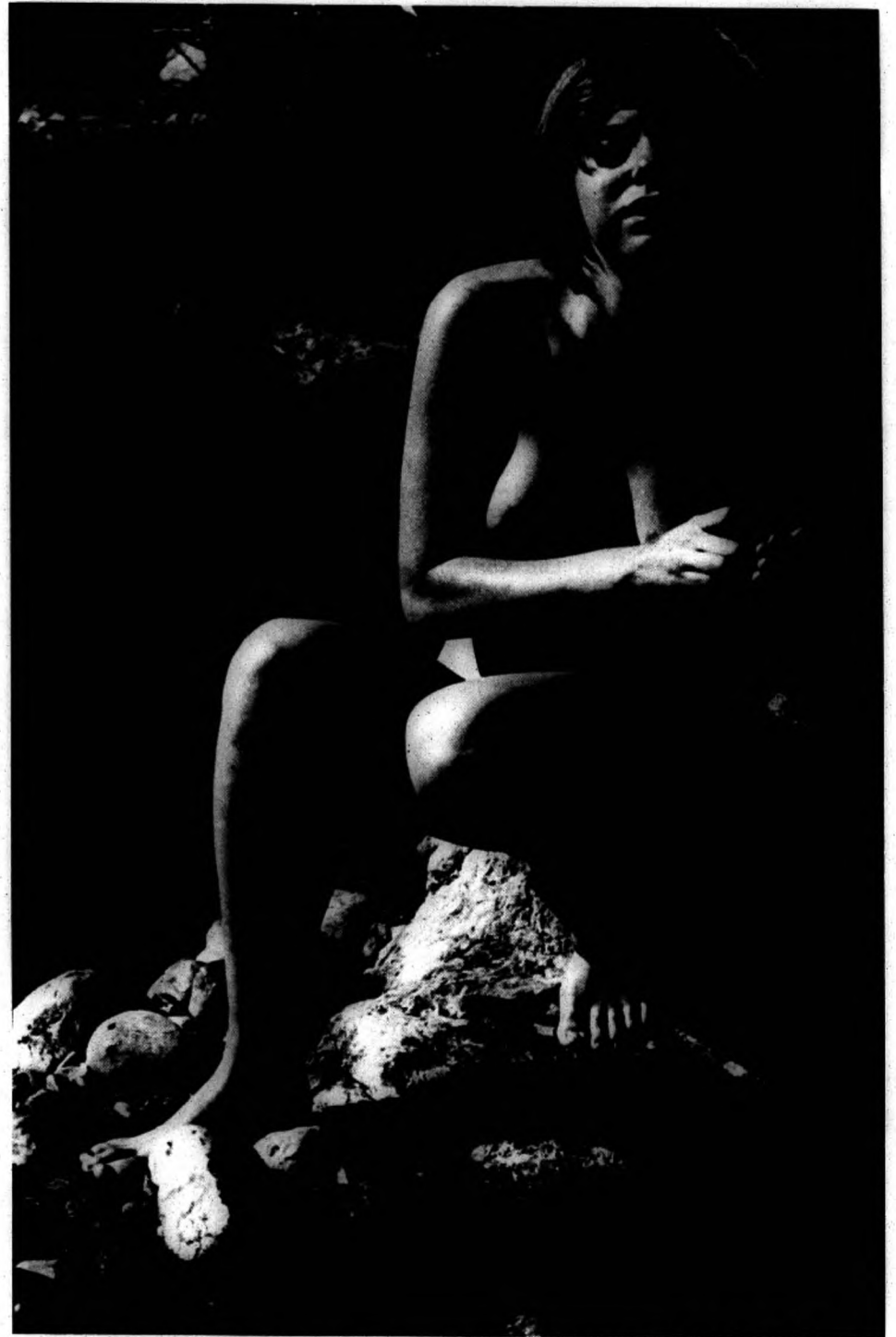
Aphrodite, then

Aphrodite, then
who controls the honey and the heart
Aphrodite
 the yes or no
 of all existence
mother and daughter
born from the foam
 the dream of the father
 the mother's mantle of glory
 foam and silver
sprinkled
 across life
Aphrodite
the fulfillment

 nor child nor mother
 can i truly be
 i have nothing to do
 with parentage
 which is a gift of earth
 i am of heaven
 the heaven part of earth is mine

the taste on the edge of the peach
not the body
 not the seed

MARGI GUMPERT lives and writes on both
coasts and elsewhere.



by Carol Newhouse

THE SONG OF THE WOMAN
WITH HER PARTS COMING OUT

I am bleeding
the blood seeps in red
circles on the white
white of my sheet,
my vagina
is opening, opening
closing and opening;
wet, wet,
my nipples turn rose and hard
my breasts swell against my arms
my arms float out
like anemones
my feet slide on the wooden
floor,
dancing, they are dancing, I sing,
my tongue slips from my mouth
and my mind
imagines a
clitoris
I am the woman
I am the woman
with her parts coming out
with her parts coming out.

The song of the woman with
the top of her head ripping off, with
the top of her head ripping off
and she flies out
and she flies out
and her flesh flies out
and her nose rubs against her ass,
and her eyes love ass
and her cunt
swells and sucks and waves,
and the words spring from her mind
like fourth of July rockets,
and the words too come out,
lesbian, lesbian, lesbian, pee, pee, pee, cunt, vagina,
dyke, sex, sex, sex, sex, sweat, tongue, lick, suck, sweet,
sweet, sweet, suck
and other words march out too,
the words,
P's and Q's
the word

nice
the word
virginity,
the word
mother,
mother goodness mother nice good goodness good good should
should be good be mother be nice good
the word
pure
the word
lascivious
the word
modest
the word
no
the word
no
the word
no
and the woman
the woman
the woman
with her
parts coming out
never stopped
never stopped
even to
say yes,
but only
flew with
her words
with her words
with her words
with her parts
with her parts
coming
with her parts
coming
coming
coming
out.

SUSAN GRIFFIN has published two books of poetry, and
teaches Women's Studies at U. C. Berkeley.

