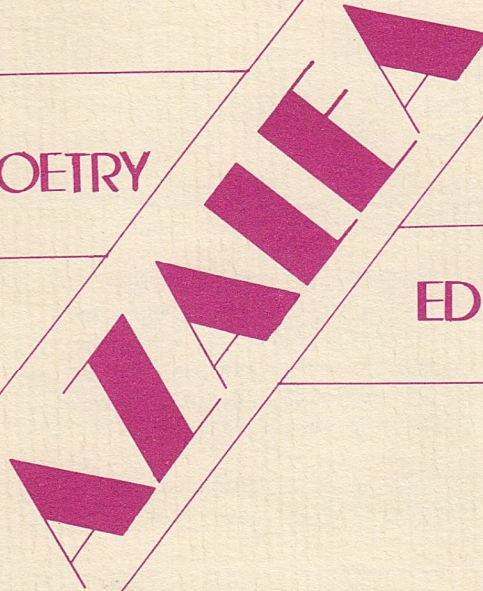


vol. 4, no. 3

1982

POETRY



EDITION

a magazine for & by
third world lesbians

\$2.00 (more if you can, less if you can't.)

This book is part of the
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We are sorry this issue is late.
We have had many problems this year.
We appreciate your support and
understanding during these times.

THE POEMS ARE DIVIDED INTO FOUR GENERAL SECTIONS:
THE FIRST, "IN THE LIFE", DEALS WITH THE THEME OF LIVING
AS LESBIANS IN THIS SOCIETY. MANY OF THE POEMS DESCRIBE
OUR OPPRESSION AND SOME ARE ALSO HUMOROUS AND
JOYOUS.

THE LOVE POEMS AND LAMENTS TAKE US THROUGH ALL
THOSE CHANGES THAT WE EXPERIENCE IN ROMANTIC PAS-
SION.

"ROOTS AND BRANCHES" CONTAIN POEMS OF TRIBUTE TO
OUR TRADITIONS AND ANCESTORS AND OUR CHILDREN.

THE LAST SECTION HAS NO TITLE BECAUSE IT DEALS WITH SO
MANY UNIVERSAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL THEMES:
FROM QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR EXISTENCE ON THIS EARTH TO
OBSERVATIONS ABOUT NATURE AND THE WORLD AROUND
US.

ALL IN ALL, THERE ARE 46 POEMS FROM 22 SISTERS. WE THANK
THEM AND WE THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT THAT KEEPS
AZALEA GOING.

from Claudette for the Azalea Collective

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IN THE LIFE

**OUTTA D RING N
INNTA D CLOSET**

*there's a fly innya soup
hair innya food
a worm comin outtya apple
look closely thru a microscope
n u cn see bacteria
jump'n up n down on yr plate.*

*there's a bug walk'n aroun yr
bilden serven eviction notices
to tenants who refuse to comply
w/d roach quota. yesterdaye u
got bagged for exhibitionism
when u decided to speak d
nekkid truth (\$60 fine n a
publik flogg'n*

*had a low time atta
high-priced disco and ya
keep tryin to fit both legs
innta 1 leg of yr pants.*

*aw cauz sumwon callt u queer
maid u feel like a loony-toon
in drag-pd yr airfare back
to the inlet of Lesbos where u
cd reign as queen of the beaubs!*

*turn yr/self in as an
enemy of d state n go!
but don't forget to
send back plenty pikchoors
so they cn turn uh profit.*

—Catherine Joseph

STILL LIFE

(for all wimmin w/deep voices)

*And the night
gathers in your throat
like a dropped coin*

*Circles slowly
across the floor,
like fingers running
through electrified hair.*

*You profile
your upturned neck
and swill down a seafood
of air—sure-footed pelican!*

*When toads croak and blow
you billow out your throat
into a choompah-choompah
of bassoon sounds
and watch geese take flight.*

*As if privy
to an intimate conversation
though I've said nothing
you chortle heartily,
take my hand and
measure the span between
each web-footed finger.*

*You for whom
the night is but
ribbed laughter, textured tonsils*

*Settle down
at my side and watch.*

—Catherine Joseph

**MY BIRTHINGS CAUSE
LITTLE COMMOTION**

to my sister

*Your husband
in his paternity
lifts his glass
in toast
to you
mother
to be
again.*

*The word barren comes to me
with the word of your
mothering
my motherhood scraped out
of me
by the news, I feel my insides
a desert, in comparison
in comparison, I doubt myself
my love making
Do you dream
of my life in comparison?*

*Jo Ann, I birth daily
I flex my thighs
and push
and push
and force the small
new body out of me.
I bleed and learn
to breathe
long and slow
to quiet the pain
the first cries of strange
territory.*

*My birthings cause
little commotion.
I go on
writing letters I make
phone calls and
coffee attend marches and
meetings talk and
read and write and
walk from room to room
spilling guts picking up pieces
of newspaper
old magazines I never
finish reading
cleaning up.*

*Sister, I am a housewife, too.
And a mother
to all that comes
from the holes
in my body. The cavities
that suck and give.*

—C. Moraga

Full Spectrum

*Sparks fly!
An emotionally filled flight in the sky—
Earth is nearby.
Feelings exchanged,
Lightning rods drained
Emotions change
into that calming stream of lesbian
friendship.
—Spectrum—*

