New Writings By Women,
For Women, About Women

CONDITIONS:

15

CONDITIONS:

15

CONDITIONS:

15

a feminist magazine of writing by women
with an emphasis on writing by lesbians

conditions:fifteen was supported in part by funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

conditions is listed in the Gay Yellow Pages, McGregor Subscription Service, Fiction Writer's Market.
Editing: Cheryl Clarke, Melinda Goodman, Dorothy Randall Gray, Pam A. Parker and Mariana Romo-Carmona.
Desktop Publishing: Beth Haskell.
Mechanicals: Jane Sharples.
Graphic Design and Layout: Dorothy Randall Gray.
Cover Design and Artwork: Eve Sandler.

Special thanks to: Jan Boney, Candace Hogan, Jasmine Ketcham, Liz Walber and The Trust for Public Land.
ISSN 014-8311.

"Crossing the High Country" previously appeared in *Kaleidoscope*, reprinted by permission of the author. "April in Berlin" previously appeared in *Big Red Rag*, reprinted by permission of the author.

conditions was founded in 1976 by Elly Bulkin, Jan Clausen, Irena Klepfisz and Rima Shore.

To People with AIDS,
their lovers, friends
and families

Introduction

The ***conditions*** collective dedicates its fifteenth issue to People with AIDS, their lovers, friends and families. The experiences of death, illness and healing are depicted in many of the pieces here. The heroic, loving response the gay and lesbian community has developed to the epidemic is also reflected in this volume. This response is, we feel, an outgrowth of our community's sensitivity to other oppressions.

In this issue the collective has continued with our project of publishing women writers of many national and ethnic backgrounds. England, Germany and France are the current homes of Jackie Kay, Dagmar Schultz, Marguerite Le Clézio and Jocelyne François. Writers transplanted to the US from Chile, Ecuador and Hungary appear, as well as Native American, Asian-American, Jewish, Black, Indian-American, disabled and working class authors. We are pleased with this variety and intend to seek out such writers for upcoming issues.

With ***conditions:fifteen*** we converted to desktop publishing. We used Satellite Software's WordPerfect for text processing, Xerox's Ventura Publisher with Bitstream Fontware's Souvenir typeface for page composition. Beth Haskell, PC whiz at the Trust for Public Land, devised the formats to recreate Dorothy Randall Gray's book design. We thank Beth, without whose skill and dedication this conversion would have been, in all likelihood, impossible.

During the last year we bid farewell to Annette Peláez, who not only resigned from the collective, but moved to New Mexico. We'll miss her. Joining us this year are Mariana Romo-Carmona and Melinda Goodman. They bring welcome skills and strong spirits. We hope they'll be with us for a long time.

THE QUILT
Pam A. Parker

I saw my beloved walking among the monuments
his shadow preceding him over the ground
I saw his gravestone lying flat among so many others
outlined in silk, painted on canvas, sequined, laméed
no other could see him, no one else
could feel his soul's breeze kiss my ear, my heart
standing among many mourners, I alone knew his presence
cried for him alone, among the multitude crying
felt the kiss, arms and skin wanting the absent beloved body
over the markers our flag of love signs us
still loving, still beloved, still one

FOR THOSE OF US WHO KNOW WE'RE DYING

Sonny Wainwright

I
Having grown up during World War II
with air-raid practice death drills
and shortage of butter meat sugar and
sometimes sparse shelves at our Allerton Avenue
corner grocery store in the Bronx I
kept my converted broom closet filled with canned goods
stacked against catastrophe snow storms or
hurricanes other natural disasters
long past the time when the unthinkable became reality.

Nuclear warfare wiped out the need for hoarding but
it took a long time for all that
to sink in a long time to realize that if
Food City across the street
from my upper west side rent-controlled apartment
could not reopen in a few days
I wouldn't have to worry
just wouldn't be anymore and
neither would anyone else...

What is important to me now is different.
I buy lots of my favorite musk perfume
and extra pints of "Half-and-Half"
(*not Ultra-Pasteurized*
by light that radiates the food) and I
treat myself to dinners out and admire friends'
wine cellars in the Hamptons refraining from the alcohol
forbidden by my treatment admiring without envy
what I cannot have but NOT
running out of luxury is
priority these days.

II
In the natural order
mother dies first preparing
child/mother dies first
the natural order destroyed
is unacceptable as

the thought of a finger
pressing the button that would
trigger unrelenting winter.

Mourning when it lasts too long
is for ourselves not for the other
those of us who know we're dying
want to say goodbye to daughters
stay longer than we need
to say goodbye.

This Naches we want
existing just a little longer
for vicarious and various pleasures.
Just some good time in a day
in a week or a month
is enough to keep us alive.

What is important to me now is different.
I try to do what makes me happiest but
sometime can really do it all the time.
I adjust to changes in the landscape of my body
in the landscape of my city and my country

It isn't easy to wake up in the morning
with Reagan's muddy landslide weighing heavily
on my life the landscape of my body heavy
with poisons fighting for my life.
Not living till the next election
forces most basic acknowledgments now:
I AM A LESBIAN. I AM A FEMINIST. I
am a WOMAN who hoped the world would say it all
but it won't. Not for the next fifty years
or more. Labeling who I am is still priority.

I adjust to changes in the landscape of my body
the landscape of my city where
the years of summers and winters there
used to be an ice-cream joint
on the one jammed between the corner bank
on Seventy-Second Street where Amsterdam begins
and a tiny shoe store on the other side of it.

Some changes in the landscape of my body
in the landscape of my city
make me angry but accepting them
is hard for example
that ice-cream store now says
PIZZERIA an unacceptable taste
of cheese sour instead of sweet-cream
if ever I stopped to buy a slice.
I don't. I fight some changes long after tilting at windmills
has gone out of style.

IV
Changes in the landscape of my body
make me angry but accepting them
is vital for example
the way the chemo makes me feel a
stranger to my body.

I fight to keep strong but I cannot fight the chemo.
Some side effects like changes
in the landscape of this aging body
are absorbed so I can stay alive
loving still loving myself.
The side effects of added weight
and weakness the pain of shingles
down my leg invasions now
absorbed so I can stay alive
the weird irony of a body poisoned
to remain alive must be admitted
as we are witness to the dangers perpetrated
on our earth fighting back
as best we can.

V
What is important to me now is not rushing
feeling I have all the time in the world
because I don't and neither does this world.
I mean it's hard to live as if each day might be my last
too much like cloistered nuns praying
praying earthly lives away for guarantees
of the Hereafter.
What is important to me now is the NOW like an awareness
a small detail in the moment

The neighborhood garden
on Ninetieth Street and Columbus
soon to disappear raked under by another high-rise
high-cost high-worthless too tall building
shutting out the light
but while still there in the lush of late August
the vines climbed high and the green was emerald.
An old man tended his potted plants along the fence.
Inside his plot more treasure grew from city earth
that once was forest.
A notice in my building said to beg
a city mother for this precious space.
Mother Carole Bellamy will you be kinder to us than
the city fathers?

VI
Hard to believe I won't be here
to see all changes but my father
when I came crying
at the age of six hit by a first awareness
of mortality put me on his knee and hugged me close.
Asked me if I worried about what happened BEFORE
I was born.
Of course not I said
NARELE he said foolish little one so why should you worry
about what happens
after you are gone?

He helped me to accept a finite life
but the greatest irony is
knowing death will come someday
maybe soon
I *still* do not believe in it!

I know I was born have lived and am approaching
my end of life because I have Cancer.
Though it might have been a very long life
death eventually would descend: it claims us one and all
but none of us can live in death
our lives inside go on forever.

Though I shall die only once my thoughts
keep slipping from control

like a car skidding on ice. The surprises
Indira Ghandi Richard Burton Margaret Mead
the death of the Beatles before John was killed
on the sidewalk of my city's Dakota
Marilyn Monroe the Kennedys and
President Franklin Delano Roosevelt
in 1945 who first taught me the meaning of
mourning as his wife gave me the gift
of love.

When my father died so young in 1963
I consoled myself with affirmations:
He accomplished a lifetime goal
having his own business in the garment center but
my mother says it killed him.

As his daughter I know that what we suffer
in life the changes we absorb help keep us alive.
His heart could not absorb the stress. He died.
My mother's heart may have to support the unthinkable:
survival of her daughter's death.
I try to console her while I can.
Try to help my daughter
who writes poems in the shape of cancer cells
trying to understand my illness and my dying.
I vow to understand this child
I love so much hope she'll be strong enough
to live her separate life.

VII
Those of us who know we're dying
have a great appreciation for the past
and high tolerance of the future.
Those of us who know we're dying
put small mean grudges aside
put priorities into shape in separate orders.
Those of us who know we're dying
stay fiercely in love with life.

Naches: joy (Yiddish)
Narele: little fool (Yiddish)

SELF-PORTRAIT OF FRIDA KAHLO WITHOUT A MOUSTACHE

Ruthann Robson

I am land: Mexico. My leg
withered from polio dangles from my hip
like my country hangs off the continent.
My body is an unnatural disaster. My flesh
has been severed, sucked, impaled and pierced
by machines, doctors and men. Sometimes
my narrow back collapses as I paint. Sometimes
I wish I were like my husband, Diego
Rivera, as fat and as famous as America.
I adore him almost as much as I cherish
being unfaithful. I love making love
with women as elegant as Nicaragua, as
mysterious as France, as exciting as Nigeria.
Everyone I've ever embraced has been a substitute
for myself.

I am mortal: a woman. My eyebrows
grow together like broken wings. I dress
like a princess from the isthmus of Tehuantepec.
Rings circle every one of my fingers and a hand
shaped earring from Picasso bounces against my neck.
I eat sweet candy skeletons and have abortions
because my imagination is more elastic
than my abdomen. I like to make love
with huge wet leaves and drink *pulque*.
I receive close instructions from plaster
body casts which I decorate. I learn pure pain
is neither romantic nor endearing, though
my deliberate strokes can turn it tangible.
I spend the long silences of agony giving birth
to myself.

I am art: a creator. My palette
pulses like an Aztec heart torn from a still
twitching maiden. Sitting in an insanely
yellow chair, I don a huge man's suit and crop
my hair. I paint the words of a sad song over
this scene, on a small metal sheet: a *retablo*

without a saint. I keep pet monkeys, those Mayan
symbols of promiscuity. I tie them to me
with ribbons red as healthy veins. Our faces
wear the same expressions. I suckle from my
nurse's breast, her face a mask. I render my throat
laced with thorns, my self as doubled, my
third eye swollen with death or my husband.
Every self-portrait I've ever done has been
someone else.

Tehuantepec: in southwestern Mexico
pulque: drink made from the agave plant
retablo: religious picture of a saint

GABRIELA
Mariana Romo-Carmona

That amazing summer of my fifteenth year shines like the very sun in my memory, yet it is a hidden episode that would send my friends reeling if they knew.

During that time, my father's small hardware store in the commercial district of Concepción was in financial crisis. My mother, who taught grammar at the Liceo #6, was planning to work with him over the summer to recover the deficit in the family business.

"We can't leave the girl alone," Mamá said at tea time. In our small Colonial house situated in the old part of Concepión, the afternoon sun filtered through the street fence, and the flies buzzed and stuck to the lace curtain, now somewhat yellowed with age.

"Have her come to work at the store with us," said Papá, stirring his tea. "She should make herself useful, that girl." Papá was convinced that making oneself useful was the solution to everything. Mamá guided the plate with toast toward him.

"The city just isn't a place for a young lady in the summer," she said observing the windows. "All the trade school boys will stick to her like flies. We'd better send her to the country."

"Isn't there any marmalade left?" I asked in hope of being included.

I arrived in the country wearing a flowered sundress, sandals, and white knee socks, my hair in a ponytail tied with a white ribbon. I looked just as lost there as the folks who arrive from San Fernando to sell flowers in Santiago. My aunts thought it was wonderful to have their well-behaved niece staying with them for the summer. The three of them hugged and kissed me until I thought I would suffocate. My arrival, meanwhile, had not gone unnoticed by the other farmers. They had gathered by the gate to greet me. Compared to my pale city complexion, theirs looked tan and healthy. My younger aunts, Hortensia and Violeta, introduced me while tía El-

vira went back into the house.

Among the people who shared the land, women and young girls, and some men, there was a boy in a white shirt, dark, wearing a large chupaya that shadowed his eyes. He stared at me, seemingly amused, and hid behind his family.

The summers Mamá and I had spent with my three maiden aunts were a childhood pleasure well-remembered. The house was light and smelled fresh, painted white, without curtains or tapestries, or embroidered doilies.

On the wall hung one or two of tía Elvira's water-colors and bunches of dried herbs tied with bright ribbon. Tía Elvira was the only one who read and did so assiduously. Hortensia and Violeta preferred to make pine wood furniture in their shop behind the house. The two of them were excellent carpenters, and all three subsisted in winter from the sale of Hortensia and Violeta's finely crafted pieces.

I ran to my little room next to the shop where they had placed flowers in a Coca-Cola bottle and a pine frame mirror on the night stand. I yanked the white ribbon from my hair and sat on the bed pulling off my sandals and knee socks. I felt better that way. I was anxious to go out in the sun, to run through the wheat field stirring up the little yellow butterflies. Besides, it was also important to show that I wasn't just any stuck-up kid from the city.

Outside, the country offered me the delights I remembered. I would go to the river or wander around in the fields, happily smiling at the sun. I gathered tiny forget-me-nots and daisies, and placed them in a vase on the kitchen table. My aunts worked in the vegetable gardens and the other people attended to their work in their fields. Sometimes they would ask for help, but it was only to entertain me. Mostly, they let me do whatever I wished.

After three or four days I was getting some color in my cheeks and on my arms. Freckles appeared on my nose as usual. One morning, I got up as soon as I awoke and went to the shop while braiding my hair, because I had heard voices. The boy with the chupaya was there, talking with tía Violeta!

"There you are, niece," she said. "Go with Gabriel and get fresh eggs." So saying, tía Violeta handed me a basket and ushered us outside. The boy looked at me out of the corner of his eye, and taking my hand, he ran with me toward the chicken coops. Through feathers flying and sonorous cackling, I looked at him suspiciously. I didn't find boys very amusing. Realizing I was watching him, he smiled and said: "What happened? Did your stockings get dirty?" He laughed, and I was surprised at how clear his laughter seemed. The poor hens were furious with my clumsy movements; it was no easy task to scoop the eggs out of their nests without disturbing them.