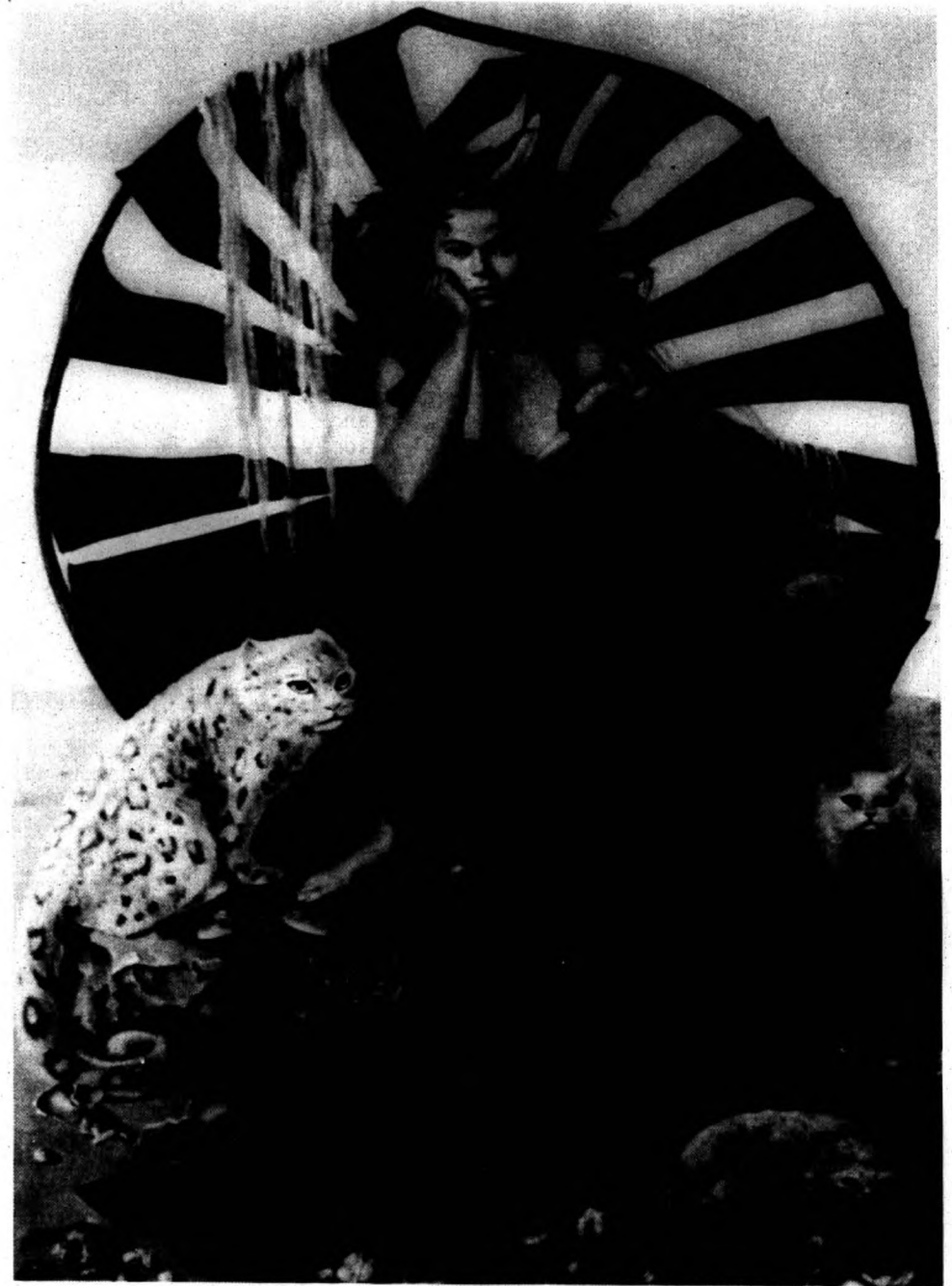
THE WOMEN OF DAN DANCE WITH SWORDS IN THEIR HANDS
TO MARK THE TIME WHEN THEY WERE WARRIORS

I did not fall from the sky
I
nor descend like a plague of locusts
to drink colour and strength from the earth
and I do not come like rain
as a tribute or symbol for earth's becoming
I come as a woman
dark and open
some times I fall like night
softly
and terrible
only when I must die
in order to rise again.

I do not come like a secret warrior
with an unsheathed sword in my mouth
hidden behind my tongue
slicing my throat to ribbons
of service with a smile
while the blood runs
down and out
through holes in the two sacred mounds
on my chest.

I come like a woman
who I am
spreading out through nights
laughter and promise
a dark heat
warming whatever I touch
that is living
consuming
only
what is already dead.

AUDRE LORDE lives on Staten Island. Her most recent book of poetry is *New York Head Shop and Museum*, from Broadside Press.



THE IDEAL LIFE by Leonor Fini (1950)
from Leonor Fini, *The Olympia Press*, NY, 1968.

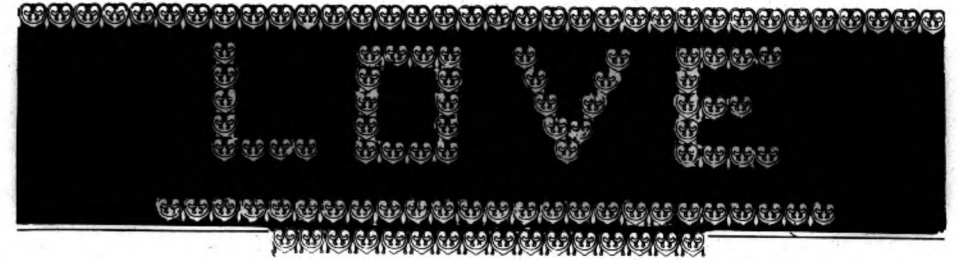
HOW THE CLOCK WILL SOUND

One day in the quiet rain
you will come to the
table that is my grave-
yard
after the others are gone
with their singing and
sighing and styled looks
of mourning

You will crush the flesh of
these pages into a huge
memory and hear the
crazy things i say said
again you will spirit
your tongue into my
ear sucking my titty
upon the grinding course
of passion

You will wonder what i
lived and suffered for
and why the world is
glad and you alone
grieving because nothing
like us could have been
prevented.

fatisha is a Black woman born in the Year of the Dragon who writes
in New York City.