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WOMON TO WOMON

womon to womon
we are
touching ourselves
as we
touch one another's
bodies and minds
and hearts

its so damned lonely

no one wants to know
no one wants to
understand
that toe to toe
soul to soul
we're the same
but so different

even the male-oriented
men
don't understand

i mean everything
is for them
they have crisis centers
books/parties
even more clubs are here
for the white gay
men
than us

you're my best and
only friend
in a world full of
people

womon to womon
do you see the snottiness of
the other couple
because we're Black and
poor?

we have to rely on the
money we get
and make do
with what we
can buy

and we have to live a
lot on
plenty of love

but its so damned lonely
and its so damned
unfair

we try to live our
lives the way we
see fit
we even help others
out
when we can
and for it we get
looked at side ways

but where is there
for us to go

we can't hide between
our parents legs

and where are our
friends

—Lou

*if you really want to help
me/my sisters*

*walk where we walk
don't expect us to
come to you*

*come grab our
hand an
let us
know*

*where you're coming
from*

*cause our silence is
breaking*

*where are your
ears?*

*it may be
that
not too many of
us are "out"*

*but that does
not mean that we
don't exist*

*i wish i could flow
into each and every
one of*

*you
and let my
feelings show
how can i make
you
understand
that i am trying
hard to get out of
a closet*

*but you are pushing
the door closed
on me
with your ignorance*

*such ignorance
that you think
you're doing me a
favor patronizing/
ignoring/denying my existence*

—Lou

SURVIVAL

SOCIETY WHAT ARE YOU?
WE ARE GAY
YOU SAY HERE LAYS "TWO
MISFITS"
BUT HOW WRONG YOU JUDGE
US
WITHIN OURSELVES AS WOMEN
WE RETALIATE ...
JOY ... LAUGHTER ... AND LOVE
AND LOVE
WE HURT...PAIN...SORROW...AND
TEARS
WE CARRY OUR BURDENS AWAY
FROM YOUR WORLD
THE BURDENS YOU GAVE US...
GUILT, SHAME AND MISFITS
OUR SHIELD IS OUR LIFE, OUR
LOVE AND OUR HEARTS
AS WE FILL EACH EACH WITH
FEELINGS.....
WE ABSORB THOSE NECESSITIES,
WHICH ENABLES US TO FIND
S U R V I V A L — BECAUSE WE
ARE WHAT WE ARE!

—A.J. Ross 5/80

LOVE POEMS
AND
LAMENTS

DESIRE'S LAMENT
for GH

*I want to hold you
trembling in my arms
in a rented hotel room
with the sunshine stripes
of venetian blinds
running warm
across my broad back.*

Or I want the dream of that.

*I want to kiss your mouth
and feel peppermint snow
melting on my painted cheeks
forming tear drop mirrors
in a frosted night.*

*I want an open eye,
unafraid to turn away
seeking me out
looking around some corners
looking into
my hiding places*

*I want the steady hand
that starts the sinuous rhythm
growing in my body
from a secret seed
and her solid mate
that stops my fear.*

*I want a sticky smell
a tickling hair
a laugh
a call
a knowing glance
an open path between me*

*and the stars
paved with musk oil
and sprinkled with rosewater.*

*I seek a familiar step
a low down dancer
sweeping me off my beat
an unknown melody
passed down to me
from generations
of generations.
A tongue that knows my mouth.*

*The fashions of love
that I confect
are endless variations
on the thematic development
of what I want.*

*I want you to press close against me
under cover of a sweaty, suited crowd
that can not see us
from behind their newsprint.*

*I want you in revelry
of open passion
legs around my own
so we are a tree
with strong and many roots.*

Or I want the dream of that.

—Jewelle Gomez

OUR LOVE

LADY, OUR LOVE RADIATES
THE SATISFACTION I ENGULF
WHEN OUR TWO BODIES MEET
I CRAVE A TASTE OF YOURS'
"THAT SIPLING CUP" - IT'S
TRULY A TASTE OF HONEY!

A TASTE OF HONEY

YOUR "SIPLING" GLOWS WITH RADIATION
I ENGULF SATISFACTION WHEN OUR TWO
BODIES MEET
I CRAVE A TASTE OF YOURS
IT'S TRULY A TASTE OF HONEY!

CALM

I STRETCH MY HANDS TO THEE
IN THEE I FIND PEACE
WOMAN I LOVE THEE
YOU ARE SO SOFT, YOUR EYES ARE SO WARM
YOU GIVE UNDERSTANDING, LAUGHTER,
COMPANIONSHIP AND TRUST
LOVE WHERE IS IT?
WOMAN IT'S WITH YOU

—A.J. Ross 5/80

A SPECIAL BREAKFAST

*YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE ONE
OF THOSE OLD FASHION
BISCUITS
GRANDMA USE TO BAKE ON
SUNDAY
MORNINGS.*

FRESH ...

HOT ...

MOIST ...

WAITING ...