In the kitchen, my three aunts had breakfast well under way and I gave the basket to tía Hortensia.

"Sit down, girls," she said, and I turned with a gasp to look at Gabriel who had taken off the chupaya.

The shiny black hair, very short and straight like a boy's, was undoubtedly that of a fifteen-year-old girl. *Gabriela, then it's Gabriela,* I thought, blushing to the tips of my fingernails while Gabriela, smiling, watched me, her teeth white as pearls, and deep set black eyes shaded by long, straight lashes.

I don't know if anyone noticed, but I was sure that *there was steam coming out of my ears, I felt so feverish. Gabriela chatted amiably with my aunts,* shaking her shiny hair from time to time, looking at me with a smile that literally made my knees tremble. Although I barely touched the food, I felt as if I had eaten an ox. The only thing I could think about was running outside again, holding Gabriela's hand. After breakfast, she had to go work with her family. I went to the river and lay on the grass. *Through the bayberry bushes blooming like suns in* the wind, I could see the figure of Gabriela bending over in the field. Once, she pushed her hat back and wiped her forehead with her sleeve. Not knowing why, I was overtaken by an irrepressible sadness and cried in silence, listening to the water splashing against the rocks, and the whisper of the willows in the summer breeze.

"Tía, tía! I need a chupaya!" I said as I went run-

ning into the shop to see tía Violeta and almost slipped on the sawdust that covered the floor.

"Careful, you'll get a sliver in your foot, Tina," warned my aunt while she sawed off a board.

"I won't, tía, because I almost have callouses now, like Gabriela," I began.

"Oh, well. If it's callouses you want..." she said turning back to her work. "But why don't you wear your pretty straw hat with the cherries?"

"But we're going horseback riding by the Springs, and the girls will tease me," I explained gravely. In my mind I could already see myself mortified by the amused looks of Gabriela and her cousin. My aunt lent me an old chupaya that was even a little moth-eaten on the edge, and I went happily out to meet my friends.

Gabriela was waiting for me by the gate with her cousin Elena, who had a freckled face and green eyes. That's why she was called "la Rucia".

Our three horses were bayos with woolen mantas to avoid getting their sweat on our legs, and mine had a daisy behind her ear. I stepped on a large clay pot and scrambled to mount. Gabriela watched me while she rolled a straw reed between lips and tongue.

"Hold on tight to her mane," la Rucia reminded me.

"Yes, I know."

We began to ride toward the river, my heart beating hard. Gabriela was very quiet.

"What's up?" I asked.

"It's just that Manuel thinks he hit it off with you," said la Rucia. I made a horrible face and she laughed.

"Seriously, Tina," said Gabriela, "remember when Manuel told my mother that he had to come along to take care of us?"

"But that doesn't mean anything!" said la Rucia, winking at me.

"Chito said that Manuel was going to *court* you," Gabriela confronted me, held onto the mane of my horse, leaned over until our hats touched. "So, don't start flirting with Manuel, okay?"

"I promise," I said, happy that she cared so much about me. La Rucia gave Gabriela a shove and

teased her:

"Gabriela is scared of guys. Not me. Let a prince come and get me!" La Rucia shook her long hair and raised her face to the sun, proud of her looks. Gabriela slapped la Rucia's horse and clicked her tongue, sending the animal downhill at a hard gallop while la Rucia screamed and swore at us. Gabriela and I rode behind her, yelling: "Careful, Princesa!"

As we turned by the oaks, we met face to face with Manuel and Chito who had stopped her horse. She took full advantage of the situation to impress Chito.

"You almost made me fall down that hill!" said la Rucia to Gabriela in a breathless voice.

"That's a lie!" Gabriela was arrogant and sat straight on her horse like her brother Manuel. I was proud of her.

"Good day, Chito, Manuel," I said, to appease matters. The boys tipped their hats way back in greeting. To tease them, I took off my hat and bowed, which made everyone laugh. La Rucia pretended to be hot and steered her horse to the shade of an oak covered with red copihues. Chito looked at her languidly, she looked so striking with her long hair against the red flowers.

"Chito..." said Manuel, giving him a knowing look.

"I won't be joining you today," said Chito, a bit resentful.

"What a pity!" la Rucia threw him a kiss and the boy waved goodbye riding uphill. Manuel, handsome like Gabriela, offered to get me a set of reins, leaning attentively toward me.

"No, thanks. I'm an Amazon," I said, solemn, and galloped behind Gabriela who really deserved the title more than I.

The day was beautiful. Though it was very hot, I doubt I noticed it because I always felt a little feverish next to Gabriela. Our ride to the Springs was at times a tense game between Gabriela and Manuel, with me as the coveted damsel. When he flanked my right, she cut between us and rode easily beside me. Manuel pretended not to notice and chatted with la Rucia.

When we arrived at the Springs, we dismounted

and tied the horses in the shade. From the high rocks a thousand sprays of crystalline water fell to the river. We were in the loveliest part of the river's journey, where it opened and strayed among the rocks, forming little pools of water, cold as snow.

"This water comes directly from the Andes—" Manuel sought to explain.

"You don't say, *professor,*" said Gabriela.

"They say you can find precious stones here," continued Manuel, ignoring the comment, and placing some pebbles in my hand.

"Why don't you make her a necklace, then," interrupted Gabriela. I burst out laughing, hugging her with pleasure. La Rucia also laughed, and Manuel could not stand it anymore.

"If you're going to behave like this, I'm leaving!" he warned. The three of us linked arms and danced in the shallow water, chanting:

"Emeralds and rubies, viva! viva! We have jewels!"

"The devil take you, crazy women!" said Manuel menacingly as he picked up his canteen and mounted his horse without looking at us. We kept dancing and singing until we saw him disappear through the willows.

La Rucia took off her blouse and lay down in the sun, still laughing at the unfortunate Manuel. I tried to braid my hair again, but it was all tangled. Gabriela took an elastic from her pocket and quickly tied it in a knot for me without saying a word. The coolness I felt on my neck was delicious and I looked at her gratefully. She also looked at me, with those dreamy eyes and that irresistible smile. Suddenly, I felt dizzy.

"Let's go swimming," I urged, pulling off my shirt. Gabriela followed me to the water, but when she took off her blouse, I almost fainted. Gabriela wasn't skinny like me, she already had round breasts and a shapely waist. I dove in the cold water to hide my anxiety, and opened my eyes to see. Gabriela swam easily in the strong current, and it was hard to follow her.

Soon, Elena joined us and we searched for little red pebbles, playing at being mermaids. La Rucia

did look like a mermaid, with her light hair and green pants.

"Hey, what are Amazons?" asked Gabriela between dives.

"They were ancient warriors. In Greece or Africa, I think. They were excellent riders and they didn't like men," I told them.

"Really?" La Rucia was surprised.

"Really. They had spears and swords and they would go to war. They were very brave." I was pleased with myself, being able to offer such an interesting tale. My friends listened attentively. I embroidered on the details of Amazon life.

When we got cold in the water, we lay in the sun. Gabriela and I looked at each other, she with half-closed lids shading the sun, while droplets fell from her black lashes to her red lips. I felt like crying. On the way home we stopped at every blackberry bush and devoured all but the last berry, staining our lips and our fingers purple. La Rucia got stung by a bee and started to cry. Gabriela hugged her cousin, but she also told her that Amazons didn't cry. I agreed. When we arrived, tía Hortensia met us, a little concerned. Manuel had told her that we had gotten lost.

"I'll kill him," said la Rucia. "I never get lost."

"That's true, dear. Well, the food is ready," said my aunt. Tía Elvira came out to the back yard, under the arbor where the summer table was set, and she placed pastel de choclo next to the stone where the hot peppers were ground.

"Do you like ají?" asked Gabriela.

"No, it's too hot," I told her.

"But it's good, look," and she ran her finger over the stone, then licked it. I stared at her to see if she screamed because it was so hot, but she licked her lips with pleasure.

"See?" she smiled, and it was then that Gabriela came close to me and gave me a kiss on the lips, so soft, that I kissed her back because I wanted more of that softness, and of the hot taste of ají.

Towards the end of January there was a drought and it got terribly hot. We all worked hard to water the fields and the gardens at dawn, before the sun could burn the plants. In the evenings, my aunts sat

with the ladies and I would go for a short ride with la Rucia and Gabriela. La Rucia liked to be Queen of the Amazons, while Gabriela and I were her generals.

We would ride in the open field until we arrived at our favorite hill, and when the sun blazed over the horizon in the early evening, I remembered that in March I would have to go back to school and leave my companions.

"Amazons were not sentimental," Gabriela said to me one evening, noticing my silence. But I could not have explained the confusion I felt. We sat among the poppies and la Rucia sang some ballads. Gabriela listened quietly, with her eternal pajita between her lips, and then the three of us sang a song by Violeta Parra.

On Sundays, the families in the area gathered at dusk under a large arbor where there was a parrillada. Later, we danced cuecas and refalosas with renewed energy in the cool night air.

When night fell, the guitars were tuned and the party began, Manuel always proud to be playing with the older men. Gabriela's mother plaintively suggested we put on dresses to dance the cueca, but la Rucia told her that warriors didn't wear dresses. Chito played a harp that had been left to him by his grandfather, and la Rucia sang with her sister, Raquel. In the midst of such happiness, it was hard to grasp what I felt. Sometimes, Gabriela would take my hand, and together we watched the couples dancing. At times we would dance with all the little girls and boys and with la Rucia, while Chito devoted his most anguished looks to her.

The last night in January, I didn't want to sing or dance. I slipped away to be home alone in my inexplicable melancholy. Around midnight, my aunts returned, hot and tired, but happy.

"Violeta, look at our niece, sitting here alone," said tía Elvira.

"Are you sad, dear?" asked tía Violeta.

"No, tía."

"She must miss her parents."

"No, tía. It's just that I want to think. May I sleep out here on the hammock?"

My aunts exchanged a look and smiled. "As you like, dear," said tía Hortensia. "But take a blanket so you don't get chilled."

My three aunts kissed me like fairy godmothers, blessing my sleep. I remained, staring at the moon, thinking that perhaps Gabriela could come to Concepión with tía Elvira in the winter. Soon I gave in to sleep and dozed off, leaning on the post by the hammock.

"How much chicha did you drink?" whispered Gabriela in my ear.

"Gabriela!" I was startled out of my dream. "What time is it?"

"Who knows. Nighttime," she said. "Did you get kicked out?"

"No, it's too hot. And you?"

"Me too, I can't sleep. Why did you leave?"

I stared at my feet. They were tanned and the hair on my legs seemed lightened by the sun. Next to mine, Gabriela's legs were much stronger. For her, the work at the farm was not merely a summertime diversion. It was her life.

"We're growing, do you realize?" I said, finally.

"What else? Everyone grows," Gabriela sat on the hammock, swinging her legs.

"But, what will you do," I sat on the hammock with her, wanting to ask a million questions. "Will you get married?"

"Who, me? Never!" she said vehemently.

"Really?"

"Sure. Now, I'm an Amazon."

"Seriously, Gabriela," I said.

"Seriously. Let's go to the poppies. Want to?"

"Now?" I looked at the full moon.

Gabriela jumped down from the hammock and gave me her hand. I jumped and we went running without stopping until we arrived at the hill, plush with poppies, from where we could see the houses and the glow of the remaining embers under the large arbor. We lay among the flowers, listening to the crickets, the bark of a dog now and then. After a long time, I turned my head to tell Gabriela that I was sleepy, and saw her asleep. She was so beautiful that I leaned closer to look at her, her long lashes,

her smooth forehead, her lips delicately drawn. When she opened her eyes, I kissed her quickly, afraid she would move away. Gabriela sighed and wrapped her arms around my neck.

"One more, give me another kiss," she said in my ear. Then there was no moon, there were no poppies, only Gabriela with her shiny hair in my hands, her warm breath, the weight of her firm legs, and the beating of my heart against hers.

Near dawn, I dipped my mouth to her breast, reaching with my tongue for the circle on her nipples that made her sigh and moan, that deep sound that rose from her mouth, red and swollen, as she kissed me again and again until I forgot everything and remembered everything: from the first day I saw her and thought she was a boy, when I knew she was a girl, when I saw her golden, swimming in the river, so strong and beautiful.

How was it possible that she would let me kiss her dear breasts, that sweet waist, and raise her belly just curving to meet my mouth?

Morning arrived pink with the singing of the birds, the buzzing of the bees and my own sighs while Gabriela parted my legs and I grasped her hand, her mouth searching the wetness and the warmth that flowed from me. Around me, there were the flowers and the wind, a murmur and a silence. I trembled in her hands, her tongue more urgent each time, until there was nothing more than the blue sky and all my being transformed by a new feeling, a sigh, something sweet, deep, immense, Gabriela.

Since the night of the poppies, Gabriela and I had spent the month of February submerged in our delight, not caring about anything else. I had gotten almost as dark as she from being in the sun and swimming nude in the river. In the afternoons we would stay with my aunts, seated in the shade of the arbor, eating watermelon and listening to tía Elvira who enjoyed reading poetry. But towards the end of the month, my joy ceased abruptly with Mamá's arrival from Concepión to visit my aunts, her older sisters. When she saw that I was so tanned, barefoot, with my hair unbraided, Mamá was scandalized and decided to take me immediately back to *civilization*.

Returning to Concepción, the train ran along the
fields, and from far off one could see the
clusters of grapes, purple, green, or pink. Thinking
intently about Gabriela I leaned my head on the
cool window of the train, letting tears roll down my
face while Mamá talked with the lady from Lican-
ten, wiping my face quickly each time they asked me
something.

"Where does your daughter go to school?" asked
the lady.

"Answer, girl" said Mamá.

"The Liceo #3 with the Spanish nuns," I mumbled.

"They are *sisters*, Tina, it's vulgar to call them
nuns," chided Mamá.

"Don't say it, then," was my insolent retort, be-
cause I cared little by that time.

"Please excuse her, señora," said Mamá poking
me. "She has become completely wild in the
country." The lady nodded at everything. I was
grateful that at least they weren't watching me.

"She didn't even wear sandals. She has callouses
on her feet!" Mamá confided to the lady aboard the
train.

"Ave María!" exclaimed the pious woman.