& DR. KINSEY

BY LINNEA DUE

I wake up in that soft cotton world cluttered with warm shadows. Julie snores lightly next to me, and it's a moment before I hear the rain pecking at the window pane. I turn on my side and wriggle up against her curved back. She reaches behind to stroke my thigh. "It's raining," I say. I want to share it with her. Now I can hear the wind whipping through the lemon tree.

"Mmmm..." She turns around and burrows her head between my breasts. I make a tent of the blankets with my hand so she can breathe. My chin rests snugly on her head. She slips back asleep, but I lie awake, listening to the rain, loving her.

I heard her steps on the walk in front of the house, and I had the door open before she'd rung the bell. I dealt with her coat, with her umbrella. I was nervous, wondering why I'd ever volunteered for this. "My name's Nancy," she said. I finally looked at her. She was older, maybe in her forties, and I was younger then, just twenty-one. "I want to tell you right at the beginning that I'm straight," she said. "I thought you should know. So there wouldn't be any misunderstandings."

"Oh," I said. I wasn't sure what she meant by misunderstandings. "Doesn't Kinsey hire gay interviewers?"

"We have a few gay people advising us," she said. "On this particular project on homosexuality. Only in this area." She said 'gay' like it stuck in her throat on the way up.

I nodded politely. "Would you like some wine?"

"No thanks. But go ahead. Please do. It's so much easier to conduct an interview when the subject is relaxed."

I got the wine out and poured myself a glass. She ran through some preliminaries, socio-economic class, what year college I was in, other kids in the family. It was easy. I was relieved. Then she sighed and said: "All right. Down to business. Now don't be embarrassed. I've heard absolutely everything."

"Well, I won't be very interesting, I'm afraid. I mean, I don't do anything exotic."

"All right," she said. "What do you do?"

It stopped me. I stammered a few times, and she looked impatient. "Well, I can see I'll have to help you out. Do you employ cunnilingus? That's--"

"I know what it is. Yes. Sometimes."

"How often? Every time? Every other time?"

"I don't know. Maybe, uh, I don't know. Every fourth time, say."

"Tribadism?"

"What?"

"That's rubbing your bodies together so your clitorises are stimulated."

I tried to imagine how that would work. "No," I said finally.

"Digital manipulation?"

"Yes."

"And how often do you do that?"

"All the rest of the time, I guess. When we don't go down on each other, I mean."

"You guess? Don't you know?"

"Well, sure I know. Yes, all the rest of the time."

"So your preferred mode is mutual masturbation, is that correct?"

"Mutual masturbation?"

"Yes, that's what we call it. Digital manipulation. It's called mutual masturbation."

"But why masturbation? I mean, well, I call it making love. How can you call that masturbation?"

"There's no onus put on masturbation, I assure you. You masturbate her, she masturbates you. That's all."

"She makes love to me, I make love to her," I said stubbornly. We glared at each other.

A little later, I hear her murmuring. "What is it?" I ask. My hands caress her shoulders.

"Is it still raining?"

"Umhmm."

She trails her tongue up the underside of my breast. I let out the breath I've been holding when her mouth fastens around my nipple. She sighs and I run my hands along her hips and sides. She moves with them, and I can feel warmth start inside me.

I started to feel weird being the only one drinking, so I pressed wine on her. "I'm uncomfortable," I explained.

"Oh, all right," she snapped. "Anything to make the subjects comfortable. Now let's go on. What is your favorite body type?"

"Body type?" I echoed.

"Yes, what kind of body do you like?"

"Well, I don't know. I never really thought about it."

"Oh come on. You must have an image in your mind. Everyone does."

"I don't," I insisted.

She waited, her pencil poised in the air. I finally dredged up a description of a woman I'd slept with last year. "Well, lithe," I said. "Slender, graceful, ephemeral, taller than me, long hair."

"Taller than you? I thought you told me earlier you weren't into butch-femme roles."

"I'm not."

"Well, then why taller than you? Isn't that pretty butch? Slender and taller than you?"

"No. You asked me for a body type, I gave you a body type. I can't help it if that's what I like."

"Is that what your present lover looks like?"

"No, no, as a matter of fact she doesn't. Not at all."

"Well," she said.

I draw her head up level with mine and kiss her closed eyelids. She turns her face back and forth, tilting different ways for soft kisses. She twists beside me, and her breasts draw my mouth. I kiss down to her fullness, letting my touch guide me. She's soft, but her nipples are taut warriors battling with my tongue. I worry at her with my lips and brush my teeth across her. Her breathing becomes almost strangled, and she grabs my hand, pulling it down jerkily. I follow her, part her lips, and sink into her. She moans when I touch her, and I wrap my arm around her shoulders. As she turns against me, I move up to cradle her face on my neck. She bites me gently, her breath shallow, and then she stops breathing, and she moans clear deep from her stomach. I hold her falling, and she melts mercury into my hand.

"Now," she said. "How about breasts?"

"What about breasts?" I countered.

"What kind of breasts do you like?"

"Oh come on. Body type is silly enough. How should I know what kind of breasts I like? It depends on who's wearing them." I smile, but she doesn't. She waits. "Look," I said. "I can't separate breasts as though they get good and bad ratings. It's ridiculous. I don't know what kind of breasts I like."

"You must!" she insisted. "Do you like huge, pendulous breasts that hang down to the waist? Do you like boyish breasts with tiny nipples? Or medium breasts with large nipples?" She was shouting.

"I don't know! I can't answer that question!"

And before I could believe what she was doing, she had torn open her blouse and pulled down her bra. "Well," she challenged.

"Do you like mine?"

I wasn't looking at her. I'd turned away the moment I'd seen

them, two obscene bags dangling on her chest.