*WAITING FOR YOUR
BUTTER TO
SLIDE AND GLIDE EVER SO
ALONG MY NOOKS AND
CRANNIES
MAKING SUNDAY BREAKFAST
SPECIAL.*

-col

**AN OPEN INVITATION
TO A MEAL**

*I am
you tell me
a piece of cake*

*I wonder about your eating habits
which make me dessert
instead of staple
a delicacy, like some chocolate mousse
teasing your taste buds, melting
in your mouth - stopping there.*

*There's nothing pretty about me
I am brown and grainy and can stick
to
the ribs
a food source that won't run out on
you
through the toughest winter.*

*Come, sit down.
Give up that sweet tooth
and we'll put it in a jar
to remind us of the polite
society that can afford
such things.*

*Right now, it's beginning to snow.
Come, sit down. The day is
getting shorter and it's beginning
to snow.*

*Yes, here.
Sit down,
here.*

HOME-MADE FABRIC

*My name falls
in fibers of sound. At first
I could not hear its composition.
As quiet as needle and thread
it cross-stitched through the
hemisphere of my inner ear. Had to
sit up straight so syllables would not
bend over and baste the ground.*

*Your name
the sound of looms
skeins of yarn simultaneously
thread their needles. My ear
accepts each embroidered syllable.*

*Our names fall out
of my ear in tweeds, in plaids,
in needlepoint to touch the hem
of this
material earth*

—Catherine Joseph

BULLETIN

I JUST HAVE FOUR WORDS FOR YOU

COME

SEE

ABOUT

ME

WOMAN MAGIC

*Magic is my woman: Turning my life
in-side-out and
right-side-up
with her love.*

*Magic is my woman: Turning my tears into
a million smiles.*

*Magic is my woman: Turning my dreams
into a reality.*

*Magic is my woman: Turning my Fantasies
into current events.*

*Magic is my woman: Turning me into gentle
beauty and it's magic*

—Ardnas Gninepoc

Awakening

*I am touched by you,
Your incredible sensitivity has allowed me to
emerge from a cold abyss of unresponsiveness
into a limitless world of feelings.
The senses in my fingers come alive when they
explore the incredible softness of your
beautiful face,
and the uniqueness of your woman's body.
I love you so much that my heart is constantly
filled with happiness
and our relationship is overflowing with love.
I'm glad that we are women who are capable of
appreciating the aspects that go into making
a woman uniquely a woman —
I guess that's why we are lesbians (smile).*

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Marlene P. Williams

Inspiration

*"She walks in beauty like the night," (Byron)
and her blackness shines brighter than any light.
The grace of a dancer accentuates her every move,
and with the temperament of a cat she needs to
be soothed and stroked to attain that heavenly
ooze of love.
Her long sensuous limbs show the strength & the
fullness of her black panther heritage.
She is the essence of the Black American/African
spawned woman with no equals.
She carries the inherited majesty & dignity of
an African queen.
She is the lesbian of my dreams.*

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Marlene Williams

MORE CONFESSIONS

- (# 3) *I don't believe in relationships EITHER
just in the fortitude of loving*
- (# 4) *I don't fear KNOWING you!
just the emptiness that creeps into my heart
when you go away.*
- (# 5) *YOUR GIFT! You are the only one I know
with whom I can be ME.
MY GRATITUDE!*
- (# 6) *SO,
It may be true
What you say
About my inability to change
The environment;
BUT,
What I can do
And would do
For us,
Is to make it easier
To live with.*
- (# 7) *I already said goodbye to you*
The day I felt your light shine on my being.
- (# 8) *I sure wish you liked poetry
Cause f you did
You could inspire me.*

TO INSPIRE YOU

*The wind tests not the strength of trees
but their wisdom to bend gently under it's caress;
The rain pours down upon the earth because
the earth would sleep forever if left alone and arid;
The sun commands the world to rise up each dawn in
tribute to life
because death
will soon enough make all our nights eternal;
I, like the moon, move your blood to flow
like the tide moves the sea ever forward.*

To My Special Lady

*During a time when the world seems
to be ending - not only in your mind
but in your soul as well
To be able to have someone
that can show you something
different and real
Is ultimately the light at the end
of the tunnel*

*Someone who you can cry to
if you haven't poured it all out yet
Someone to talk to
to love
to - by some remote possibility
love you back
It truly makes a difference*

*The noose of despair is loosened
ever
so
gently
Though not fully removed, at least you can
breathe again
The tension is eased
for the moments shared
But from sheer anxiety
from nothing sure
The tension returns
like a slap
in the face*

The twist of fate

—Rosalyn S. Lee

Hope

*All caught up - Almost all over again
Trying to escape*

or is it really that way?

*Doing things to keep others happy
While yet I feel pain
Time and mind is to blame - nothing else*

*Oh, what a stab of pain
Loneliness doth leave
To share the emptiness of a kind
with the still of silence
Yearning to sense a presence so real*

To touch and feel

But somehow an awareness of that life

Tells you - No

Don't Hope - Don't Yearn

No more pain of desire

Fearful of a full heart

*with a tiny pinhole to leak the emotions
of a time ... into space... forever*

*But yet the heart marches on ... Brave and true
Eyes well with tears ... San sight for the next time*

—Rosalyn S. Lee

BLANK MOMENTS

*I get hung up thinking about her
in a blinking of my mind's eye,
in one of those blank moments
that kind of slip up
on you
and then slip
on by.*

*I might be standing
on a street corner,
waiting
for traffic to pass
or in an
elevator
in between
the words
of a sentence.*

*I could be lying
in my bed
at night,
rolling
over to sleep, or
in a subway
when a flash-
back sends
me into
past tense.*

*But its only for a moment,
a blank moment;
It comes sudden
then its gone away.*

*Its just amazing how many
times there are like
that, in the course
of a busy day.*

—Claudette

THE AFTERMATH

*I remember
What you told me
About your family:
The cold disapproval
That surrounded your whole life.
The sideways glance of anger
That stopped you
From talking too loudly
Or moving too freely
Like the child you were
Instead of the little "lady"
That they wanted.
I can see how love and anger
Got mixed for you;
The strangeness of it
Is that your anger
Spills into physical violence.
You experienced*