The last Sunday we spent together, Gabriela and I
walked to the Springs on horseback. The sun was
hot and we took refuge under a willow with our feet
in the water. Looking at Gabriela, I realized she had
grown more than I had. She had ripened like the
dark grapes we gathered for the fresh chicha.

"Gabriela, you're so beautiful, I want to die!" I
said kissing her cheek.

"Don't be a fool," she kissed me back.

"For you I'm a fool," I insisted.

She lowered her gaze and I suffered untold
tortures while her long lashes shaded her pretty
face. Her hair had grown and it curled in soft waves
around her neck.

"Tina, look at me," she demanded. I looked at her
while we held hands.

"Do you realize that we're really Amazons, you
and I? La Rucia isn't anymore, since she went with
Pedro," she looked very seriously at me.

"That's true," I said

"Then, promise..."

"What should I promise?" I asked.

"That you'll come back here when you're free," she said simply.

"I promise. Gabriela, I promise with all my heart!"

Between sobs and the already distant sensation of her red lips, I was shaken by Mamá's hand and the train racing by at dusk.

"Why do you cry, my girl, you've fallen asleep," she said.

"I promise, I promise," I blurted out, still wanting to hold on to Gabriela in my reverie.

"Ay, Virgen! What's wrong with her?" pleaded Mamá.

"She has sun stroke," offered the lady from Licantén. You have to give her a very strong tea"

"No, no! Give me chicha fresca!" I said, stupidly.

"Tina!" Mamá was horrified. "Ave María, it must have been those country boys. As soon as we return, I'll send you to boarding school with the *nuns*—and not a word out of you!" came the verdict.

"Sí, Mamita," I said, closing my eyes and smiling to the memory of Gabriela.

---

chupaya: wide-brimmed straw hat
bayos: yellowish brown horses
mantas: blankets
la Rucia: Blondie
copihues: the flower of Chile; grows like a vine and looks like an upside down tulip; they can be red, white, or pink
pastel de choclo: a traditional dish of meat and corn
ají: hot pepper
parrillada: open air roast for a large number of people
cuecas and refalosas: typical Southern Chilean dances
pajita: straw reed
chicha: hard grape cider that is very sweet and intoxicating

THE BOOK OF MYTHS
Joy Harjo

When I entered the book of myths
in your sandalwood room on the granite island;
I did not ask for a way out.
This is not the century for false pregnancy
in these times when myths
have taken to the streets.
There is no more imagination, we are in it now, girl.
We traveled the stolen island of Manhattan
in a tongue of wind off the Atlantic
shaking our shells, in our mad skins.
I did not tell you when I saw Rabbit sobbing and laughing
as he shook his dangerous bag of tricks
into the mutiny world on that street outside Hunter.
Out came you and I blinking our eyes once more,
entwined in our loves
and hates as we set off to recognize the sweet
and bitter gods who walk beside us, whisper madness
in our invisible ears any ordinary day.
I have fallen in love a thousand times over, every day
is a common
miracle of salt roses, of fire in the prophecy wind,
and now and then
I taste the newborn blood in my daughter's
silk hair, as if she were not nearly a woman
brown and electric in her nearly womanly self.
There is a Helen in every language; in American
her name is Marilyn
but in my subversive country,
she is dark earth and round and full of names
dressed in bodies of women
who enter and leave the knife wounds of this terrifyingly
beautiful land;
we call ourselves ripe, and pine tree and woman.
In the book of myths that fell open in your room of unicorns
I did not imagine the fiery goddess in the middle of
the island.
She is a sweet trick of flame,
had everyone dancing, laughing and telling the stories
that unglue the talking spirit from the pages.

When the dawn light came on through the windows,
I understood how my bones would one day
stand up, brush off the lovely skin like a satin blouse
and dance with foolish grace to heaven.

Rabbit is a trickster in Muscogee (Creek) mythology

SIT IN THE GOVERNOR'S TEA

Youngblood

December 1959 was the year Miss Shine got even for two-hundred-year-old wrongs. I was born that year so the story was told to me and long as I'm live I'll never forget it. Every Christmas Eve when Big Mama and all the other grown folks went shopping downtown, Justine Baker would come to our apartment to sit with me. Even though she was in her twenties, she could tell stories good as Aunt Vee, Big Mama and Aunt Vi. I especially liked the one she told me every Christmas Eve, the one about Miss Shine.

Justine was a little on the plump side cause she had a terrible sweet tooth. She wore loose cotton house dresses with pockets that hid penny candy, and big pink curlers in her hair every day but Sunday when she sang in the choir. Her voice was soprano and really pretty, so she usually had the star position in the choir stand as the soloist. I loved hearing her catch notes with her voice and then let them fly over our heads in the congregation, like birds. When Justine was telling a story her voice was like that too, high, sweet and strong.

After I got in my red bootie pajamas, brushed my teeth and said my prayers, Justine would light Big Mama's kerosene lamp, put me in the middle of me and Big Mama's bed and sit looking at me from Big Mama's rocking chair. She would fold her plump hands in her lap and rock slow, backwards and forward, as she told me Miss Shine's story:

"'Round Christmas time there's a whole lotta things in the air you can't see. Things that make you smile at folks you don't even know and speak to your worst enemy. People get in what you call the Christmas Spirit. I'd like to think it was the Christian spirit and folks would do it every day of the year, but the world just ain't like that. This Christmas Spirit infect everybody like a disease. Everything is amazement. Well, this particular December I'm gonna tell you about wasn't much different. At the start of

December our chorus teacher told my class we had been chose to sing Christmas carols at the governor's mansion. For weeks all the kids that lived in the projects talked about was the school chorus singing at the governor's mansion on Christmas Eve. Glo Dean, Jimmy, Pearl and me was all in the choir at church too. So everybody knowed we would make our mamas proud. Your Big Mama was just as excited as everybody else, but when she heard she couldn't help but say out loud: 'With all the mess the governor been stirring up, standing in the school house door to keep our children from a equal education. Now the children gonna have a opportunity to show him they know a little something already.'

"'Amen,' Miss Shine broke in, 'I'm gonna be there to see our children show out. The governor done asked me already to stay past sundown on Christmas Eve.'

"Miss Shine had worked in the governor's mansion ever since her husband, Mr. Polk, died and left her with no insurance money and a heap of bills to pay. When Mr. Polk was living, he used to cuss a mean blue streak when Miss Shine spoke about working.

"'What you wanna work for?' he would scream, so everybody in the neighborhood could hear and know he was a man.

"'What you mean? I work every day. I near about break my back cleaning up after you. We got bills to pay and I want some nice things around here. Like some new curtains on the window 'stead of that old sheet I sewed up so folks couldn't look in, a flower garden and a new hat for church once in a while.'

"'Shine, where can you work? On your rusty knees in some white folks' kitchen? Bringing they nasty clothes in my house? No ma'am, I ain't gonna stand for you working for white folks as long as I can swing this hammer,' he would end up, swinging his railroad hammer over his bald head.

"Mr. Polk worked on the railroad for thirty years or more. When he died and couldn't swing his hammer no more, Miss Shine had to work. All she knowed was keeping house and cooking so when Miss Emma Lou told her about the job at the governor's man-

she ain't hesitated but a minute. Miss Shine was a little nervous about working in a place as fancy as the governor's mansion, but Miss Emma Lou straightened her out quick.

"'Honey chile, the governor and his wife is simple as pumpkin crackers. They don't put on airs till foreigners come around. They eat, sleep and pee out a hole just like anybody else. You remember that and you'll be alright,' Miss Emma Lou said.

"'But all them fancy place settings, three or four different kinda forks and spoons, pouring tea before supper.... I just don't know Emma Lou.'

"'Colored folks, as you know, is the most amazing people on this earth. Anything we put our minds to and our hearts into, we can git done good and most times better than that. You'll never know if you can do a thing till you try and a try has never failed.' Miss Emma Lou finished her speech by spitting in her spit cup like she always do.

"'Emma Lou I'll do the best I kin. Thank you for the blessing.'

"Miss Shine got the job and she caught on quick. The funniest thing she had to do was pouring tea. Every day around four o'clock the governor's wife, Emmie, rung a silver bell. That was Miss Shine's signal to pour boiling water in a great big silver tea pot that sit on a big silver tray set with easy to break china cups and saucers and real silver spoons. Every day the governor say the same thing:

"'Shine pour me a cup full, with round about six spoons of sugar. I like mine sweet as Miss Emmie here.'

"If there wasn't no company, Miss Emmie would crow like a rooster and say, 'Doggone if it ain't tea time again. Cheers daddy.'

"Then they would sit in the living room quiet as two rocks in a river, 'cept for the slurping of that sweet tea, for exactly thirteen minutes, then Miss Emmie would ring her little silver bell and Miss Shine would either pour some more tea or roll the cart back in the kitchen. Madam Waters, the head cook would then start heaping food in serving dishes and Miss Shine would take off her white apron and start walking to the bus stop. It was a mile and a half easy.

She'd wait with the other maids who worked after four o'clock for the last bus to town. From downtown she'd have to catch another bus home to the projects.

"Weeks before the first Christmas pine was chopped for decoration, Miss Shine was in charge of polishing cabinets full of silver, starching closets full of linen, and her biggest job, the one she loved the best and saved for last, was cleaning the grand french crystal chandelier that hung in the big entry hall to the mansion. She said cleaning the 814 crystals all by hand gave her time to think. Her chandelier cleaning ritual went something like this:

"'I climb the ladder with my cleaning bucket in one hand. Once I git to the top I untwists the wire that thread through a little bitty hole in the crystal head. The wire hold the crystal on the big brass tiered circles. I put many crystals as I kin in the bucket. Then I soaks 'em in ammonia and lemon juice. Then I rinses 'em with real hot water and lay 'em on clean white towels. Then I polish 'em with spit and a soft flannel cloth till they shine like pure dee diamonds.'

"December 1959, two days before the singing, a strong feeling pass over Miss Shine like something bad was about to happen. She was sitting on top of the ladder in the entry hall taking the crystals down. She said it was like a heavy cloud press down on her and hung on her heart a while. She was near about done up there so she eased down off the ladder and set up in the kitchen pantry polishing them chandelier crystals with spit and shining 'em with a white flannel rag. She polished with special care the big round crystal with a thousand faces that was as big as a Florida grapefruit, rubbing it like she used to rub on Mr. Polk's bald head to get him to go to sleep at night. It hung from the middle of the chandelier. She spit shined and rag rubbed till she could see her face, that was the color of a grocery sack, in every flat edge like a mirror.

"Christmas Eve day the snow started falling around noon. Fat, white flakes covered the ground like one of Aunt Judy's wedding quilts.The governor and his family invited some friends and neighbors

[illegible] to the mansion to have a early supper. Just as [illegible] was finishing they meal, the three yellow school [illegible] rolled around the circle driveway and parked [illegible] side in the bus parking spaces. The governor, [illegible] Emmie and they few friends went out on the [illegible] porch to watch the first group assembled [illegible] that twenty-five-foot Christmas tree all [illegible] and lit up in the middle of that lawn all [illegible] with snow. Miss Shine dried her hands in [illegible] apron and stood in the front window looking out [illegible] behind the curtains, her heart near 'bout burst-[illegible] with joy. She knowed we was gonna do her [illegible] that night.

The first group of them red-faced white children [illegible] they Christmas carols in high-pitched cut-off [illegible] that didn't sound right to us, nor Miss Shine, [illegible] she clapped when they was done with 'Jingle [illegible].' 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas' and 'White [illegible]istmas,' even though they messed up them songs [illegible] broke glass on bicycle tires.

"The second group wasn't much better. They was [illegible] a church-run school, so they sang a lot of [illegible]ymns. Like the first group, every one of 'em was [illegible]hite and dressed just alike in blue jackets, pants for [illegible] boys and skirts for the girls. Miss Shine wasn't [illegible]mpressed, but she clapped for them too.

"Then us colored children broke loose. We ar-[illegible]anged ourselves around that Christmas tree holding [illegible]hands in a circle. We was wearing long white robes and gold sashes over our shoulders looking like black angels. Miss Shine felt faint. 'Oh Come All Ye Faithful,' 'Away in a Manger,' 'Oh Holy Night,' and just when she thought she couldn't take no more heavenly sounds, I led the choir in 'Silent Night.' When I was done there was a deep hush, quiet like God had stopped what he was doing to listen. I was feeling the spirit, 'cause God was leading that song. Miss Shine almost forgot where she was. She clapped long and loud, put her hand over her heart and kept clapping on her hip with her free hand even when we was heading for our bus. She could see Glo Dean, Jimmy, Pearl, me and the others dancing around that tree like we was at home round the chinaberry tree in July. The governor went out

on the lawn as we was gathering near our separate buses. I remember it clear as day, the governor's speech went something like this:

"'That was some real nice caroling, children. You all did a fine job. How about another round of applause for everybody.' He said everybody like it hurt him, then he said:

"'I would like to take this opportunity to invite Middle T. Morris School and St. Joseph's Academy to join my wife and myself and our guests in the mansion for a cup of hot chocolate. That was some mighty fine singing from my alma mater and rival school. Come on in children. Merry Christmas to you.'

"He waved the white children over to the front door and welcomed them with a handshake into the entry hall of the mansion.

"Something inside of Miss Shine broke in two when she saw our faces. Glo Dean and the others' faces was soft and sad like they was gonna cry. Jimmy's face was hard like he wanted to pitch a brick through the front windows of the mansion. Pearl looked like she didn't expect no less. I was just too shame to look anywhere but at the ground. I couldn't believe that after he heard God in my song he could be so mean and cold hearted.

"Miss Emmie rushed into the entry hall and found Miss Shine still as a statue standing at the window staring at the white children lining up at the door and the colored bus pulling out of sight down the driveway.

"'Shine, quick, fix the children some hot chocolate. There seems to be about thirty-five of 'em. Not too much sugar or the lambs will be up all night.' Miss Emmie said sweet as Brer Fox in the briar patch.