"Shall I just describe my own?" Her voice was mocking.

I turned to her, and her blouse was buttoned back up.

"Just put smallish firm breasts," I answered. "With medium-sized nipples. And no, my present lover doesn't have breasts like that."

"Thank you," she said smugly.

She turns me on my back and looms over me in the dark, stroking my cheeks lightly with the back of her hand. I try to catch her fingers with my mouth, but she's too quick. She drops her mouth to one of my nipples, her hand to the other, and I lie back, gasping at the sweet sharpness of it, these tiny pecks and pinches that rocket down my body. My hands scour restlessly along her back, and I sink my head under one arm, licking at her soft skin. She hooks my leg on her foot and draws me open, vulnerable to her. The hand at my nipple traces a slow winding path over my stomach, around my hair, clenching at the muscles of my thighs. And then she touches me, and I tremble and relax, not moving at all. Each time my hips start to move I stop, wanting her to do it all, wanting to surrender myself to her. She pushes my feet further apart with her legs, and I suddenly think: God, what if I can't come, but I always think that, and right after, I know I will. I open myself up to her finger and nothing else exists, only me and her finger, and I can feel waves flowing between us as though we were part of each other, and I relax totally, knowing it's coming, knowing I'm coming. I slide over the line, and my body shakes uncontrollably, my stomach muscles dancing in mad spasms as current after current flings me head-long into a screaming flood.

"Have you ever had sexual relations with an animal?"

"No."

"Have you ever whipped anyone or been whipped by anyone?"

"No."

"Have you ever tied anyone up, or been tied up by anyone?"

"No."

"Are you sexually excited by leather or feathers?"

"No."

"Do you use dildoes?"

"No."

I tried to think of something interesting I had done. "I slept with two people once," I said.

"What did you do?"

"Well, the same old stuff, only there were two of us. Making love to one of us, I mean. You know."

She didn't answer and her pencil didn't move. "All right," she said. "This last is a fun one. You don't even have to answer it. If you could take a pill, and it would let you be straight, happily, that is, would you take the pill? First, do you want to answer?"

"Sure. No."

"No what?"

"No, I wouldn't take the pill."

She looked incredulous, and then suspicious, as though she was sure I was playing some trick on her. "I wouldn't be me if I was straight," I explained. "Would you take a pill that turned you gay?"

"Well, no! But that's a little different, now isn't it?"

"No," I said. "I don't see why it's any different at all."

She didn't answer me. She just packed up her things and left.

We lie under the blankets, curled into each other, our muscles and bodies content to stay put forever. I can't imagine a better feeling. I stroke her hair, and she kisses my shoulder gently. Her breathing changes as she falls asleep. It's warm, and my thoughts fade in and out. I stay awake a moment longer, listening to the rain streak down my window.

LINNEA DUE writes in Oakland, California.

VAGINA Sonnet

Is "vagina" suitable for use
in a sonnet? I don't suppose so.
A famous poet told me, "Vagina's ugly."
Meaning, of course, the sound of it. In poems.
Meanwhile, he inserts his penis frequently
into his verse, calling it, seriously, "My
Penis." It is short, I know, and dignified.
I mean of course the sound of it. In poems.
This whole thing is unfortunate, but petty,
like my hangup concerning English Dept. memos
headed "Mr./Mrs./Miss"--only a fishbone
in the throat of the revolution--
a waste of brains--to be concerned about
this minor issue of my cunt's good name.

JOAN LARKIN writes in Brooklyn, New York, and teaches at Brooklyn College.



SEXUAL SELF-HELP

BY KATHY HRUBY

Lesbian Love and Liberation, by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. The Yes Book of Sex Series, Multimedia Resource Center, 540 Powell St. San Francisco, California 94108. \$1.95.

Getting in Touch -- Self-Sexuality for Women, by Carolyn Smith, Toni Ayres and Maggie Rubenstein. The Yes Book of Sex Series, Multimedia Resource Center. \$1.95.

Liberating Masturbation -- A Meditation on Self Love, by Betty Dodson. Bodysex Designs, 121 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

The first two books are edited by the National Sex Forum, a church-related group. They are designed to be positive "how-to" books that are "brief, explicit, direct and factual...for use by persons in the health professions."

Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon write clearly and warmly about lesbianism, covering definitions, myths, legislation, lovemaking techniques, lifestyles, homophobia, feminism, jobs, child custody, teenage lesbians, therapy and psychological studies. They stress the diversity of lesbians and their essential normality and similarity to heterosexuals. The book is addressed mainly to straight people, and lacks discussion on lesbian culture, community, creativity, sensibility, politics. Nevertheless, it is an excellent and non-threatening pamphlet to give to parents and other straights who need to be educated.

The many photographs are way ahead of the text and are exciting to me as a lesbian. The women show their caring joy and strength with each other, with their children, and their work. While I respect the desire to portray lesbians as much more than sexual creatures, I was disappointed that there was no explicit picture of women making love in what is, after all, a sex education pamphlet.

Getting in Touch is written by a collective of women, in simple language. They affirm one by one everything it is all right to do and describe a six-point plan complete with ground rules and exercises. I found the language repetitive and condescending, and I didn't like the structure of such statements: "Practice as often as you want, but at least three times a week." I would have preferred the photographs alone--of women bathing, exploring themselves, and experiencing ecstasy. The one photograph labelling the parts of a woman's genitals is the most informative I have ever

seen. If words need to be added to this photographic essay they should be more personal, specific and creative.

Betty Dodson surely expresses the outrageous joy, vibrancy and humor which I miss in Getting in Touch. I am delighted with her presumptuousness: "I was furious. I called every woman I knew (including my mother). She was sixty-eight, living alone, a widow of several years. I started right off with, 'Mother, are you masturbating to orgasm?' ...I suggested she start immediately...Having independent orgasms can lead to wondrous changes. In my case, I radically altered my kitchen, gave away all of my furniture, shaved my head, went into business and published this book." Betty gives the best reason for masturbating I've heard: "To become responsible for our own orgasms is a basic statement about independence and establishes us as people with something worth sharing."