*Psychological violence
But not the slaps you gave me
The arm twistings, the shoves.
I loved you
And wanted to believe
You would change,
But after five months
Of not doing it;
You beat me again.
So I'm going
To leave you
With no notes or good-byes.
You see, I still love you
And the lying promises
You will give me
Might tie me to you
Again.
Oh love, we were two women
Together;
Who would have thought
Violence came between us?*

—Michiyo Cornell

a division of one

*one slice of rye bread
is the best I can offer
slim as it is a beer pint would be
best
with it*

*it is no good to remember you
no good to say I went away to be
happy*

*there is only one moon
turning, sometimes shining
one slice of rye bread
a moon slice of butter*

*taste with no eyes at your eyes
sip with no frost on your beer*

*you will never catch me weeping
falling into my own hands
naming you*

*from some interminable distance
you will decide what you will decide*

*and you will never tell me
any more than I told you*

—Anna Maxwell

ROOTS

AND

BRANCHES

ENDURA A LUFU

*I Soko of Bundu ngoso
ngoso chant elongi sing
sing your song
fly back to before
paint a sound of tomorrow
alghaita invade the air set your pitch to call
dance us home
knead the laced entanglements from our brains*

Griots

*Mamadi Kuyate Sore
Iya Ilu mother drum ten thousand women warriors strong
where are you Nigeria
Bamileke carved ivory blare a scream to soothe my cries
No there is no price on Bendere
No there is no price on Bendere
No there is no I did not come to make a slave
my music dances
you can't buy my drum Bendere is for Naba of Tenkodogo
they stole a drum a people
Bamileke blare a scream soothe a cry
Hausa's Kalengu Wolof your Tama speak the secret
call us home
Intojane engulf me born me again from carefulness
thatch and earth Dahomey
ten thousand frenzied warrior women
Dahomey*

*Nekhbiyet goddess mist over Intojane
protect the birth
cornelian fullness swell flush pulse
thunder my coming
rain libations*

*Soko of Bundu Ngoso Chant
take us to before*

*Daughter of the moon zither rattles
flutes sing Akikuyu
chorus to me*

*Jabo Liberian before we came after they leave
when we can finally come again*

*Jabo remember me remember for me
my story ebon soul fuscia velvet of Wanyamwezi land
I am the moon*

*melt of steel
return to the thirster*

*II Saxophone drum water wetness streaming through
undulations incantation*

I learn to roll

contractrelease I'm insideinside

*mellifluous madness
soprano horn screech
cracking*

flying out

*tasting
you
mother ema ema
touch earth*

wEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

*Nappy fire gyrations
weeds*

*lavender insanity warming
overflowing womb
burgundy azure
over the barracoon wilting bars
sanding cement*

*twirl fly
bongisa*

rejoice Bongisa

III Batu ba Ndura
forest

Chawi came pika'i
yes the taste of boki is sweet
honey sun

Yes Karibu
I am welcome
ema songe

You are well come
ema ema
Kanga me bi akile
I am dancing with the Forest
ten thousand women strong

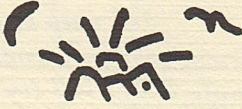
Dahomey

Ngoso chant Elongi sing

ekimi quiet kimia quiet kobia quiet
endura a lufu

the forest is talking a sound of tomorrow

Endura a lufu, a quilt, patched together from the color sounds of a people's breathings, is the result of two years reading, testing, seeing and trying to feel who and from where I am being. It's the beginning of an epic song.

Carletta Joy 

—© Carletta J. Walker 1981

AND I WONDER

*How strange, at times, to be a mother
Reflecting pride in my dear son
Wondering how he grew so quickly
He was just tiny and helpless before*

*Now he sits without my support
Crawls and hits on walls
He falls*

*He talks back to me
Chuckles and spits
He makes me wonder
And at time forget*

*How within a year
I've fallen in love
With a product of my own creation*

*As I weep at the wonder
I wonder
Why I still cry in my sleep.*

—© Copyright August, 1980 Thelma P.P. Thomas

Poems to My Daughter

*My chyld, the body of my body
the blood of my blood
you are so much a part of me
and yet you are not mine.*

*You do not belong to me
you were merely borne in me
there is a difference
you belong to the forces, perhaps,
and to yourself
I come next
I am your mother.*

*I love you
I live with you
I depend on you
and I see so much in you.*

*The truth and the beauty
that I have always sought in life
I find in you
and the growth
and the promise
I see in you
is a miracle to me.*

*I need you
you are a part of me
you are life and you are hope
but most of all you are truth
I see all things in you.*

*You are the purpose of creation
and the reason for the universe
the world belongs to you
everything is here
that you may grow
and marvel at it
as I do at you.*

*It used to be
that when life was unkind
or people unbearable to me
I would look to the stars
and wonder out loud
what I could have done
to deserve my fate.*

*Now, when I witness
the innocence in your eyes
and the sweetness
of your smile
it is sometimes more
than my body
can contain.*

*I want to reach out
and thank the stars
and never stop loving you
the way I do now.*

*I cry sometimes
and I pray
I only pray at the good times
and I thank goddess for you.*

**—Juana Maria Paz
L.A. California
Fall, 1977**

SMALL WONDERS

*We measure out each morning
Thin
Inside of coffee cups
Clutching smokey memories
And humming fragile tunes*