"Miss Shine walked to the kitchen with lead feet, like a woman without her mind. She fixed the hot chocolate rattling pots and pans, dropping the silver and spilling milk all over the floor. She was madder than a foam mouth dog, but what could she do? She poured the hot chocolate into thirty-five white dixie cups for thirty-five thin pink lips to drink from. Her hands was trembling and her head felt light. Her

the pressure was rising. She kept thinking that they was all just children. Why couldn't the governor see that? Color don't matter in the sight of God. The governor think he know more than God? When all the cups was full and on the rolling tea cart, Miss Shine pushed it slow into the entry hall. She heard one of the white kids say something about 'sending the niggers back to the jungle' and heard laughing break out round the room and saw wide grins on the governor and Miss Emmie's faces. Each one of 'em took a cup without even a thank you or a look in Miss Shine's direction. She left it in the lord's hands, and he come through. With no warning, the big round crystal that hung from the middle of the chandelier fell with a loud crack on the marble floor, breaking into a million pieces. Miss Shine's mouth dropped open and her eyes got big. It didn't hurt nobody, but she took it to be sign.

"'Them niggers must've sent a voodoo in here on us.' one of the girls said giggling nervous like. Miss Shine fixed a look on that child that made her turn red as a beet and start to cry. Miss Emmie seen Miss Shine staring at that child and snapped up, 'Shine get a broom and sweep up this mess before one of the children gets hurt.'

"She was trying to break Miss Shine's spell on the child, and she did but Miss Shine turned to stare Miss Emmie full in the face for a long uncomfortable minute before going back in the kitchen.

"Miss Shine come back and parted the crowd with the point of her broom, waving it wild, just missing knocking a few blond heads and poking out a few blue eyes. She swept up every sliver of crystal she could find. The she put the pieces in a paper sack. After collecting all the empty cups and cleaning up the kitchen, she walked that mile and a half through the snow to a main street. She hailed a taxi that took her home. The streets was mostly empty, as it was near nine o'clock, cold, and snow was still falling. When she got in her apartment she turned the oven on and opened the door to warm up the kitchen. Then she pulled out a chair and stood on it. She felt around up on the top kitchen shelf for a fat white candle she had bought at a spiritual store years

before for the purpose of a ritual Miss Mary told her to do, but she never did. She sat down with it at the kitchen table still in her coat dripping with snow. She lit the candle and sat there staring at it. She poured the broke up crystal from the paper sack onto a piece of newspaper spread out on the table and looked at 'em while talking to herself. Them pieces of crystal still sparkled like diamonds, but every jagged edge was like a dagger in her heart. Miss Shine sit at her kitchen table till Christmas morning broke light, sit there till the thing she had to do come to her.

"'Folks say things changed, but it's still like slavery times.' Miss Shine's mind ease way, way back. She heard a chant far off, deep as slave graves and old as Africa.

"*Blood boiled thick, run red like a river, slaves scream, wail, moan after they dead. Daddy lynched, mama raped, baby sister sold down river. Slaves scream, wail, moan after they dead wishing they could find relief too. Don't nobody listen, not even God this time, not Oshun or Elegba, nobody. The cook know what to do to save the race, stop the screams, save the blood from boiling thick, running like a red river.*

"Miss Shine all of a sudden knowed what she had to do to save the race. It come to her like in a dream, but it was real. It was a story told to her a long time ago. In slavery times cooks had a heap of power. They stole food to feed the children to keep 'em from dying before they was sold off. Fed the mens scraps of lean meat to give 'em the strength to find freedom and bring it back home. They had the power to poison the master too. When the beatings, killings, and selling off of families was too much to bear, oftentimes the cook would use her knowledge of herbs and roots to make her white master sick, sometimes die.

"Miss Shine was possessed by her power. She snatched off her coat and white apron and went into her bedroom to get the wood bowl her mama give her and the iron head of Mr. Polk's hammer. She come back to the table spread with all the broke crystal and ground it all up with the head of the

hammer in her mama's wood bowl. She grind it till sweat dripped off her face into the bowl. She ground it till the crystals was fine as dust and tied the pile of it in a corner of her slip. She burnt the bowl in her tin bathtub and flushed the ashes down the toilet. Then she wrapped the hammer head in flannel and put it away. The cooks kept whispering in her ears, chanting.

"*Nobody know how the master get sick. Nobody know how he die. The doctors won't know why he pain so in his stomach. The grind be so fine. He think it be root work and be scared of niggers from then on.*

"When Miss Shine had to go back to work after New Year's, she was ready, almost happy to be going. All the other women on the maids' bus was grumbling about having to go back to work.

"'Somebody got to pay them bill collectors,' a voice in the back of the bus hollered out. That put everybody in a good mood. Miss Shine was really wanting to get to the mansion that morning.

"Miss Emmie stopped her from washing the lunch dishes to tell her they was having a guest to dinner and he was gonna have tea with 'em. Miss Shine 'yes ma'am'd' her looking direct in her eyes. Miss Emmie wasn't used to coloreds making eye contact and she near about run out of the kitchen. Miss Shine went on as usual fixing tea. She put the kettle on to boil.

"*blood boil thick...*

"She kept hearing the whispers. She poured the boiling water over the tea leaves and strained it into the big silver tea pot.

"*run red like a raging river...*

"She took down three china cups with a flower pattern and set 'em straight on matching saucers.

"*nobody know how the master get sick...*

"Miss Shine put everything on the big tea cart.

"*nobody know how he die...*

"She untied the knot in the corner of her slip and empty the powder into the sugar bowl and stirred it up good.

"*you done good sister...you done right...we can rest now...*

"That was the last whisper.

"Miss Shine smile before she serve the governor, Miss Emmie and they stone face guest, a south Georgia mayor with a beer belly and a mouth full of 'nigras.' Miss Shine kept pouring tea for the governor and Miss Emmie for more than two weeks before she disappear. Some folks say she move to a entirely colored town in Texas, other folks say she wasn't really of this world in the first place, just sent here to do a job and teach a lesson to human beings. Nobody living ever see Miss Shine again. She told me this story the day Aunt Judy sent me to her apartment with a piece of Christmas cake, two days before she disappeared.

"The doctor that examined the governor couldn't find nothing wrong with him. As delicate as she look, Miss Emmie must've had a iron stomach, she wasn't but a little sick. The governor suffered stomach pains for the rest of his life. He got cancer of the intestines at the age of seventy-two and died after a long and painful sickness.

"From then on, the school chorus started singing Christmas carols at the colored nursing home every year to honor our own folk. Nobody never talk about wanting to sing for the governor no more. Every time I sing 'The Spirit Can Move' solo, I dedicate it to Miss Shine, wherever she is."

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Pamela Sneed

for Bernhard Goetz

Shrouded in this circle of flames is
Emmet Till's face
bloated/beaten
burning in my mind
every time I climb the stairs to my house,
sit in my kitchen,
talk on the phone
I hear you asking me
why am I so angry
when I see
little white ladies in
little white dresses,
baking bread while
little white children play
hopscotch inside white picket fences...

And I see Emmet Till's body floating
on a river
mutilated so badly
his mother could not say who he was,
bars split thru him for
whistling at a white woman
his swollen face
protruding from that horrible picture.

He was fourteen years old,
do you hear me?

And I see white families celebrating
cause there was no proof,
no proof that fourteen years old and black
means any white man can kill you/
meant any white man could kill you
for sport.

And I hear white laughter
gurgling from the courtroom
when they say, you are free to go
to kill niggers wherever you like,
do you hear me?
YOU ARE FREE.

SHE WHO BEARS THE THORN

Terry L. Jewell

her vulva was clean
those turgid and pink
from the focus of her
the thought of her mothers
who bore the thorn
had the bud of their pleasure
cut out
their labia sealed like an oath
with mud and blood
ash and gut
the girls before who lay moaning
men who clicked by in approval
while wives rocked and fingered
their own coarse scars
nothing like those wormed onto flesh
naming proud lineage and sense of ground
nothing like those shouting right to birth
to strut kick take on the sun
the knife maimed her
in the name of Allah
cleansed all desire
to make her precious
in the arms of a god
who knew not her name
or delight in girlish touch

THE TENANTS
Paula Martinac

So when my sister Angela died it just about broke my heart. You know we was close, just like that. She lived upstairs over twenty years. I thought I'd never want nobody living upstairs again. We was always running upstairs, downstairs. Sometimes I'd need something for my Frank's supper. Or she'd wanna use my clothesline, if she was doing sheets or something. Some nights she'd come down and have a cup of tea with me and Frank after supper. She liked talkin' to Frank, he's real smart, reads like it's going out of style. I call him the Professor. Angela's Eddie died, oh, it must be twenty-three years ago, in a bad accident in a mill over in Pittsburgh. She lived upstairs ever since. We was just like that, I'm tellin' you. It ain't been the same without her. Easter, that's the hardest. The Easter before last, that was the first without Angela. The whole family come at Easter, our three boys and Angela's girls, and Angela and me, we'd be cooking for weeks. It's too much for one person. The sausage pies, the grain pies, the Easter bread. I couldn't do it that first year, I just sat in the kitchen and cried and my Frank told everybody, Mum can't do it this year.

Our Vinnie stayed upstairs a while, after his Mary left him to run off to California with some hippie. But then he got himself a job in Jersey and it's too far to go every day, all the way from Brooklyn. So then the apartment's empty for two, three months and my Frank says, Mum, when we gonna get somebody for the apartment? I can't argue, I gotta call Salvatore Morretti's boy Mike and have him see if he can rent it. You gotta be careful, you can't just advertise in the paper. So Mike says to me, Kay, I'll find you a nice tenant. He says, how much for the place? I say three hundred dollars. He says Jesus, Mary and Joseph, you're crazy, this is New York City. You could be getting five, six hundred, he says. I said, I just want nice people, maybe if we don't charge so much, we get nice people to move in and stay. I

don't like it, people moving every year or two. It's too much. My sister, she lived here over twenty years. The Sabatini's, they been on the top floor six years. Frank and me, we always say if you can't have family living upstairs, you gotta pick people who are gonna stay put a while.

So what do you think? Next week Mike brung me two girls. Nice lookin' girls, both blonds, almost look like sisters, not more than thirty, I'd say. They both have steady jobs, they work in the city. They're good friends, you can tell they're close, just like that. They seem real quiet, polite. Well, I take one look at them and I say you can move in whenever you want. They like the apartment, they can't believe how nice it is, compared to the dumps they seen. We keep the place up nice, even when nobody was living there. Frank, he wanted to make some improvements like we did downstairs, put in a drop ceiling to cover up that old-fashioned tin, maybe some new paneling in the living room, but I said no, let's leave it how Angela had it. The girls seemed to like it that way, they say it must be real old. Belonged to my grandmother, I say, next year it'll be one hundred years old. I tell them there's no roaches here, we mind our own business, we don't bother nobody. I'm praying these nice girls take the apartment.

Well, they call the next day, the real quiet one Christine calls, she takes care of all the business stuff, and she come over to give me the deposit. She always pays the rent, too, all in cash, right on the day, not two weeks later like some tenants. I tell everybody I'm so lucky I got such nice tenants. So quiet, you almost never hear them. They stick together pretty much, they're not always having people over. Leave together in the morning. Come home together. Even went, where did they go, some beach together on vacation. Susan, she's the younger one, she's a real firecracker. So much personality, I call her my girlfriend and she thinks that's funny. She always says how nice I look, asks if I got a new dress. She's a pistol all right, she makes the quiet one laugh a lot. A couple of times they have tea with me at night, but mostly they keep to themselves. No men come in and out, either, I like that.

You never know these days.

Our Vinnie says, Mum, why ain't they married, girls that old? Nice lookin' girls, too. Vinnie, he don't know nothin' about girls like this. These girls are different, they ain't from around here, they're from the Midwest someplace, they're what you call career girls. These girls talk like they're educated, even better than the Professor. It's different nowadays. Girls don't get married right away like they used to. Me, I never finished high school even. I married my Frank when I was just seventeen, 'cause he was shipping out, you know, during the war. Everybody did that. Around here if you didn't get a husband by the time you was twenty-one, people called you an old maid. Now they wait till they're thirty, forty even to get married. Everything's different now. These girls, they're women's libbers.

Well, it was about a year after they come here when my Frank started to say that he didn't see Susan so much anymore, where was Susan? I started to notice it, too, and I asked Christine. She said, oh, Susan's working hard, away on business a lot. I'm startin' to wonder, are they doing OK? I'd run into Christine on the stairs and say, where's my girlfriend, where's that Susan? Finally, I see Susan and she says, yeah, she's working all the time, she's been out of town. But I get worried, I think maybe Christine gets lonely up there all by herself. She don't seem no different, maybe a little more quiet.

Then one night I heard crying upstairs and loud voices, must have been pretty loud, 'cause you don't usually hear nothing with this drop ceiling and all. So one day I says again, where's that Susan, and Christine says Susan's moving out, she got an apartment over on Manhattan Avenue with another girl. And I ask if she'll be okay with the rent and all, and she says I shouldn't worry, she'll be fine. Then I'm wondering if they had a fight or something to make Susan move out, and she says no, it ain't like that, they're still friends. She says Susan just wants more room, she got a bigger place for the same money. But I don't believe it. Not in this neighborhood. They was close, I'm telling you, just like that. I know close. I think something went wrong. I get nervous,

you know, worrying that maybe Christine will get lonely and move out, too. I know how lonely you can get when somebody leaves unexpected.

So one day I run into Susan on the street, I go out to get the paper every morning, so I decide to ask her. I think it's probably her fault, she's such a pistol, and Christine's so quiet, she hardly says boo. I say how could you leave Christine? She says Christine's fine, they're still friends. She says Christine likes to be alone, she'll be fine.

But me, I ain't so sure. I know what I heard, I heard crying upstairs. No, like the Professor says, it ain't so convincing an argument.