Betty intimately reveals her own sexual/artistic breakthroughs. The sixteen drawings of cunts in the book imaginatively "create an aesthetic for female genitals." The most exciting parts of the book are the exercises in the chapters on masturbation as meditation and bodysex workshops. I hope that women will use her suggestions to start workshops that will open sexual communication and exploration beyond the lovers' bed. Let me know if you do.

The book proves to me that language needn't be simple and boring to be accessible to all women. I gave it to women in prison who were excited and vocal about it.

Unfortunately, Betty's ignorance of lesbianism is not only offensive but a denial on her part. She continues to identify herself as heterosexual while engaging in her most creative sexual/artistic play with female "sexual buddies." I am turned off by the pricks sprouting up among the words and pictures. I suspect that Betty Dodson's restricted focus on orgasm comes from male-identification, and I sincerely hope that her next writings will be more woman-identified.

In the meantime, I sense a tremendous need for radical, cosmic, lesbian-controlled books on sexuality. Why are we not sharing our love-making celebrations more openly?

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WOMAN LOVE

DEL MARTIN AND PHYLLIS LYON

Lesbian love is womanlove--learning to know and love one's woman self, the better to know and love one's woman partner. The more aware a Lesbian is of what feels good to her own body, the better lover she is. The more in touch she is with her own woman's body, the more she will know how to bring pleasure to her woman lover.

Lesbian sexuality is the creative consciousness of womanpower and womanforce collectively expressed in womanlove. It is the holistic bringing together of womanmind, womanbody and womansoul. It is mutual inspiration, attraction, exploration, movement, sensation, rhythm and climax.

Lesbian sexuality is female sensuality blended into a collage of eyes, lips, legs, arms, hair, breasts, bellies and buttocks. It is fingers seeking, toes tensing, tongues searching, nipples blossoming, ear lobes tingling, bodies rubbing, juices flowing, backs arching, thighs questing, clitorises rising and cunts yawning.

Lesbian sexuality is womanlove--the melding of womanmind, womanbody and womansoul into tremendous womanenergy.



DEL AND PHYLLIS

by Ruth Mountaingrove

I love you
Lisa

I love you
Pat



Here you'll find a little story written by my nine-year-old daughter. Maybe you'll be able to read between the lines.

A year and a half ago I was a typical married suburban wife with five children, etc. etc. My husband took me for granted, just like the furniture, car, lawn and all his other passions. Then I met Pat, and strong feelings came to the surface of my life. We fell in love and after many trials and heartaches we came together.

Now we are a family. My husband left and does not give me any support. I'm on welfare and Pat works. Believe me it's not an easy job in fact sometimes we feel like climbing the walls.

Well anyway when Jean gave this story to Pat I felt that maybe we'll make it. What do you think?

---Lisa Boer

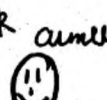
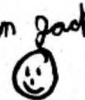
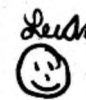
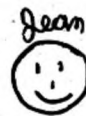
To Girls That Loved Each Other

By: Jean Boer
Illustrations: Jean Boer

Once upon a time lived a
girl named Lisa and she
had a girl friend and
her name was Pat and
this girl had five children
and their names were Jean,
Loranny, Jack, Jimmy, Steven
and she had a husband
but they broke up and
he left and the girl named
Pat lived with Pat Lisa
and they still had the
five children

and they had lots of
fun to gether and Pat
loves the girl named Lisa
and she will love
her forever and ever
and she also loves
all the children all
the same and my name
is Jean and she still
loves me just as I said
and so this is the
end

Love,
Jean



We all love
you
Still 'o' 'o'

THE LAST DANCE

by J. Walker Engle

My life edges in upon me in layers, appearing as it may have been, as I dreamed it, or as it seems to me now. I have grown since this story happened, and perhaps in growing I have learned too much. But I wanted to tell someone, and I wanted to tell Cynthia, because I loved her and our times together were the most beautiful of my childhood. This was written partly for you and partly for her, in the hope that I could tell her what I didn't have words for then.

In Cynthia's third floor room, we could hear the rain beating hard on the roof, sluicing down the gutters and splashing on the porch steps below. I sat on her bed and looked out over the greening fields to the pond and the makeshift diving board and the big black innertube moored to a pole in the middle.

"No riding today, I guess."

"We could always play in the barn," she said. "Maybe even work if you feel like it. Trigger's stall needs to be cleaned."

"Yeah," I said. "I'd rather play in the hay mow."

"So would I, but we've got school tomorrow. It doesn't matter--whatever you want."

J. WALKER ENGLE is a member of the Moxie Cooperative Community in Youngstown, Ohio and works as a printer's apprentice in a local union shop. This is her first published story.

"Let's not and say we did."

I went back to staring out the window, thinking ahead to a summer full of riding and swimming and exploring the woods--all the things Cynthia and I did together naturally. We'd pack a knapsack full of baloney sandwiches and chocolate bars, maybe find a canteen to take along and go off across the road to whoever's woods they were and build a fire and play jungle games. I'd take my new knife and she'd take her hatchet strung to her belt and we'd be like regular grownup explorers, finding caves, climbing enormous rocks, killing copperheads, discovering the skulls of decayed animals. Maybe this summer David would let me ride Star since I was bigger than last year and better able to handle her. Maybe this year he'd let me saddle her so I wouldn't fall off so easily. It was scary whenever she began to trot because my legs weren't long enough or strong enough to hold on around her belly, and I'd just bounce off thud onto the ground like a large turd. I never wanted Cynthia to know how scared I was of riding bareback--she did it all the time. This summer too, we might get to sleep overnight in the woods if our mothers would agree, but I doubted if they would on second thought.

"Hey, Cynthia," I said, turning around. "I've got an idea."

She had her head buried in a horse book, as usual--the Horseman's Handbook or something, I forget. "Just a second," she said.

"Hey! It says here you should dock a hackney's tail so he'll hold it higher when he trots." Only she said it "hackey."