*We construct our lives on
Edges
Built with waves and flames and blood and burning
Move through streets, through air and underground
And wonder how.*

*The things we choose to cherish
Are the things we choose to live by
Are the fine points that define us
Are the things that make us real.*

*And we wonder at the meaning
While
We rush and pulse through hours
Holy shadows
Silent seeking
Unknown ghosts with untouched power*

*Still
We wonder every morning
How we're ever gonna make it
And that question keeps us living through each day*

*The horizon's sky stands screaming
There's danger in this moment
of movement lush and growing fuller
We wonder at the weather
Still it rains on rooted things.*

—Carroll Oliver

On drums, dance, and love: The eye of a hurricane

for Yvonne Flowers

*And now see into the eye of this
hurricane*

*We dress in beads and cowrie shells
silver and leather*

*lower east side chic: Bloomingdale's
funk*

high African queens

all of us wearing love

*Our rhythms pull a mighty machine
from still life to motion*

the miles pulsating by the hour

stroke to women dancing

We were holding

each other

each other

and hugging

each other

and loving

each other

We recognize the Goddesses

by the best we have to offer

something holy churns in this storm

it be wider than the sky

the Sisters be powerful

and they own you completely

free yourself, and dance

The spirits worked over

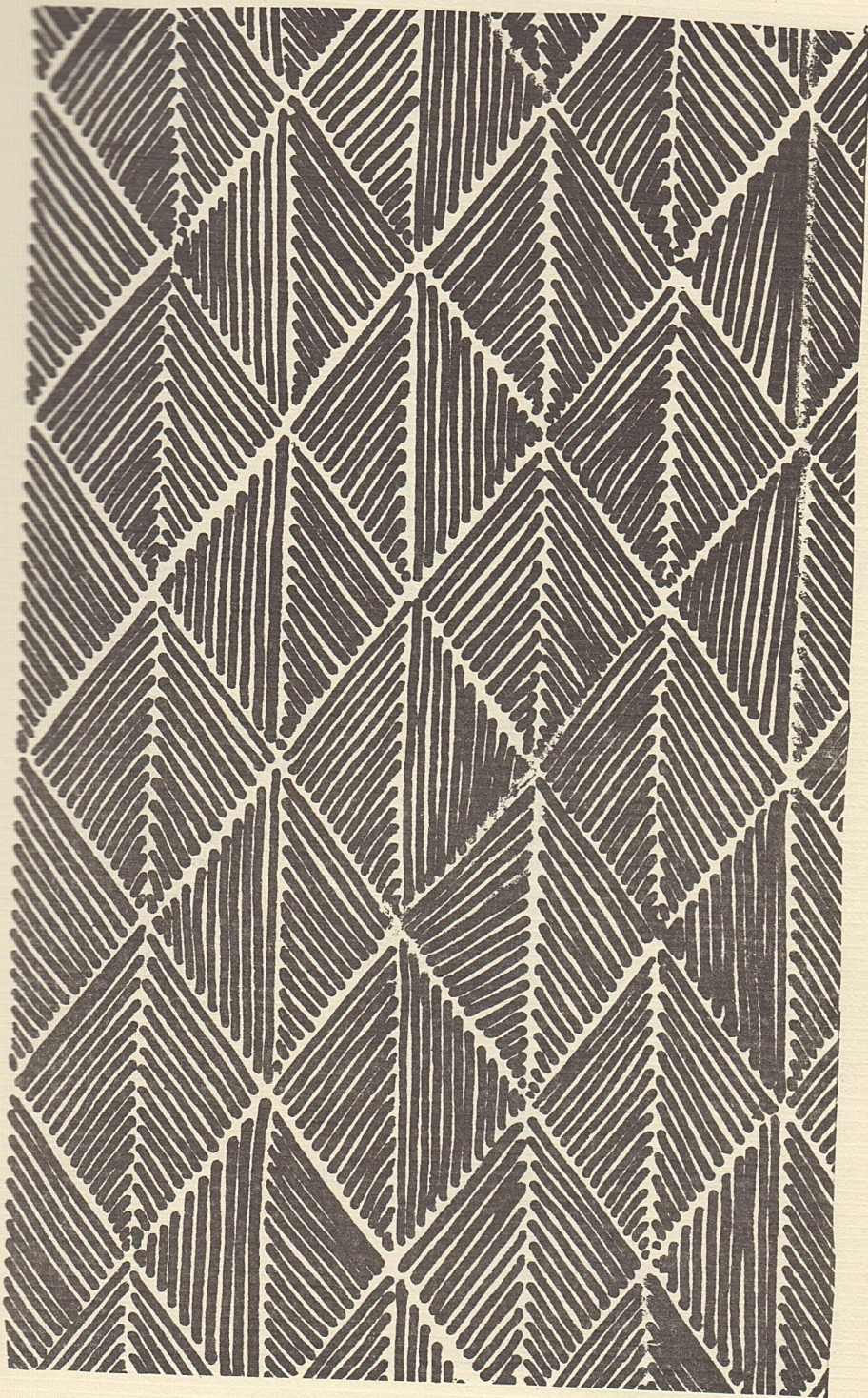
the Baptist girl from Brooklyn

Goddesses came to visit
and stayed
We are Africans
Give the drummers everything
and the dancers even more
sweat pouring becomes our river:
wear it like pride
women are the first power
Africans all
this holy rainfall rinses pure through
to joy
it scents of a woman dancing
Courage is erupting as we build
a nation
hard work coming and we be
the strong
Together we make it stand
together we bind our wounds
and ourselves
together
We be Africans
cleansed in the heat of our flesh
we have women call up our rhythms
their hands twin geniuses
We mate with each other
and breed our own strain
we dance our world into being
never breaking touch:
my hand your thigh her shoulder
her lap your head
all our hands together
the ring and cry of cowbell