MARGARET
Gina Rhodes

margaret, was it you?
the summer of '72
i came south to visit my grandma
& found you
your stuff belonging to
the room i thought i belonged to

black dot beam eyes burned circles
around the spot you were standing in—
grandma's fleshy arm draped around your shoulder—
"gina, this here is margaret, she's gonna be staying with us"
your short plump frame, chipmunk face
"hey gina! grandma done tole me so much about you;
we gonna have such fun..."

margaret, for a solid week i drew the invisible line

you were so anxious
to learn every little thing about me—
best friends, special flowers & colors—
always asking and insisting answers
i was surprised to find myself
talking so much
in a few weeks you had surmised
soaking wet buttery biscuits were my favorites
& atomic jawbreakers
always eager
every night i watched you pull from
this or that hiding place
six tin wrapped biscuits
they were always warm
& margaret, i am sure you drove yourself to the poorhouse
that summer
sneaks to brown's juke joint
servicing our sweet tooth
against grandma's warnings

margaret, i played grown, detached
watching you
maneuvering through summer's strict discipline
where we were supposed to be
we always were
night after night
rattling cellophane wrappers & tin foil
giggling, bad as the devil
both sugar apple dumplings in our grandma's eyes

in that chilled woodframed summer
under the beige pom pom spread
we shared
drops of butter & red hot spit
falling from our mouths
on grandma's clean starched sheets
we turned our back to the thick plastic
tacked against that room's single window
& scooped up close
your ample loose flesh
like cheese melting over stacked spoons
your spongy knees contained the empty angle
my bent bones made
inwardly giggling, i crinkled toes
until your cold nose grew warm breath
at the back of my neck

in the middle of the night
when grandma passed
on the other side of the thin drawn drape
bolted
but you were innocent, margaret
with no place else to be

played grown, detached
but now my lover feels like you

THEY WERE SOBBING...
Deborah Salazar

They were sobbing about boyfriends before
they kissed. The blond dropped her coffeemug,
whiskey spattering the drapes. The dark one
set her double old-fashioned in a risky
position—half-off the coffeetable.
Then each unbuttoned the other's blouse.
It was summer, only a latched screen
between the room lit by the television
and the thick smokey darkness outside.
The boy next door said it sounded like
they were grieving the dead over there,
all that terrible moaning. He watched
fireflies blinking across a black lawn.
Then the television zapped into static.

...JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS LOST

Gwendolyn Bikis

Oct. 25, 1982

Dear Tammy—

I haven't found work yet, so I have plenty of time to think of you, and time to write you also. I'm down to two digits in my checking account (no savings at all) but I looked out the window from my bed this morning, saw the weather and decided to cancel my job search for the day.

Winter is coming fast. I can feel its hoarse breath, practically at my back, on days like this. Out my window the sky and sidewalks, the streets and concrete, are gray. Fog like fallen sky blots the upper reaches of slick black trees and telephone poles. Litter and leaf ash clog the gutters. The subway rumbles from its stop down into a dark tunnel. I think again of the first season I spent in this city.

And I miss you very much.

My room is bare but clean, and I'm filling it with books and music. The chair and bed are comfortable, the light plentiful. You and I could be safe here, and maybe even happy.

When you first saw me in nothing but my skin and bones, you asked about jail. But then your soft and healing hands were smoothing, soothing, all up and down and over me, and I couldn't want to think of nothing else.

Yet on days like this, when I sit looking out this window, this window blocked by the thick black bars of the fire escape, while winter leaks in a cold stream through the crack at my windowsill (I suppose that soon I'll have to stuff it), I can hardly think of anything else.

I didn't expect I'd have to go to jail, wouldn't even have dreamed it, not even after my arrest, nor a night in the station lock-up, nor my arraignment the next morning. Almost as soon as I was arraigned, anyhow, I was free to go, for a while, on the bail I'd gotten a friend to throw. Most of the women I'd spent the night with in the dank concrete tank

weren't so lucky. As it turned out, even my interlude of purchased freedom proved deceptive, though hardly less precious for that.

But after my sentence—without enough time to collect myself, take a bath, and tell myself it *was* only a month—I was courteously, but firmly, escorted out of the dock by a court matron. Then taken down a caged stairwell to a tiny holding cell (it felt the size of a phone booth) and asked to "Wait, pleez," and before I could turn around for a last snatch of open light, the door had clunked in place behind me.

So I sat on a metal stool and surveyed the smudgy tile above and around me, and noticed how very quiet it was. Maybe because the door was so thick, the walls so solid, the light so weak. Where there was so little light, how could there be much air? I broke into the sweat that presages my elevator fear: of being broken down and held in, in dark, for God knows how long. Maybe hours.

After maybe an hour, I heard footsteps along the hall, and a rattling, then the buzz and click of a lock's release. The door swung open, but as an image it was deceptive. As I reeled outside to bright-ness, rubbing my eyes, a vise of a hand caught me at the elbow. More rattling, then a rasp and a click. At my other side another hand took a heavy hold on my wrist. I pulled it free, and giggled. I'm so obvious-ly small, and relatively harmless, and couldn't they see that? But the policewoman at my left had clamped ahold of my thumb, and was splaying it back against my arm. The tears sprang to my eyes. "OK," I begged.

"Good," the matron nodded, stepping forward to cinch a chain around me. While the policewoman held my forearms, the matron snapped handcuffs through the chain and hooked them up, snug, around my wrists. The policewoman took my elbow, the matron the loose end of the chain, and they led me down a couple gray lengths of hallway to a mesh-front cage.

They opened the cage—vomit-scented, and filled with women who were chained like me—and directed me to a ledge beside a woesome black woman whose loose chain they padlocked me to,

me to sit here, "Pleez."

I sat, and heard the door clang behind me, and looked around at three steel walls and a sloped steel floor with a drain in its center. This cage reminded me of a tarnished kitchen sink, but nothing I'd ever seen anywhere reminded me of how all this steel would feel—this cold ledge beneath my buttocks, this cold wall hard against my spine, this chain that encircled my waist, these heavy, binding bands that chafed me whenever I moved, so that I did so only with caution.

And with caution, I studied some of the cage's faces: a face gone slack as her shoulders hunched in a shiver, as her hands crossed limply over her breasts; another face clenched tight as her fists, as the starred sinews of her arms, writhing inside her handcuffs ("I jus' hopes to God she don't spit up," muttered my companion); the face across from me like a tired gourd, with a seam splitting one wide sallow cheek; and the face to one side of me whose eyes, black and terrified, I tried to avoid.

Keys rattled outside the door, but nobody bothered looking up. The door swung open, nobody but me looked around. They'd brought in a woman, white (she and me together made two), who was moaning into the shoulder of her dress.

"Quiet please," ordered the matron, yanking her arm. "or we'll have to isolate you."

Boy, I shook my head, that was pretty cruel. I shifted slightly and refolded my sweaty, numb fingers.

The matron fumbled with the addict's padlock, while the addict whined and shimmied, and the woman she was chained to looked dully away. The lock sprang open, they hauled the addict (wrenched in half with her cramps) up by the elbows, pushed the white woman down and reset the lock. They prodded the addict out, and clanged the door shut in our faces.

I shifted again, and rubbed together the tingling haunches of my thumbs. At my unchained side, the face whose eyes I wanted to avoid drew my gaze around. She heaved herself forward, doubled over her lap, over her hands that she'd folded up in

shame (in front of us?) inside her skirt. Her chin was thrust way up, but her lower lip quivered, and I was reminded—helplessly—of you. Quickly I looked away.

Across from me, the newest woman had lifted her face away from her shoulder, and I saw, with a wince that I felt to my toes and fingertips, that her eye was blackened and swollen.

Oooh Godd, I moaned, lowering my eyes to the floor, where mesh blocked shadows over dully gleaming steel. I tucked my chin and closed my eyes and wished I could imagine I was elsewhere, at least for a while.

After a while they fed us lunch, dropping a sandwich in each of our laps, and a carton of milk in our hands—with straws, so at least we could *drink* the shit. Like a kindly kindergarten teacher, one of them helped us to unwrap our sandwiches and open our milks. But the milk was warm, the sandwiches mushy-white-with-baloney, the mechanics of eating and drinking them difficult. I hunched over and leaned down and took a bite—of crust so dry it lodged in my throat—then a pull of my milk. I finished the milk, but my throat balked at the sandwich. My companion was finished, I noticed. "You want this?" I asked, stretching it as far as I could at her. She nodded and strained forward to take it. As I watched her lean over it, I almost thought she was blessing it, her first bite was so deliberate, so nearly reverent.

Next, they brought a garbage pail around. "Puedo fumar? Por favor," asked the one with the scar on her face as she nodded down at a half-smoked cigarette. The matron reached into her pocket for a match.

All the activity, after the hours, was making me restless. "What if we gotta go to the bathroom," I wanted to know.

"You pee your pants," my companion replied. I sat back, it was a darn good thing I didn't really need to go. From a cage down the hall the addict's whines were sharpening like siren wails. "What about her?" I asked, jerking my head. A vague lift of the shoulders was all I got. But common sense suggested that the

[illegible] to do was to try to get along with the woman I was chained to—for God knew how much longer—so I asked her how long she had gotten.

She snorted. "I drew me a flat five years, this time."

"What for?"

She snorted again. "Larceny. Anything else you need to know?"

"How come?"

She shot me a guarded look, "How come do I [illegible] do you mean? I steal because I'm too damn dumb and ugly to do anything else." Her laughter was a bitter hacking.

"But that doesn't seem very fair," I grumbled.

She slit her eyes at me, like I was crazy, or something. "Life ain't fair, girl, don't you know that?"

Well, yes, I'd thought I did, but as I looked in her face (she was missing teeth, one up top in front and two or so at the bottom, and her eyes were running), I realized that I hadn't begun to *know* it.

After a while (after Scarface had to be jerked awake, by her chainmate, from a half-asleep slide off the ledge, after the addict down the hall had subsided into wails and puking) we were led out of our cage in pairs and loaded onto a freight elevator and taken up to our Processing, also conducted in pairs, also involving much waiting, this time on hard wooden benches in the booking rooms.

But to my vast relief our hands were unhitched for a few short minutes and I was permitted to go to the bathroom, albeit with a guard to watch over my every movement. And all too soon, after fingerprints and photographs and the forms we had to sign, they trussed us back up, locked us back together and directed us back to the bench. After another hour or so, when everyone else was Processed, we were all told to stand, and then were herded, two by two, onto the elevator.

The elevator slid down to a basement parking lot, vast and gray and noxious with car exhaust. We were led across the cement expanse and loaded onto a wagon where we sat in dark and sullenness broken by a cough or a sniffle or an occasional clinking until someone decided we should leave.

"No talking either," snapped the other guard.

I rested my case. The ugly uniforms. The demeaning showers. These guards like our gym teachers, with their keys and clipboards, their wide shoulders and slat-like hands, their straightened or frosted hair, with their terse insistence on pairing up and following orders and referring to charges by last name (and soon by number) and their rough way of pulling a person by the elbow when they got tired of telling her where to go.

My companion (whose name was Bonita, I'd learned during booking) had managed to shove her feet into her shoes—split soles, ragged laces and all—and to stand. We were led by the elbow through a tunnel whose lights and clocks were caged, and through a metal door so thick I thought of ice chests. Then up three steps to stand before a glassed-in control booth. Beyond the booth, a wall of bars faced us, behind the bars, an aisle of cement and steel grills ended in a solid cinderblock wall. The air hung gray, like dirt and sweat and stale disinfectant.

"Shit," I murmured. For the first time in my adult life I was truly frightened.

One of our guards forked two fingers toward the control booth. Inside it, another guard turned and hit a button. The wall of bars rumbled back. "Third one on the right," she called, snapping a switch so that the door popped open.

I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry, when I saw it.

No window. A bunk, and a cot wedged between the barred wall and the foot of the lower bed. A toilet without a flush handle (a "head," they call it on boats and buses) and a sink, both small and built into the wall, both gun-metal gray. And three cinderblock walls painted a bright, playschool yellow.

"Good God," I moaned. They held the door wider, shoved us through and closed it. They walked away, rattling their keys. The wall of bars rumbled closed.

"Y'all done missed the call for dining hall," announced our newest guard. "Supper will be served in your cells tonight."

"Thank you," I called.

"You welcome, honey."

"Who in hell is she?" I asked, dropping on the bottom bunk.

"The cellblock supervisor," Bonita answered. "An' you can't take that bunk. It's already made. Take the cot or the top one."

"I'll take the top one. You don't mind?" She shook her head. "And is this a *cell* block?"

For the second time that day, she looked at me like I was not to be believed. "What you think it is, a nursery school?"

Well no I didn't, I thought, as I rolled the mattress back and made up my bunk. Despite these absurdly bright walls and this plastic-covered mattress, I knew better. I spread the drab, scratchy blanket and climbed up, lying down with a huge grunt, too tired to think about bedbugs or lice, or the peeling dirty ceiling about two feet from my face.

Bonita was standing by the bars, with her arms propped on a crossbar. (Prisoners really did that!) "This your first time in, ain't it?"

"Yup."

She squinted at me. "How *old* are you?"

"I'm twenty-two."

"No shit. You looks about fifteen. How long they give you?"

"Just a month."

"Shit. The first month is the *worst* month, girl." She looked away down the aisle. "You ain't no bulldag, is you?"

"I don't know yet," I answered honestly.

She cast her sore-eyed gaze at me. "Got to decide, one way or the other, in here. But if you is, don't be looking at the wrong women's women. An' if you ain't, let the ones who is know that, right off. An' don't steal from nobody, or snitch on no one, or stick up for nobody. And don't be poppin off that *mouf* of yours like I can tell already you're used to doin. Shrimpy as you is, you'll get your ass whupped if you ain't careful, and I ain't lyin."

My ass tingled in fear. "Thanks," I said weakly.

After a while, an older woman in a cheesy yellow dress (a trustee, Bonita told me) came by with a cart and pushed two dinner trays at us through a mail slot in our door. More warm milk, canned peas, a

By then I was ready to jump right out of my skin. Jail, if we ever got there, might even be a relief. At least I'd be able to lie down. At least I could have my hands free. There might at least be a window, and I might be able to think, in some degree of peace. Since I'm a poet, it almost appealed to me.

After a ride whose stops and starts and potholes we took on our rumps, we arrived at the Correctional Center, where we were called off the wagon in sets, and led through a narrow fenceway and a sliding steel door into a dingy anteroom, where our chains were at last taken off. After signing more forms and emptying our pockets onto trays we were led, still in pairs, into a chilly lavatory and told to strip, and then to lift our arms, our breasts and our feet for their inspection. They ran their fingers through our hair, and poked in our mouths, our noses and our ears with a doctor's penlight; they asked us to "Bend over and spread, please." Then they dropped our clothes into numbered baskets and directed us into a shower. They gave us no towels and I wondered why not.