"It's pronounced hackney, I said, "not hackey."

"It is not," she said. "The n is silent."

"It is not. Whoever heard of a silent n?"

"I've heard people say it--people who know about horses--and they say hackey."

"It's hackney," I said. "Look it up."

She got up and took the Webster's off the shelf and looked it up.

"It's hackney. You're right."

I smiled. I didn't know anything about horses called hackneys, but I'd heard my mother talk about hackneyed phrases and figured it must be pronounced the same.

"I've got an idea," I said again.

"Yeah, what?" Cynthia mumbled, still reading over the phonetics for a way out.

"Why don't we play hookey tomorrow and go hiking up at the pumping station?"

"You have to go home tonight."

"We could get your mother to call my mother and tell her I've decided to stay over. That way she won't have to come out to get me, and we'd have the whole day together. Do you think your mother'd mind?"

"No, I guess not, but I'll have to ask."

"That'd be fun. We could pack a lunch and spend the whole day exploring. We can go to the bus stop as usual and leave our stuff in the woods somewhere and pick it up later. We can change clothes in the woods too."

"But the leaves aren't out yet, not enough. Besides, what happens when you don't show up at home after school? You'll have to come back here with me, and they'll know we didn't go."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. It won't work. I'm sick of being indoors all the time. I wish spring would come."

"Me too. Pretty soon. We'll be able to take Trigger and Star out for long rides. They need the exercise. You can ride Trigger."

"With a saddle?"

"If you want. He doesn't like it, though, and it tires him out quicker."

"I can ride bareback, I guess," I said. "Let's go out to the barn."

"I better call Bonnie, see if she wants to come over."

"Aw, do you have to?"

"My mother won't like it if I don't."

"She's such a pain. All we ever do is fight when she's around."

"She's not that bad."

"She never wants to do anything. Just sits around and whines and slows us down. She doesn't like to explore. Anyway, you see her almost every day after school when I'm not here."

"I know. But if I don't call her and invite her over, her mother will get mad at my mother and then Mother'll get mad at me. I'll go down and call her. Come down when you're ready."

Cynthia grabbed her jacket off the chair and went downstairs. I slid off the bed and reached for my sneakers. Bonnie was a pain in the neck. She lived only a mile or so from Cynthia in a fancy house in the woods. Her parents were rich and she had lots of nice things like a three-speed bike and a basketball court all to herself. Frail and white-skinned, she never got a tan in the summer and couldn't stay out in the sun, couldn't swim as well or as long as Cynthia and I could, couldn't keep up with us on long hikes, and she scared easily. She never participated in our rough tumbles in the hay mow--her skin was too sensitive--and she never helped clean out the stalls or herd the sheep or paint fences. Whenever Cynthia and I concocted some great scheme, Bonnie would be the first to chicken out, and if Bonnie didn't want to do it, none of us could. I couldn't stand her and was intensely jealous of the fact that she lived so near Cynthia and got to ride the bus with her every day to and from school. She was an interloper, and Cynthia's tolerance of her made me mad.

I finished tying my shoe with an impatient snap, took my sweat-shirt off the bed and ran downstairs. Cynthia was sitting in the living room waiting for me.

"She can't come. Her mother wants her to stay in on account of the rain."

"Goody!" I said. "Let's go!" and we ran out the back door letting the storm door slam and made a mad dash for the barn, licking the rain from our lips as we ran.

"I itch," I said.

"Me too."

The air was still dusky and full of microscopic chaff after our tumble in the hay, and it filled our nostrils and tickled them so that we snorted like horses. The barn was filled clear to its high rafters with the dry sweet hay smell. We breathed and snorted, whinying once in a while, talking a language we longed to

appropriate. Perched high on a pile of hay bales, I sat beside Cynthia as we panted and snorted breathlessly at each other. Anywhere our skin had been exposed it was red and full of tiny scratches, and our hair was wild like blond mustangs' manes.

We were both ten and partly equine. We played horses, lived horses, dreamed horses, worshipped horses. Horses were all. Boys were nothing.

"Are you going to that stupid dance Wednesday night?" I asked when we'd gotten quiet.

"My mother's making me," Cynthia said. "Are you?"

"Yup."

My question cast a pall on our mood. Girl Scouts was always a bore, making situpons and hotpads and baking cookies. Now they were getting us ready to be grownups.

"I never danced before," I said dully. "I don't think I want to learn, either."

"Me neither. I tried dancing with Jimmy Harvey once in youth group at church. He stepped on my feet."

"Why do people do it? What's the point of walking around a floor to music hanging on to somebody? My parents waltzed once in the living room, and I thought they looked dumb. My mother wanted me to try dancing with my father."

"Mothers are funny like that. My mother's been talking about this stupid dance all week."

"It's just Girl Scouts, isn't it?" I asked. "There won't be any boys there."

"Huh uh," she said, "just girls. We're going to learn some dance. It's called to two-step or something."

"Is Bonnie going?"

"I don't think so. Her mother doesn't want to drive her."

I kept quiet about the possibility that she could go along with Cynthia, hoping it wouldn't occur to her.

"She could go with us," Cynthia said, "but I don't think she wants to anyway."

"Don't blame her," I grumbled.

Cynthia was silent then, gone away into a world beyond the barn and the thick hay smell. Her yellow hair glowed even in the dim light, its tangled fall full of haystacks ending in a confused line of pageboy curls around her collar. Every night her mother rolled the ends up in makeshift curlers made of wire covered with fabric. They were farm curlers, not at all like my sister's store-bought rollers, and they set a tight kinky little ridge into her otherwise straight hair. I didn't like it that way, and whenever I saw her in the morning before the curl loosened out, I wanted to call her Leah, her middle name, because then she looked older.

"I like the rain," she said softly, almost to herself. "I like the drumming sound it makes on the roof when I'm up here. I can't really hear it from the first floor--it's just a muffled hum, like a train going by in the valley. Up here, I'm so close I can hear every drop if I listen hard enough. Sometime we should sleep out up here, maybe when it gets warmer" and her soliloquy drifted into silence.