*Urging the undeniable
the drum calling the time
the dance mapping the way
speaking language from our higher
selves
that translates to action later
Tonight we clean, heal, get strong,
love, connect into a woman family
this sister world of Africans
we be Africans:
a British-civilized Caribbean girl
who bares her breasts to
California dream queen dancing
all her Africa
a third degree professor howling
for the moon to fill her cup
the Puerto Rican cowgirl,
Indian dressing an ancient young
face,
the good woman, Barbados prim
and proper
and our very young ones:
nine years old and perfect
Africans, Africans all
the drum, the dance, the love
some buried world is rising
the waters swell to the curves of our
hips,
our breasts, our behinds, our faces
As we dance continents tremble
our breasts pointed, we step to our
future
we turn around and touch ground
to our mothers
We belong here*

*Our mighty force is nature
the Spirits of the Sisters keep us clean
we all come home tonight
Look well into the eye of this
hurricane
- always named for a woman -
and understand Who starts the rain
a Goddess is heaving for us
giving birth in mighty strokes
her daughters will inherit
each time the love grows stronger
the women: my friends and loves
their voices sing through me
we choose to be family
we dance it all out
we dance and let each other know
our love
we dance and the sky applauds us
we feed and carry one another
we dance
women pregnant with sisters
the first fruits planting deep
the harvest is our selves
we dance
we be Africans, Africans, Africans
we dance, earthshaking Africans
world turning, spirit burning Africans
thundering, driving Africans
Africans, Africans all:
we dance.*

—Donna Allegra



*Some women are like
Delicate rose blossoms
Too strong a touch and
Their gentle petals fall apart.*

*some women are like
The thorns that bear
The blossom on the stem
No touch diminishes their beauty.*

*And others are somewhere in between
Too strong a touch
Cannot wilt them
And yet, without life's brazen strokes
Their beauty lies hidden eternally.*

*I'll write no more love poems
no sorrowful love songs
shall I sing.*

*I'll write of what the world
is doing and what to it
I can bring.*

*I must give this world more
than a broken heart and
an uneven score.*

*There must be something
more to this world
I can bring*

*Other than crazy love poems
and out of tune songs
to sing.*

IN PROCESS

*Not choice, necessity
You sit & sit & sit
Just, sometimes, to have whiteness
revile your faith
You sit & sit & sit
& mourn your impreciseness
& wonder what, precisely, you
have imprecisely said*

*Not blessing, curse
You sit & sit & sit
Because nothing means anything if
you cannot sit
Successfully
& sometimes you cry
& sometimes rage
& throw things round the room*

*Not glamorous, tortuous
Not mysterious, clamorous
You sit & sit & sit
& beg: PLEASE! PLEASE!
PLEASE!, can I, PLEASE, be
Someone else?
& sometimes laugh at your
foolishness*

PRAAYER

*I bleed my words
& pray your heart not full
too much to receive
each word
a drop
I bleed*

*my finger
this pencil
this page - red stained*

*I pray your heart be receptacle
find meaning
replenish me
& sleep be less death-like
& sleep be empowering*

THE WEEPER

*Sometimes in the night
When the world's sound asleep
I sit at my desk
And sometimes, I weep
I cry for the children
Who are lost or alone
I cry for the elderly
Who have no one to phone.
I weep for the women
Who are bruised and battered
I weep for the women
Who are forlorned and tattered
I cry for this world
That's adrift and at sea
Hoping that someone
Is crying for me.*

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Anne Roberts-Calamease

DOESN'T ANYONE LISTEN TO THE WORDS ANYMORE

as i sat and listened
to a tape
i really hadn't been
into before
i thought about
how little people cared
about what was
being
sung
into their
ears

curtis mayfield
had the audience
practically eating
from his
hand

and each time a
song of his
ended on the
tape
the audience
clapped/whistled/stomped
in
appreciation
of his music making
their feet feel
good

i could just
picture him
narrowing his
eyes
wiping the sweat
from his face
and scrutinizing his
audience

he was thinking
if they realized
or understood
the meaning of
what he said
did they get the
point

were they the ones
saying and not doing
anything

the ones that would
be the last to fight
for freedom
but the first to cash in
on others' work

not that much could
be done

like when james brown
said:
"don't raise your hand if
you don't mean it
don't do it"

they just danced
stomped
clapped

until it got a little
old
for them
and they forgot it

still raising their
hands
clenching their fist
brother sisters change
or twist

have the words
finally lost their
meaning
people stopped
clapping
dancing and snapping
open your
eyes ears nose
and head
and let the words
in.