By then I was sweaty enough to need a shower, but the nozzle of this one squirted a mist that smelled like insecticide. I emerged from my cubicle in goosebumps and a stickier, colder sweat, and was checked off a clipboard list and issued a blue pinafore-and-bloomers, ragged wool socks and once-white sneakers. The bloomers looked clean enough, but stepping into them made me long for my own pair of underwear. The pinafore hung tentlike, its canvas material frayed and faded. The sneakers reminded me of nothing so much as the cast-offs they'd made us wear in gym class when we'd forgotten our own. "Fish ears," we had called the dirty, despised footwear. The fish ears made me realize what I felt like.

"I feel like I'm in junior high gym class," I intoned to my companion, who was crouched on the floor struggling with a shoe. She chortled.

"No whispering," snapped one of our guards. It seemed like such an arbitrary, if improvised, rule that I felt my point had been proved. "I said that I feel like I'm in junior high gym class," I repeated.

slice of Wonder bread and a slick gray stew.

I chewed and swallowed my milk and peas and bread, then a few quick spoonfuls of the stew, then pushed my tray away.

"Don't you want that?" asked Bonita. I shook my head and she reached for it, dumping it into her tray.

Watching her eat it was more than I could take, so I climbed back up to my bunk and lay down. I turned and tried to close my eyes, for a while, to my wall's fluoric glare. I threw an arm up over my eyes, lifted my hip away from a spring that had sprung up through the mattress, ground my face into the flat hard pillow. It smelled musty, like mothballs. Down bare hallways, across caged stairwells and barred wards and locked-in "units" echoed voices: curses, laughter and calls. Against bare walls sounded clanks and rattles and clicks. Prison. I was in prison. I moaned and pulled up my pillow, clamped my arms down around it and my head, and hit the wall of my exhaustion, falling down into sleep.

Only to jump back awake: a rumbling, a shuffling of feet and a dozen hollow pops.

"What's that?" I yelled, jumping up so fast I hit my head on the ceiling.

"All the cell doors openin," answered Bonita, seated crosslegged and arms folded on her coat, her long neck and head, with the two squat plaits on top, thrust giraffe-like through zoo bars, "Everyone's back for lockdown."

Our cell light had gone off, the aisle lights dimmed. In the cell across from us shifted shadowy figures. A hand, brown, reached for the door and pulled it closed. On signal, other hands pulled other doors, each door clang resounding on the bridge of my nose, so that my eyeballs ached.

One supervisor stepped out of her booth with a clipboard, stood in the middle of the aisle and began to call off numbers.

"Yeh. Yo. Here," answered voices, sounding weary or sullen or simply detached. The supervisor stepped back in her booth. The wall of bars rumbled back, the aisle lights went out. I laid back down.

Rustlings. Groans. Whisperings. A broken snore or two. Somebody began to moan a hymn, "After a

While, This Will All Be Over," in a way which I have mostly misunderstood. I flopped over and buried my face in my arms. I fell asleep crying.

I've eaten a sandwich (smoked ham! with cheese and mustard on rye) but now I'm back, feeling less hungry and less angry, so let me tell you more:

The next morning, we were shocked awake by the amplified *brriing* of an alarm. Our overhead light flicked on, its bright disc burning my eyes open. And indeed, my eyes did feel like two burned-open holes. I bellied over and hid my head, which throbbed like the alarm bell. I groaned. Awake, I couldn't imagine I was elsewhere, not with my aching wrists and heavy head and stomach so empty it made my throat tight. With my whole heart and soul, I longed for a cigarette. I needed bacon, and some coffee and some liniment, with someone to rub it on my wrists. I wanted sunlight, and some orange juice. I wanted to brush my teeth.

Instead I got: rough bedsheets (numbered), a wristband stamped with a number, a nightie like an overlarge undershirt, numbered towels and my old pair of underwear. Plus a numbered envelope with my twelve bucks in it.

"You bring us sheets and nighties in the *morning?*" I groused to the trustee.

"Shut up," she said.

"OK," I agreed.

We made our beds and took our turns at the toilet. Though I couldn't imagine how to flush, and Bonita hadn't. "You have to yell 'flushing' loud enough so they kin hear it," she pointed up the aisle. "But in the mornings, they jus flushes em all at once."

After a while, after everyone had been sprung and called into line by number to be marched off to morning feeding, two guards came by with our breakfast trays. They asked for our wrists, which we thrust through the bars while they riveted our wristbands on. They left us alone to eat the powdered eggs and Wonder toast, then came back to lead us out of the block and down a corridor to Medical Wing.

After pelvic exams and a pubic shave, we were led

back to our cell, where, thighs quivering, I sought my bed and blanket.

"Why don't they let us *out* for lunch?" I asked that afternoon, when another set of trays got shoved through our slot.

"This is Ad*just*ment Unit," Bonita replied. "We gotta get *used* to it, before they let us out."

How could I ever adjust to that logic? Instead I went to sleep again, until I had to do something, like eat, shit or answer to my number at count time, three times a day.

After two days, they did let us out: to a dayroom down the hall. With everyone else, we were sprung one morning. Like everyone else, we scuffled aimlessly in for our morning feeding. Everyone else, with faces bloated or drowsy or tight, with eyes slitted or clouded or fevered and bright. It took me a while to realize—a while of watching wooden stumbles and arms that hung, of fingers and tongues that twitched like an alien reptile's—that almost everyone was medicated.

I remember that dayroom almost as well as my cell. I spent about a week in it, after I decided to try and stay awake all day. I recall the tiles the color of unclean dentures, the raw cement floor, the translucent blocks instead of windows. The light they let in was filtered through dust and vague fluorescence and the dull silver glow of the plexiglassed TV screen. I remember the metal chairs and tables, green as an army tank and bolted to the floor. I can probably recall every episode of "Mr. Ed" I saw (they never changed the channel), every tattered copy of *Reader's Digest* I read.

After five and a half days of raucous sitcoms and game shows, of dull digested articles, of card games blowsy with boredom and cigarette smoke, I decided to go back to sleep. The tinny bonks and buzzes of "Password" echoed after me all the way down the hall to the supervisor's booth. Inside it, our supervisor (Officer Ordner, chunky and ginger-skinned) was mending a state-issue knee sock. The wall of bars was open. Beyond it, the aisle's floor was slick. Newly disinfected, our cellblock smelled like a just-cleaned kennel. I wrinkled my nose.

"It do smell, don't it," said Officer Ordner, loosely flapping the sock. The fanning motion looked familiar.

"Are you from the South somewhere?" I asked

"Of course I am, baby, but even if I wasn't I could've been insulted by that question. You could get into trouble here for questions, honey. You know that, don't you?" She beamed helpfully at me.

I felt chastened, the way I'd always felt at Sunday school. "Can you pop my door for me?" I meekly asked.

She leaned back, seat squeaking, and flipped the door switch.

DEATH IN OUR WINDOWS
Timea Szell

"Julia, make sure the water's not too hot," Bernard called out from the bedroom. "He hates it hot." She didn't answer. She played with the water, pleasantly warm, and watched as its level grew higher in the tub. The cast-iron tub was old, very large, heavy and freestanding. Rust stains surrounded the drain. Jordan must have known these stains intimately and loved the curved legs which ended in claws biting into the tiled floor.

"Dunkin Donuts, what an idea," Bernard grumbled in the bedroom just loud enough for her to hear. She straightened up, weary, and took a deep breath. It wasn't going to be easy. Jordan walked by the door and flashed her the quick smile of an accomplice. The plate with the two fat donuts slanted precariously toward the floor. "Watch out, love, don't drop them," she ventured. They both laughed, her voice sounded so frail and uncertain. The child came back into the doorframe, "Jewel, I am making sure there's a *reason* for me to take a bath." She smiled again, her throat thick with sadness. How he talks, like a little adult. Unlike Bernard, she had missed the months and months of babble growing more sophisticated.

The tub was almost full. Bernard walked in, irritation about his lips, "Julia, *please* let some water out. You want to drown him?" He hated her being there; he hated her being well enough to board a bus in New York, and boldly heading north, sit through the five hours in a confined space, then pick up the phone and clearly enunciate, "Hello, Bernard, I am at the bus station. Can you pick me up?" and even comment articulately on the severe, functional houses lining the country road and the hills crowning the town. He wanted it all to himself: the martyrdom of raising Jordan alone, being able to tell his new wholesome friends of his ex-wife's neurotic loyalty to a failed city like New York, and wryly smiling at her inept attempts at talking with the boy on

the phone. Yet she couldn't really blame him for being irritated with her purposeful stride and her determination to see Jordan and, of course, the child's radiant reception of her. One day she might be able to tell Bernard that even the boy's capacity to forgive her had to do with the lackluster days Bernard was present for him. She was Jordan's rare jewel; Bernard was his father.

"This one smells just like lemon," Jordan appeared in the door again and held up one of the donuts, the lime-flavored one, "It smells just like Ruth's toilet." "Who's Ruth, love?" Julia wanted to know. "A friend of Pop's," Jordan took another bite. "Probably organic lemon," she murmured. Ruth—Julia could just see her, some authentic survivor of the sixties, her hair shiny with its gray boldly showing—had probably given Bernard the small soaps shaped like rosebuds that sat in a graceful little basket on the rim of the tub. The rosebuds, if anyone used them, would eventually end up like faded balls no longer smelling of roses. She had seen in a mail order catalog an item which looked like an ordinary bar of soap, but as the explanatory note revealed, when one started using it, the figure of a naked woman would gradually emerge. It was, no doubt, to satisfy the Pygmalion instinct in men: rubbing away their dirt and sweat, they slowly facilitated the birth of a sleek tangible female—all their own.

Jordan ran into the bathroom naked, his mouth covered with moist crumbs, "Look, Jewel, look, I am trembling like you used to." He stopped in front of her, rapidly moving his belly and thin torso from side to side. She felt a surge of resentment, but then he looked so comical and touching with his mouth grimacing in concentration and the blue veins crisscrossing his white chest that she smiled, "But I am *not* shaking any longer, see?" She held up her hand before his eyes, and they both stared at it fixedly. "I am impressed," Bernard growled in the doorway, "Get in the tub, Jordie." He looked very pale and poetic with his long dark hair smoothed behind his ears and his chino pants slightly soiled around his knees. He must have been working in the garden before she arrived, planting bulbs or something.

The child gingerly climbed into the tub and smiled at her, "Just right, Jewel. Give me my duck, the one you sent me, she looks like you." She reached for the soft rubber bird. She had bought it for two dollars in a shop selling homemade chocolates. Jordan grabbed the duck by the neck and suddenly pushed it below the surface. When he let go, it immediately bobbed to the top. The duck had wide, gray eyes and sweeping eyelashes which lent it an oblivious, dreamy expression.

"And now you'll tell me a story. Tell me a story about the Soldier who lived a long time ago." Bernard must have been near the bathroom, because he immediately appeared in the door again, his face taut with resentment, "Not that old Hussar again!" She finally grew impatient, "Bernard, please! I am giving Jordie a bath, and I *can* manage." Whipping the water with both hands, Jordan created small waves that propelled the duck forward. "A story, a story," he chanted. She sat down on the stone floor and began.

"A long time ago the Soldier drank a funny potion. It burnt his throat and made him see things that weren't really there. He drank the potion often and lots of it, because he was very sad, and the potion entertained him and made his arms and legs feel all soft and warm. But after a while the potion did not do the trick. He started to sleep badly. And one night when he woke up in the dark he saw a pale, silver-bearded goat hovering right in front of his bed. The goat looked like it was about to start nibbling on the Soldier's pillow. 'And *now* there's a goat in here,' he muttered. You see by that time several animals had appeared by his bedside, and the Soldier was very tired of them. He spat the funny potion out, right at the goat. The goat sizzled and disappeared." Jordan nodded seriously, "I wish my spit could do that."

"Julia, please step out here for a moment," Bernard called to her in his quietly furious voice. He didn't believe in reprimanding her in front of the boy. Everything about Bernard was indirect, even the way his shirt was buttoned. "Julia, are you out of your mind, entertaining the boy with parables about drinking? And now he wants sizzling saliva? What's

your problem?" His voice trembled with indignation. She put both hands on his waist which made him wince uncomfortably. "You are right, Bernard; I do have a one-track mind these days. I'll stick to the little red engine that could." He pulled back violently so her hands slipped off his belt. "Julia, what you do outside this house no longer concerns me. But I forbid you to entertain Jordan with oblique accounts of your goddamn grandfather's alcoholic reveries!" The word "forbid" stung her. But then Jordan called out to her from the tub, and she was further distracted by the sudden crisp image of swaying dark tree limbs right outside the hall window. She turned to Bernard, "You're right. And you're so tall and pale with justifiable indignation. Or is it self-importance? Damn playfulness about habitual drunkards. Do watch me every step of the way while I'm here, won't you? It makes me think of.... Did you know that heated plows were used to test the chastity of the medieval empress Kunegund?" Bernard nodded with a sudden thin-lipped smile, "And after she failed the test, no doubt, they scattered her poor little bones about the altar."

Jordan's limbs grew dark pink in the water. He seemed a trifle impatient with her. "Don't you know I need you here, Jewel? You can talk with Pop later." Then he suddenly smiled, "Know what? Today, when the sun was out I saw a bird take a bath in the dust." She nodded absently, still thinking about Bernard's anger and the bones. In all fairness, he had for a long time chased after the supremely selfish and erratic patterns of her own thirst. At times like an alluring, wounded deer, she kept skipping, sometimes stumbling, just a few feet ahead of him; at other times she slept like a muddy hog in an unshakable sleep. But when he could hold her, and begin to rest in the affirming knowledge that his kindness was healing her, her wounds would start bleeding or oozing anew, and she would be gone, whether twisting her doe-speckled behind out of sight in the forest or closing her red-rimmed pig eyes at him.

She turned to the boy, "Have you ever thought of what kind of animal you'd like to be?" Jordan

looked up delighted. "Yes. A gibbon," he said almost immediately. She thought of a photograph she had once seen in *National Geographic* or the *Smithsonian*, in some doctor's waiting room, no doubt. In the picture a woman and a small black-and-white-headed gibbon stared intently into each other's eyes. The woman, a zoologist who lived in some sultry jungle all by herself studying monkeys, had impressed her with the strength of her jaws and the small, elegant lines about her kindly eyes. "Wouldn't it be nice...", she mused, beginning gently to rinse the child's back, "just think, to live in the jungle enveloped by green...." "Are there lakes in the jungle?" Jordan asked. "Yes, lakes and rivers and seas and puddles and rain and mist and dew and ponds and streams and brooks and large drops of water hanging on long, thick leaves." She was soaping his matchstick arms, softly, deliciously to the rhythm of the water words. "I'd like to wade through a jungle lake," he nodded seriously. "Are there sharp rocks in the bottom of jungle lakes, do you know?" Julia shook her head,"No, love, the stones in jungle lakes are all round and smooth, pleasant to step on." He looked up with sudden excitement, "Just like marbles! Get my marbles—please."