"That would be fun," I said quietly.

Cynthia was usually alone, even when she was with other people.

She would slide into herself imperceptibly during our long walks in the woods, just slip away even as I moved in unison beside her, and I would watch her face intently to discover where she had gone. I wanted her to be fully there with me as I was with her, but it was an invasion of her privacy, I knew, to call her back. Now as we sat on the prickly haybales, I was impatient and restless, and I sought some way to break this reverie and resume our play. I jumped up suddenly.

"Hey! Watch this!" I said, and dived headfirst into the sea of loose hay at our feet. I continued to somersault across the mow, heading straight towards the hold that plunged to the concrete floor of the stall below.

"Watch out for the hole!" I heard her muffled call from upside down somewhere, and when I found myself upright again I stopped, not a foot from disaster.

"Bet you can't do that!" I called back over my shoulder.

"Bet I can!" She was up for my challenge. She stood up and plunged into the hay, rolling and laughing as she came. The churning ball of bluejeans and blond hair and flying hay came to a sudden stop beside me. She sat up, coughing and spitting the straws from her mouth.

"See?"

I snorted a loud horse snort, and she replied.

"Let's go get some lunch," she said.

I nodded up and down vigorously, shaking my forelock and blowing a horse's assent through my throat and over my tongue.

Why are we here? I dreamed last night that you had cut your hair very short and all the curls were gone and it hung straight and yellow close around your head. We were out riding in the woods, bareback, on horses that stood ten feet off the ground. I watched you gallop ahead, your blond hair flashing in the sun, your small brown legs wrapped around Trigger's belly, your fingers buried deep in his mane. You disappeared and appeared again from behind heavy oak scrub, now in shadow, now in bright sunlight. As you galloped farther and farther from me, I saw you getting smaller, until I could barely catch glimpses of gold and brown and Trigger's white rump being overtaken by foliage. And I called out to you--Leah! Wait up! But you kept on going deeper and deeper into the woods, until I couldn't see you at all. I stopped to listen for breaking twigs or the sound of horses' hooves, but all I heard was silence and a crow screeching in a nearby tree. Leah, Leah, where did you go? Leah, wait for me! Leah! But I got no answer.

Why did they bring us here, to this rancid little firehouse? To learn to dance? I don't remember, I only remember our being there, one warm night in April.

"Choose a partner," someone said. We hesitated. "It doesn't matter who. You're all girls anyway. Pick somebody."

We were obvious, natural. The same height, the same age, friends, and as I said, partly equine. They put some music on the record player, and two of the less inhibited among our mothers proceeded to show us how it was done--the two-step. One, two, one

two, one two, easily around the floor. "When you dance with a boy," they said, "he will lead. That means he will take the steps. You follow him, follow his feet. So since you're all girls, trade off being the boy."

Giggles.

"No need to be silly about it. Just take turns leading. Only make sure you know who is doing what, so you don't end up all over each other's feet."

We approached each other awkwardly. Who hangs on where? Who's goin to be the boy? No problem--didn't people always call me a tomboy? So I put my hand on your waist and you put yours on my shoulder, and we held the spare two together at the side. There was a good foot between us at the start, and we moved like puppets across the wooden floor. One two, one two, one two, we counted under our breath, concentrate, one two, one two, one two, oops! sorry, one two, one two, one two, this is stupid. "Don't stop now," someone said. "You're just getting the knack of it. Keep going, one two, one two, one two." My hands were clammy, my muscles so tight I could hardly move, and still my hand rested on your hip, barely touching you. We giggled, exchanged murmured whinnies, and began the foolishness again. "I can think of things I'd rather be doing, even cleaning Trigger's stall," I said. "Me too," you said. One two, one two, one two one two one two one two.

By the time the first record was over, the foot between us had diminished to a few inches and we were getting around more gracefully, when someone said, "Okay, girls. Rest for a few minutes while we change the record." We quickly let go the dance hold and joined a group of girls who were giggling together in a corner of the hall. "It's so dumb," one of them way saying, "dancing with girls! When do we get to dance with boys?" Another said, "Mrs. Buch's troop invited the Boy Scouts to their first dance. Why couldn't we?" "They'd probably be chicken," someone suggested. "Hey! Did you know that Gloria is in love with Teddy Miller? She's wearing his ring!" "Wow! She's lucky!" and the conversation turned to who was in love with whom. We drifted away to plan an expedition into the woods next week.

"Okay girls! Get your same partners and let's try it again" and the music started up. We sighed a small resigned sigh and resumed our position on the floor. "You want to lead this time?" I said. "Not particularly. You do it," you replied, and I put my hand a little more squarely on your hip and decided to enjoy this ordeal if I could. So we danced--more or less--through three records and at the end of the third, collapsed into wooden chairs set along the side. "Cynthia," I said, "do you think it's funny to dance with a girl?" You looked at me, puzzled, and said "No. Why should it be?" "Well, you heard what Jonelle said. She thinks it's dumb." "No, I don't think so. I'd rather dance with you than Jimmy Harvey. He's too big and clumsy." We sat for a minute in silence. "Do you think it's funny?" you asked. "No, I'm kind of beginning to like it. It's a neat feeling." "Yeah," you said and we were silent again.

Then the voice: "Okay girls! One more record, then we'll quit." We looked at each other and groaned, and heaved ourselves up for the last round. "Now this time, try to relax more. Get into the

feeling of the music. Let it carry you around the floor. Don't even think about where you're putting your feet; that should be coming naturally to you now."