—Lou

Bandolero

*not in every century is a voice
of the populace great and in
a single throat—
not in every shot of bourbon
either*

***Stealing Dried Stalks from the
Widower's Crop***

*The corn leans in the field
well into december this year.
Nobody comes to buy the land what with
costs out of reach and the farm spoiling.
Nearby, a scuttling in the dried shucks
alarms me,
the corn all around me windless
and high.*

—Anna Maxwell

BORED BEFORE AND BETWEEN

*Waiting for a second opinion
Was boring
Even though I had no choice
I chose NOT to choose*

*The beginning is nothing more than new
Novelties never fail to bore me
Recalling the foolish records of my past
Is a waste of my precious time*

*Before getting better
I'll die unchanged
The price of subtraction
Is the minus in my remainder*

*Subtlety is awkward here
So let me tell you to your face
You bore me with your tears
They're contemptible—incomplete.....*

*The time remaining us is too temporary
That I can hardly wait to leave you
So that I may begin the boredom of the in-between.*

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WHO AM I

*Who am I?
I am the unrealized idea
of a time yet unborn.
I struggle with a dream
to make it my reality
while trying to hold
on to my sanity*

Like a River

*Like a river I am
Cold and Beautiful
Deep and Moving
While forever Changing
I look and seem the same*

—by Ardnas Gninepoc

TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

*Capricorn, wild impetuous thing that
you are
How cleverly you conceal your
crimson spirit.
The world thinks you are the salt of
the earth;
I know you are more like the salt in
the wound.*

*Capricorn, brazen hussy in a nun's
habit,
How callously you defend the right of
the strong to rule.
Even the fire, water and air signs
deflect to the
Queen of the Earth.*

*Goatish Capricorn, sure of foot, you
undertake the perilous
sojourn. Despite my condemnation, I
too am awed by your
strength and your spirit. You are the
eye of the hurricane,
but also the wind and the rain that
surrounds the calm.*

—Athena

*Time, too, is a body of water
it moves, flows
and ripples
slowly -
quickly -
continuously -
scarcely beginning
or ending*

TO IVY

*floating
soaring
drifting
a snowflake
through space
melting*

*Hopes and dreams
gather like clouds
... be swept away*

— © Copyright 1980
donna donato

Yesterday, I sat in my car, parked by the little Post Office in the community where I live. I opened a package so kindly forwarded to me by *AZALEA*. It was from a woman in Oklahoma, named Flying Clouds. She sent me a gift because she liked something I wrote, once. I cried. She made me very happy. And I thank her.

HAPPY RAINS

*Yo! Flying Clouds,
Cousin, You touched Me.
Inflated My spirit and brought Me back,
Softly, with Peace.*

*Nights, I have lain awake,
My Heart filled with Words,
My brain in Utter chaos;
Looking,
Seeking a voice of Transformation,
Praying for a Vision of Awakening:
A Spark of Comraderie.*

*And now, from across the Great Span
Out of a Terrain I have never seen,
You raise Your Hand to Me.
Your scarred Fingertips caress Mine
And we heal Ourselves in Our Ancient Blood.
Lightening Flashes.*

*Forgotten, the Days
The Morning Sun born no shine,
The Water Songs, Lost in the Fog.
Such Sadness in Separation;
No Home to call
Our Home.*

*All this moves into Yesterday.
Eagles hover about Our Heads.
In this Time, among All the Others,
We are here; You and Me.
We remember and We Breathe
Phoenix Fire.*

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.... Letters To Azalea

Renee, Jamaica, NY.

"... I am submitting the enclosed two poems, "In Process" and "Prayer"
... Of late, I've been obsessed/possessed/oppresed by the tyrannical element involved in writing as a craft. These particular two works were selected in the belief that they would amply expose the full energetic circle involved in the creation process.

..."In Process" reveals the less awful side of the creation process, the un-mastery of self that one must submit to in order to arrive at the "mastered work" and then, sometimes even after that completion, the nagging questions: what does this mean, or how, ever, will any of this matter? "Prayer", on the other hand, clings to the belief that it does matter and is light, mostly, to the supplication entreaty that any writer invariably makes for understanding; the fulfillment of which, somehow, in some measure, assuages the anguish incurred, and which, inexplicably, completes and validates the process ..."

R.S.L., Bronx, NY

"... your literature is very enlightening to those of us who find it difficult to express ourselves in this patriarchal society.

By reading expressions of other lesbians, like myself, an awareness of self becomes prevalent. I felt prompted to contribute some thoughts from a time when my special lady brought me to see the light of my life, my lesbian life

....please continue to inspire and awaken the minds of those that are reaching for the uniqueness which AZALEA offers to lesbians."

A.R., NY, NY

".... The Spring/Summer issue was splendid, as usual. The writers have many interesting viewpoints. I especially liked 'Foundations' because it stirred my own thoughts about politics and culture.

'Invisible Among The Invisible' was an interesting piece in relation to Black lesbians. We are Black people - white society tries everyday to make us appear invisible; we love women - and many Black men and women wish we would disappear. Both sectors, I feel at times, wish we would just disappear. It gets depressing."

S.S., London, England

".... I am a Third World lesbian sister from India, who has been living in England for the past 7 years In London we have only just begun to meet together since May/June this year, and ours is the first and only group of Black lesbians (by this we mean women of colour) in this country. So I am energised and excited about all of you"

lesbian lyrics. by michiyo cornell
76 George St. Burlington, Vt. 05401
write for price and other information

reviewed by lindajean brown

On August 4, 1981, I received a postcard from Michiyo Cornell, announcing the self-publication of her first book of poems, *lesbian lyrics*... 'hey linda, my book is out!' The first line leaped from the card at me.

I knew her joy. Remember, still, how I felt when mine was first out. How I still feel everytime I - or an increasing number of sister-writers - do the thing once again. Publish our own work.

It's a process, you see. It speaks of self-definition and direction. O yes. But it also speaks to respect for our own work as Third World lesbian writers. I, for one, am big on that.

Michiyo's book, then, is a celebration for me, too.