She was mesmerized by the marbles; multicolored, and in different sizes, they were beautiful in the smooth, pine box. His small, dripping hands eagerly grabbed the box from her, and without hesitation, he dumped the contents into the tub. She winced for a moment, imagining Bernard's outrage, but the appropriateness of the many colors slowly rolling about in the tub delighted her. They were glass; the water would not hurt them. He was going to try to walk on them, she realized. So she anticipated him, "Fine, but only if you hold on to my hands." He didn't notice that he hadn't yet spoken his intention. She held his hands tight, and his grip too was strong. He stared down intently at the marbles and panting with concentration kept treading them. He looked like a little Cupid, moist and his hair curling in the steamy room, pressing grapes.

But in a few seconds it was over: having appropriated the sensation and been nourished by it,

he sank into the water. "Look, Jewel," he pointed at his knees barely emerging from the water, "Islands! And do you see the tiny trolls on them? They're blue and hairy and scratching their behinds *firsly*." She laughed, "Scratching their behinds *how?*" "Firsly, firsly," he repeated impatiently, "Don't you know anything?" She realized he meant "fiercely," and kissed him quickly on the top of his head. He looked up, his eyes dark and purposeful. "I'm going to send you a book soon," she murmured. "Don't send it, bring it," he interrupted and then asked, "What book?" "The tales of a thousand and one nights." "So many nights? Do give me the book." He forgot all about the tiny trolls on his knees and let them sink. "That's where I read about olives for the first time," she explained, and he seemed to understand. "You have eyes like glistening dark olives, Jordan," she said. He nodded, "I like that. And I have brave eyebrows. Brave like a king's, you see?"

She picked up the washcloth which hung on the edge of the tub, rubbed it with soap and continued washing him. She probably wasn't as thorough and methodical as Bernard, because Jordan kept a sly silence, humming to himself mysteriously. Then he quickly said, "I have already washed my face. While you were with Pop in the hall." She shook her head, the donut crumbs, though soggy, were still visible. He shuddered but offered no protest as the cloth touched his cheeks.

Later she would pour herself a tall glass of spring water; her throat felt parched. Bernard might not insist on conversation; of late he seemed to have given up his previous insistence on continuous clarification of the hopelessly murky. He was an intelligent man with great and meticulous learning. He kept a long list of books and articles yet to read, a list that kept growing as he read his journals and studied the footnotes and the bibliographies. Slowly, deliberately, he went down the list. He had tried to understand her in the same methodical manner. His concepts of addiction and dependency were, by and large, nuanced, and he was ever ready to revise his positions. He was in the best sense of the word up to date, and a stubborn honest thinker. But he would either take her too

seriously or fail to hear the oblique pleas for mercy in her plainer, but less precise, and infinitely less honest words. Meaning rotted between them when they spoke.

Absorbed, Jordan silently stirred the water with his fingertips, enjoying the exquisite sensation of the water against them. That was true freedom, she thought as she watched him. She surreptitiously sank a finger into the bathwater just to gauge by the temperature how much time had passed. She half expected the water to be cold, but it was warm as before. "Jewel-bewel, this feels very, very good," Jordan finally said awed, in a hushed whisper. He peeled her unresisting left hand off the rim of the tub, gently pulled it down into the water, and moved her fingers back and forth. She laid her head on her arm, and let the moment be. Sometimes she could to it now; watch minutes grow like enormous drops of water at the ends of blades of grass, hanging on for what seemed like an astoundingly long time, and falling to the ground only when their own fullness was ready to burst.

"You were named after a river, love, did you know that?" she asked in a whisper. Jordan let go of her hand. "You mean like the Hudson?" She nodded, "Yes, sort of like that. Like Lake Cayuga, Niagara Falls...." Like the Dead Sea. The Soldier had drowned in a flooded river when Julia was a bit older than Jordan. Bernard had once tried to trace her obsession with water and alcohol to the night when she was awakened by her parents and some strangers talking outside her door about the corpse discovered in the river. She had always thought Bernard generous to explain her dubious involvement with things liquid by a childhood trauma; she knew it was both more complicated and more simple.

She also knew that for a long time she wouldn't even attempt to unravel the strands of the old rope to her past—to Eastern Europe, to silent evenings behind the lace curtains when she sat and drew uncanny little scenes of crucifixions and beheadings, to suicide statistics, to arguments on the worn steps of the museum about the failure of socialism, to walnut brandy, to the oppressive smell of paprika and onion

drifting from the direction of the railroad station, and to childhood nightmares.

The other day she had thought of the stories the Soldier used to tell her about Mishi the red squirrel. Forever threatened by foes and darkness, Mishi lived in the hollow of a tree lined with soft, dry bunches of grass and animal hair, and he listened anxiously to the winter storms outside. When the flavor of the tales had returned to her, she had thought of the precariousness of the small furry body perched alone in a tiny hollow of warmth in the midst of wet snow viciously slashing against the tree. She had imagined the squirrel, with its red hair standing up, crawling cautiously to the opening of the hollow. And she had seen how he watched then with dilated eyes as the leaves and tufts of his own fallen hair which obstructed the opening grew more and more wet.

Her next thought had been of Jordan—nothing specific, just his pale triangular face which, especially in his absence, struck her always as an image of pathos. She had felt a vague dread for him then. She had lain down on her floor, blown at the dust balls about her face, and put her flushed cheek against the wood. She had stayed that way until the beating anxiety receded. Later, as she had washed her face, she noticed hives on her fingers, round and red like mean mosquito bites. She had named the child Jordan to ward off the evil spirits of the waters, to force them, as it were, to recognize him as one of their own.

Suddenly invigorated again, the boy gave out a shrill yell, and splashed some water in her eyes. "Perhaps we should begin retrieving your marbles from the water now," she suggested tentatively. "No," Jordan shook his head emphatically, "my bath is not over yet. I am all dirty." She picked up the washcloth again and ran it up and down his back dutifully while, reminded of the marbles, he peered down into the water trying to sort them with his feet. The marbles rolled frustratingly in unpredictable directions.

Just like the bones, she thought. Her father and the Soldier had opened the family crypt, which had become full, and taken the bones of the dead out of

their coffins and placed all into one to make room for the younger generation. She had always thought that the Soldier had taken this event as a cue to die soon afterwards. He had spoken to her about that day only once and then only to say how puzzled he had been to find thick locks of gray hair on the two-hundred-year-old skull of his great-great-grandfather and nothing at all, not a shred of flesh, but a dusty, homely black dress on the remains of his mother. Sometimes the bones still figured in her dreams, dancing in the air, mingling inextricably.

"I *can't* do it, I can't," Jordan complained angrily, and then added in a suddenly light-hearted voice, "Let's take them out now anyway. They live in that box. In the water the sillies think they're fish."

She picked out the marbles one by one. Music wafted into the steamy bathroom: Bernard had put on a record, Vivaldi cello concerti. She imagined him slouched in his favorite armchair, his posture contrived to seem relaxed, a look of petulant irritation tightening his features. Like a thoroughbred with flaring nostrils, he would be listening to the soft, intimate water noises reflecting accord which came from the bathroom.

She wanted to get into the tub with her child, but that would have been too much for Bernard. She couldn't very well blame him: what a spectacle it would be, violating all aesthetic and psychological criteria of wholesomeness, the incestuous, repellant image of the prodigal mother, straight from the halfway house for alcoholic women, on her fist visit to her four-year-old son, floating, nay flaunting, her pasty body battered by chemicals and abusive and abused lovers next to her small child. She took off her sneakers and socks, and sat up on the edge of the tub.

The steam and the cumulatively blessed relief of being generously accommodated by the child she had neglected made her feel pleasantly weak. "Do you mind if my feet join you, Mr. Gibbon?" Jordan was delighted, "Oh, yes, come right in. Feet and legs and everything." He eagerly made room for her, much more room than her feet needed. She eased them into the water. "They are pretty clean, really,"

she volunteered shyly, but he didn't seem to care. "They *should* be dirty, Jewel; why else would you want to wash them?" He made good sense. With a wide grin he grabbed her right foot under the water. She wasn't ticklish, but the intimate touch of the small fingers sent a shiver along her spine. He touched her toes one by one. "This one ate roast beef, this one ate chicken, this ate a box, this ate tissues, this one ate the skull." He reached for her left and grabbed the big toe. "This ate whiskey, and," skipping the middle three and grabbing the smallest toes, "this one went wee, wee, wee, wee all the way home." Suddenly he slipped into insistent baby talk, "Wee, wee, wee, wee." He let go of her toes and started softly rubbing both her feet, "I'm washing them, they're dirty," he offered.

She looked at her feet floating trustfully between his hands. A week or so after she had left the halfway house, filled with menacing energy and a desire to scrape away all the imperfections, she had shaved her legs in the tub. Of course, her hand still trembling and unaccustomed to the activity, she had cut herself. As she had watched with admiration the blood streaking in the water, she had thought that slitting her wrist would be quite painless. Now Jordan's hands cupped the soles of her feet gently yet purposefully. Perhaps one day she could forgive her own body for its relentless imperfections, and be as generously accepting of it as her boy seemed to be. Under his unselfconscious appropriating touch, the protrusions of her bunions looked almost dignified. The tension left her calf muscles; her feet went deliciously limp. How lovely even a flawed limb could look when in repose, she thought.

Peace didn't last. Jordan suddenly wanted more, "Come, get into the tub, all of you!" he urged bossily. She shook her head; her feet touched the rust stains on the bottom of the tub. Disappointed, Jordan reached for the washcloth and began pulling it in swift, angry circles on the surface of the water. Suddenly the water became murky; the outlines of her feet fragmented. Her soles instantly remembered an old feeling of moist muddy grass under them. Faster than she would have liked, she pulled them

dripping to safety.

"You're *scared*, aren't you?" The child looked menacing in his small triumph, but misunderstood what really frightened her, "All of you! Into the water!" Suddenly his voice was shrill and mean, "No," she said, "it's those spring floods, you see..." It had been spring, with the grass muddy and the embankment swollen with underground waters when she had gone swimming with the Soldier to seek relief from the prematurely scorching sun in the river flooded and rising above the level of the thick water-side bushes and even a few young willows. She had kept glancing back at her faded cotton dress left in the grass on the dam. And then something long and sharp had clawed at her stomach. She had screamed and clung to her grandfather fitfully. He had tried to calm her and told her it was only the branches of a bush, but that only made her more frantic. She had always dreaded things black and darting that lurked beneath surfaces. For the same reason she had pleaded with Bernard never to inflict the idea of the tooth fairy on their son. Even as an adult she imagined the tooth fairy as a wizened, demonic necrophiliac coming at the dead of night to peer in the face of the sleeping child and quickly reaching a tiny hairy claw under the pillow to extract the small tooth there with bits of dried child-blood still sticking to its sharp edges.

But she didn't have to tell Jordan all that. She tried to give him words to hold on to, even as she had been compelled to collect pretty words when she was a first-grader. "Milk, wave, yellow, oil, smile, owl, beguile...", she spoke them like an incantation. Jordan drew back disappointed, realizing she was no longer frightened.

"Spring," she finally said firmly, "Jordan, in the morning it will be spring." He let the washcloth sink under the surface. "So what will happen then?" he asked, hoping for a game. She said, "The houses will play hide-and-seek with the sunrays. And fresh petals will grow on new flowers." The child was listening. "You mean the petals on the dining room table will jump back onto the yellowness in the middle?" She stood up, trying not to make the floor even

more wet, "No, things don't go backward like that. Once a petal's down, it's down. No, spring means new ones." This he understood. The music had stopped; she heard Bernard approaching. "Jordan, your mother will have to get you out. It's later than your usual bedtime," he was addressing the child in an even voice. He looked composed again. Then he turned to her, "I am making some tea, like some?" She nodded, and dutifully reached for a towel. His lean, flushed buttocks pinched, Jordan shivered lightly as he stood up in the tub,

"Jewel, could I have some chocolate? I only had half a donut. Those coins...", he pointed in the direction of his bedroom. She had brought him a bag of chocolate coins wrapped in gold foil, because when they had spoken on the phone last, he had asked her to bring him treasure for his trove. Keenly aware of Bernard in the doorway, she tried to sound officious, "No, not tonight. Half a donut is enough sweets for one night. But tomorrow you can sample the gold." The tip of Jordan's nose was crowned by a garland of water droplets. He seemed forgetful of the ordeal of being dried. "So did you bring me gold, Jewel? Is it really gold, not chocolate? I think I'd like it to be chocolate."

She didn't answer. He wove his arms around her neck like strong strands of seaweed; she felt his weight in her waist. "Well, you can tell about that tomorrow," she said mysteriously, for a moment wondering herself what she had brought him. She carried him to his bedroom carefully as if holding something fragile, or someone terribly sick. Her belated solicitousness, unknown to the child, was just as inappropriate, she suddenly realized, as her ferocious selfishness before. Alone in New York, for days at a time she hadn't even thought of him. Perhaps it would all balance out one day; perhaps then it would come to her naturally. For now sanity was still a contrivance. She had to will herself to relax her inappropriate grasp of the child. "I'll get into pajamas by myself," Jordan announced. The calming, languorous fragrance of camomile tea filled her nostrils. "Good," she smiled at the boy, "I'll come back in a few minutes."

She met Bernard in the kitchen door; he was balancing two cups, a large jar of honey, and some oatmeal cookies on a tray. Grateful for his having relented, she reached for the tray, "Let me help you." He looked tired, but much less bellicose. "You madwoman, you," he grumbled almost tenderly, "I do want you to get better, and I must say you seem to be getting better, but the sight of you, the wild things you sometimes say to Jordie...well, I'm just reminded of all the waste, all the scenes." "I know," she said quietly, and took her cup. "Thank you, this smells very nice. I'll drink it in a minute; I still want to say goodnight to him. I wish I could be more calm around him, Bernard."