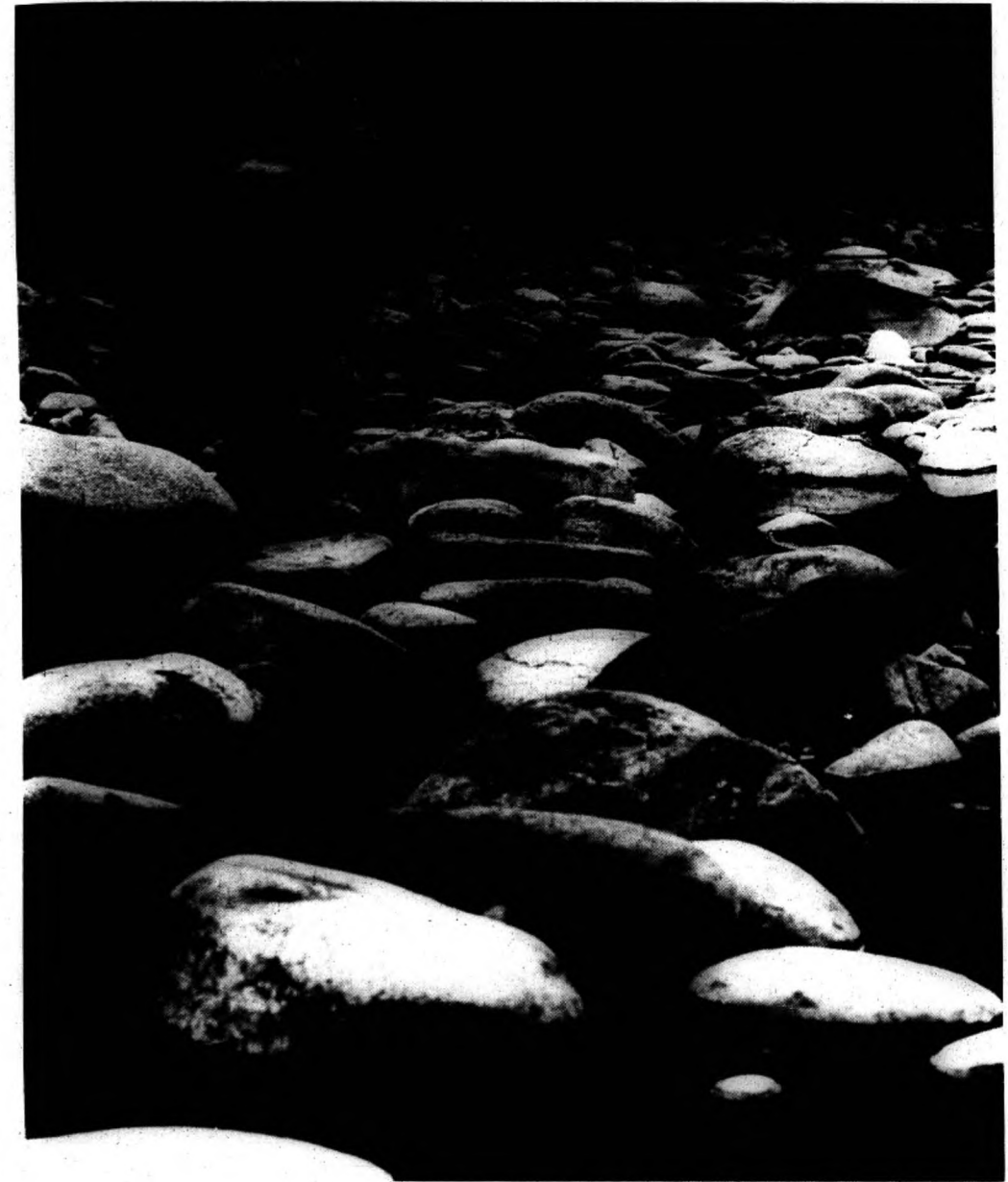
All I remember, Cynthia, of that last dance is this: We began in our usual wooden way, moving stiffly and counting one two, one two, one two across the yellow floor. We danced closer then and our bodies touched and we could not break that contact. We forgot to count, forgot to take sweeping steps around the floor, but moved quietly in small circles. The yellow lights glared down on the yellow floor, your yellow hair like sunlight in my eyes, and surrounding us both as we danced an aura of golden light, just the two of us in a world no one could enter. Your head on my shoulder and mine on yours, our bodies fitting together sharing their warmth, the two of us moving silently and slowly around the floor in a golden world of our own. The music stopped and we kept on dancing alone together around the deserted floor. Our mothers came and called to us from very far off, "Come on, girls, it's time to go home. The dance is over," and I remember the tension in their voices like the shrill note in a horse's frightened whinny. But we said, "No, we want to keep dancing," and we did, long after the music had stopped and most of the others had gone. Danced and danced in our own silent world.

Easter Sunday that year was the first full day of spring. The sun was hot and the air cool and fresh and full of earthsmells. The leaves on all but the latest trees were unfolding slowly to the light and the mountains seemed clouded in greenish smoke. Cynthia stood on the fence and whistled to Trigger who was grazing down by the pond. In no mood to be ridden, he refused to come to her call, so she climbed the fence and walked down the long pasture toward him, calling softly as she approached. "Here Trigger, here boy. C'mon fella...easy boy...c'mon." Trigger backed off casually, tearing at clumps of fresh grass and pretending not to notice her. They moved strategically around each other in the field in a tense minuet, till at last Cynthia was close enough to grab hold of the horse's halter. Then, her hand clutching his mane, she leaped on his back and they took off in a spirited gallop toward the barn.

I was home that day. We had just returned from church and I was helping my mother and sister prepare Easter dinner. Mother had promised to drive me out to Cynthia's farm later in the afternoon, and I was bursting with impatience to be off, to run in the fields, to ride through the blossoming woods. The phone rang, and my sister rushed to answer it. I paid little attention, until I realized that an enormous hush had fallen on her voice as she talked, a hush that filled the whole house. I didn't want to hear what was being said, and I retreated to wait at the top of the cellar steps until I could know what was wrong. I heard the receiver clunk quietly into its cradle and my sister's soft sobs in the kitchen. I waited. Maybe I knew. My sister came to me and in the half-light of the landing said, "Cynthia's dead. Trigger tried to rub her off on the fence. She fell under his hooves. It was an accident. He didn't mean to trample her." She sobbed. "I don't

know what to say, Jeanie. I know you loved Cynthia. I did too." And she went away.

I howled then, a long anguished cry, and sank my forehead into the doorjamb and cried softly, almost without tears.



by Carol Newhouse