This book of poems is 22 pages long. I thought - wondered whether Michiyo Cornell subscribes to the numerological theory that 22 is a special number: One that you should compute no farther. One that gives psychic direction.

The front cover - soft, goldenrod - has her picture. Real nice to see her face, with its smile - and her great knitted hat.

The first page tells you a first bit of who is the woman, Michiyo ...

"Legend has it that the Sun Goddess dipped her spear into the ocean and that where She touched, land appeared: Nihon or as it came to be known, Japan: Land of the Rising Sun. The dialectic of Japanese and American history produced me: a Lesbian Poet, victim and survivor of America's most vicious sickness which is racism."

And then, the journey.

The poems are mostly page-long. They are direct and personal enough to let you know the woman will, indeed, speak her mind. What I like about a writer, is when she calls up her own life to tell me something. 'Cause I figure if you don't *know* what you're talking about - or *where* you're speaking from - then you really haven't anything to say.

Michiyo's words are power-filled. She chooses them well. She presents herself to you without apology. She tells you without being nice or using shock-value or sugar to lure you to her side. She has a strong sense of, what some may call, feminism -but, what I would go further and call survival. Also, I

like the book alot because she is not afraid to name herself - lesbian. And I don't have to wonder should I call her sister. 'Cause, see, I like reading and talking to womyn who know my joy, my pain, (even if our *specific* incidents are different; but we be united under the same banner of dark lesbian womyn. It's a connection I feel we'd all better make, soon enough).

I like:

"Mother" - how it speaks of reasons, beginnings.

"...A teenage girl asked me
Why I became a Lesbian;
I said I fell in love
With a woman
And that woman
Is myself, mother, mostly myself."

"Poetry Class UMass/Amherst" - tells about writing, womyn writing, institutions, trying not to be stopped.

"i frighten myself
with my words.
if i speak too plainly,
too clearly,
i know i open myself
to death
and the bleeding
of my heart..."

"Vow" talks with a discovered anger at the realization that one is a victim of racism. The ending offers an ominous promise, a prophecy. It is the extreme of what symbolically happens if racism is not dealt with within our communities of womyn...

" . . . my rage and grief
will know no end..."

"For Brothers of Color" - deals quite effectively with the question: 'to brother or not'...

" Don't start that rap:
' You too beautiful
To be a Lesbian'
'Cas I is one."

"Mayumi Sue" is for Michiyo's daughter - but for our universal daughters; ourselves; each other. The poignancy touched me in a special place. It opened some doors. It shows another side of the woman - giving us a whole picture.

Tender. One of something I wished there was more of in this collection. At the risk of being wholly corny, I just have to say - it is so pretty a piece. I'm a softy for sweetness. I wish there were more quiet, calmer things in the book.

Another sweet one, "No Wildfire" - is a love poem. It's to a specific woman as well as being a primer lesson to all womyn of color.

"Untitled" asks the questions (and gives answers to them, too) all lesbians probably ask when we see a woman who has gone back to the 'other side'...

" . . . today i found i could
control only myself
(sometimes that is doubtful);
today a former lover
told me
she slept with a man."

The four ending poems deal with the connections - any way you hook them up - surrounding pornography, rapists, rape, abortion. How they interchange: Change places in line. You can actually start or stop at any one. You can, actually, make up the list in any order. These four poems are almost too personal to tell. Even to other womyn. She is a brave woman who speaks of these things openly.

In content and sight - a beautiful, important book.

Thanks, Michiyo. Really, sister ... Thanks. □

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25 Years of Malcontent by Stephanie Byrd

Good Gay Poets

P.O. Box 277/Astor Station/Boston, MA 02123

A Distant Footstep On The Plain by Stephanie Byrd

Boogooloo Productions

P.O. Box 1009/Back Bay Annex/Boston, MA 02117

reviewed by Berni Smith

Stephanie Byrd's poetry sends forth strong feelings and strong images. Her words cut deep. Anger, rage and passion are the themes in many of her poems. In her two books, 25 Years of Malcontent and A Distant Footstep On The Plain, she speaks about racial violence and hatred, sisterhood and love. In the poem, "I'm Not," I can feel the rumblings of a not-so-distant volcano:

*"... jesus has not kept me near the cross
nor have i found salvation
pretty is a fallen child
spattered in its driveway
it makes me
not leftist defenseless feminist
it makes me murderous with passion
and rage."*

Her poem "R C Cola," travels at 85 mph and crashes on impact. It presents a situation that when imagined, tenses the body, starts adrenalin flowing:

*"... the only vision I ever had
was a car full of white boys
bearing down on me ..."*

Stephanie's poetry is personal, intense and sometimes cryptic. I can identify with her anger, as a black lesbian woman. I, too, have seen the ugly teeth of prejudice bite and rip into the flesh of dark people, leaving scars beneath the skin.

What I liked most about Stephanie's poetry is her honesty and courage. Her writing touches varied areas of her life and gives us pieces of who she is. Many different colored pieces, not unlike a kalaidoscope. In her poem, "Quarter of a Century," Stephanie shares with us, her search for a name:

*"...
What would you call me
Black woman
Who has sought naming
in strange women's breasts
and between their legs
What is it that you call me
who pays homage to heathen gods
and decorates the family tree
with nightmares
Is there no naming for this child of soil
Who stands before you now ..."*

I read Stephanie Byrd's two books, (containing 61 poems) thoughtful, slowly and was glad to have read them. □