Bernard sat back down in the armchair, "He talks about you all the time. What can I say?" He stood up, nervous again. She too felt tense; she found it easier to cope with his hostility. Facing her and the tray she held protectively in front of her chest, he struck a theatrical pose, "'The angels bear down/ upon the barn, their wings/ neither white/ wax nor marble...' Louise Gluck. Seemed apropos."

Julia nodded, "Yes, this angel has playdough wings. What a remarkable memory you have for poetry." He stepped back, "Go on, put him to sleep; the tea will wait. Just don't tell him anything crazy; he's had his share of that. Don't tell him that tomorrow you will cook his spaghetti with God's breath on it." Her defensive flippancy rising up again, she teased, "Then again, you can't deny I have at times been pretty poetic when drunk." She gingerly set the tray down and walked out without looking at him.

"Who am I?" Jordan asked spreading his thin white arms wide. He was standing on his bed wearing an oversized Superman t-shirt which covered his knees. "Sup-p-perman!" she diagnosed with forced joviality. "And what else?" he urged a bit impatiently. "Superman getting ready to go to sleep?" she asked tentatively. "No," he was disappointed, "Superman walking in the purple blood of his enemy." She looked at his feet; he had purple socks on. "Whose purple blood, love?" she asked, feigning disinterested curiosity, almost afraid to hear his answer. Jordan responded immediately, smoothing his moist

hair back on his forehead, "Well, especially the blood of the Great Moth. The Great Big Moth is all dead now." She sat down on his bed. Could it be possible that nightmares too were genetically transmitted? She had been very small, still sleeping in the crib, when she had repeatedly seen a large, brown, velvety moth flutter at her menacingly from the darkness behind the tiled stove. She was sure she had never mentioned that moth to him. "Don't be afraid of the Great Big Moth, Jordie," she finally whispered, "He only *looks* bad, but inside he is full of brown and gold dreams and honeyed wishes and soft songs. Believe me, I met him when I was your age." She pulled the cover high up on his back. He instantly grabbed the sheet and held it protectively against his cheek. But his voice sounded sleepy and unconcerned, "Good, I didn't know that. Perhaps Superman can give him back his blood then. Tomorrow..."

She kissed his ear, and straightened up with a sigh. "Sleep well, Jordan; I'll still be here in the morning." He closed his eyes in reply. She left the door a bit ajar as she walked out of the room to pass through the darkened hallway with its window opening at the black branches to sit and drink her camomile tea.

APRIL IN BERLIN
Debi Ray-Chaudhuri

We are lying in bed together, fused at the navel with sweat. Outside the sun is shining, it must be late afternoon, but I always lose track of time when I'm making love.

"What are you thinking of?" I look at her eyes, they're green as cat's eyes, though they can be gray as the sky in Berlin when the air raid sirens go off and you think it's the beginning of World War III.

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all." She's teasing me with the lightness that she has after we make love. I feel intoxicated, aufgelöst, dissolved. The radio is playing quietly, Stimme der DDR, Voice of the German Democratic Republic, a waltz before the news. Then we'll know exactly how late it is.

My lover, she knows how to waltz. I try, but this leading and following business confuses me. It's not easy when you're both women. Still, she moves with absolute certainty, dancing with my precarious but spirited bumbling.

"I'm hungry, are you hungry too?" I'm always hungry after making love.

"What have we got? I'll make some coffee." She likes to drink coffee. I can take it or leave it, but I like to watch the way she makes coffee.

"We don't have any more canned milk, I think."

We have been drinking canned milk ever since Chernobyl. It's almost a year now. Buying canned milk is such a pitiful gesture, as if the radiation wasn't falling from the sky every time it rains; as if the rains didn't seep into the ground water; as if somehow those little cans could protect us, coming from a more innocent time when we didn't even think about low-level radiation. They won't be safe much longer either, since they have begun to process the contaminated milk powder into canned milk. But we buy them anyway.

"Ach, du Scheisse!" (Shit!)
"I think we have some tea."

The tea is from Turkey. They say it's not safe to consume tea from Turkey harvested after May 1985 either, but we don't have anything else right now. Besides, we like Turkish tea.

She's gotten up to make the tea. I feel the space she's left as a vacuum, a void that threatens to suck me in if I don't get up too. Looking out the window I see the other side of the "Hinterhof," the back lot, the roofs are blazing, and my room is filled with the golden, reflected light of the evening. It seems beautiful to me, though I think of the woman who lived in this apartment before me, with her husband of forty years. Probably fifty years, but no one talks about what they were doing here fifty years ago, if they are old enough to have been doing things on their own. Forty years, then, in twenty-eight square meters; this room, the kitchen, the hallway connecting them, and the outside toilet. Not much. They say, "Too little to live on, too much to die from." I suppose she did not find this view beautiful after forty years.

She certainly seemed happy to leave. I don't know how she felt about my moving in. Somebody didn't seem too happy about an "Ausländerin" (foreigner) moving in. Why would they call me anonymously at night, "Du, Dreckpenner, was hast du mit Frau Kusches Wohnung gemacht?" (You, garbage, what have you done with Frau Kusche's apartment?) Click. Hang up.

Ausländer, as in Ausländer raus! Not an easy word to translate. Foreigner doesn't carry the force and fear connected with "Ausländer" (outlander), someone not from The Land, i.e. Deutschland, Germany. This division of the world is so fixed and lasting, it frightens me. Well, America is a land of foreigners, they are not willing to advertise the fact by naming it. And what am I to Americans or America to me?

"Where are you from?"
"Ohio."
"No, I mean...?"
"Well, I was born in New York."
Blank stare.
"I mean, what language do you speak, Indian or

something?"

"English."

My knowledge of, and inability to speak Bengali is a shameful secret that I am not willing to divulge. The price of my American passport, of my Americanization. Forget where you came from, you're in America now.

Put that aside. Ute's here with the tea. I am looking lewdly at her long legs, she laughs and throws a snapkick at my head. Then the bomb hits.

Not a real bomb. I mean not in my room. We're listening to the news, you see. It's April 15, 1986. President Reagan has just bombed other people's rooms in Libya in an attempt to assassinate Quaddafi. The pretext is the bomb that went off in a Berlin disco, frequented by American soldiers.

Suddenly the sky seems gray, and I don't hear the air raid sirens but I think it's the beginning of World War III. What will happen next? We are straining our ears, fiddling with the dial to improve the reception, but there's no more information coming out of the radio.

I am too numb to think about it at the moment, but some questions keep bothering me, when I'm not too busy with my own business.

What happened to consulting Congress (and therefore, indirectly, the American people) before any sort of military aggression?

Since there was no irrefutable evidence that the disco bombing was planned or executed by Libyans, what happened to International Law?

What is a terrorist, or terrorist activity? Does that include assassination?

The last question bothers me quite a lot lately, as I am constantly being pulled out of the subway by the German police, under suspicion of being a terrorist. Me and anyone else with dark hair and complexion.

I am thinking about going home. I am wondering where home is, when I hear that seventy percent of the American people approved of Reagan's military action against Libya. I think of my family, my little brother who's three and my older sister who's twenty-three. I wonder how we will fit into World War III.

Will he be forced to become a soldier, will she be imprisoned for her beliefs?

I was wrong, it seems. World War III did not start on April 15, 1986. Or maybe we just can't see it as starting then, from 1987. Still, it is a day that shall live in infamy, even if it provokes no great stir of emotion in the world. I am not surprised that NATO did not respond, nor the United Nations (given the American influence in those bodies), but that the Soviets did no more than issue a reprimand, and that Quaddafi seemed unwilling to respond in kind to the American attack, that surprises me.

But, America would not attack a country, no matter how small, that had strong ties with the Soviet Union, would it? The U.S. might provide unlimited aid to "freedom fighters" of all shapes and sizes, but naked military aggression is another matter, isn't it?

Scene change. Back in Berlin, fifty thousand people have turned out to demonstrate against Reagan's visit. On either side of the street there are five hundred West German policemen, in full riot gear, i.e. helmets, boots, gloves, shields, sticks, and guns; ready to beat the living hell out of anyone who gets out of hand. And they do. So we half-run, half-walk the seven miles from Charlottenburg to Kreuzberg, afraid to take the subway home. Finally, they shut down the subway altogether (the subway to and from Kreuzberg) to keep the "radicals" from disrupting the President's visit. Technical difficulties, they say.

What a sound that was! The absolute, deathly silence of a busy intersection (Mehringdamm and Gneisenaustrasse) lined with those uniformed policemen in riot gear, policing a German city for an American president. No cars, no bicycles, no people crossing the street. Rush hour in Berlin. Weltstadt.

When we get home, we are too tired to make love. We fall asleep and dream nightmares of World War III.

RAPUNZEL
Pamela Sneed

Rapunzel was a sister.
You think I'm playing?
I said, Rapunzel was a Black Woman
badder than your Mama.
That white woman with the blond hair
hanging out in a castle
pining for prince charming
was a damn fairy tale!

Now,
The Rapunzel I knew had dreadlocks
longer than the geechee river.
I'd say "RAPUNZEL! RAPUNZEL!"
She'd say, "What do you want now?"
I'd say, "Rapunzel, let down your hair" and
she'd let them dreadlocks
blond from baking in the sun fall reluctantly
from beneath her red black and green cap
so I could grab holda one and
climb on up.

We all know that fairy tale girl's hair was too slippery
to hold anybody
and anyway
prince charming should have left
well enough alone
because I found out
the woman they said was a witch
keeping 'punzel prisoner
was Rapunzel's lover and
that castle was the love they built!

Yeah.
Rapunzel was a free woman
making her own choices and
she did not need any rescuing.

FOR LISA WIELDING A COMB

Deborah Salazar

I want a hairstyle like Rosh Hashana—
nostalgic, severe, a whole day long.
But already I'm getting off the subject.
The object is to get off.
To make potent nonsense out of soft facts—
women missing women,
a portable fan singing D flat,
diaries laid one on top of another all the way
to the gold, much gossiped about moon.
And there are cats—boneless calicos
draped over sofa arms, wrapped around shoes.
Before you believe it, October
is the cruelest month, but one woman
is crueler—her hair overcombed to static
and sticking up like fur.
I'm her, wishing I were
a portable fan singing D flat—swish
    adjust impassive compassion its
    possible we're women we're worrying
    we're whir whir—as if any
insistent sadness rhymes with being reminded
of a fingernail combing a naked back,
of my last lover's vodka-colored
apologetic kisses.

ALL HALLOWS EVE
Jacqueline Lapidus

Tapes on the boom box blare into the night.
Your child is gold, electrified, a queen.
Were you like that when you were just sixteen?
Somehow I don't think so—in your room
the single mirror hangs so high and small
you can hardly see yourself, much less preen.
In all the time we've been lovers, you
have never seen
me dance, though I am known to all
as virtually unstoppable in Provincetown,
the quick, lithe body you desire
and hold now, murmuring) wired
until closing. These children move
to music I remember, but were you
like that? At the pool last week your girl
complained she's getting fat, then swam
her twenty lengths without a pause
and flopped, exhausted. I suppose
I was like that once, death so remote
it couldn't possibly be real.
My arms and legs are trained now,
sleek as a seal I go the distance.
You, when we swim together, start out slow
yet burn to reach the other end ahead
of me. I follow, fingers on your toe.
Will she do that when she is forty-six?
Will I, at fifty-three, grow more ambitious,
achieve patience, speed and breath?
I doubt it. Now the children swarm
to the table, ravenous—in ten minutes
half the food is gone, it's London
under the blitz. The noise
is deafening. Are all teenagers loud?
I was. You, by your own account deprived,
never had a party. Sixteen
and golden, she a joy, a gift
I can be proud of. Sweetheart,
listen, dance with me tonight
before our differences put out the light.

SIGNATURE PIECE
Pam A. Parker

I want to sign my name to you
splayed there
something I could see across the room
before I put my hand or mouth to you
a mark lasting longer
than your response to a familiar move
what I'll see
    next I'm here
        doing this
something that won't grow to boredom in the end
as the familiar (and its response in us) must do
something that doesn't show 'accustomed'
show tiring of me, my tricks and tales
as the familiar (and how we face it) does
a mark that doesn't show time passing but only says
itself
    says I did this
        my work is good

even when we want the same thing
constantly, unendingly
our wanting fails, in time, to be enough
desire turns away, filled and empty together
we remember, little prompting,
    what we wanted
        and how
a mourning for the shift of our target, our aim
that shift I want to stifle
signing you, splayed
mine in this way
then I might go
freed of the future building itself into my hands
my mouth I put to you
freed of the familiar's question and my answer
then I might be only in the past
and perfect there
    a good work
        signed by its maker

AMANDA
Virginia Holmes

The baby lay quietly in her crib. She lay on her back, staring up attentively. Her sister leaned over the side. Braids hung down on either side of her face. Her eyes were dark. They matched the baby's eyes. She whispered, You ugly baby! I don't think you're so precious. Don't expect anything from *me*. She glanced quickly behind her at the open door that led to the small living room. She reached out, lifted the warm blanket, and swiftly pinched the baby. The baby began to cry.

But that was not out of the ordinary. The baby cried most of the time. She had been small when she was born more than a month before, and she had not gained any weight yet. She cried when she was held. She cried when she was in the crib. She cried days, and she cried nights. The mother took her to the doctor, a family friend and neighbor. There's nothing wrong, he had said to the mother. You're the problem. Just get her away from your fussing, she'll be fine. The little girl had listened. The baby had continued to cry.

At home the little girl returned to the side of the crib. I'll show you, she muttered. I'll show you what she does to me. She unwrapped the blanket covering the baby. She grabbed the baby by the heels and picked her up, head down. Small fingers explored between the baby's legs, under the diaper. Steps sounded from the other room. The little girl dropped the baby into the crib roughly and hurried from the bedroom.

The bitter cold had passed. Snow had melted, running down the roads into the ditches. Apple blossoms had passed by. Lilacs had come and gone. The family had gone back to the island. The baby was six months old now. Another doctor had found the problem and placed her on a special diet. She had gained weight; she no longer cried all the time. The worst was over. She played quietly on the rug in front of the fireplace. The little girl was in the big

armchair feeding her doll. Sounds of the pump and clattering dishes came from the kitchen. She wrapped the doll in a blanket and carefully laid her on the window seat for her nap. She stared out at the bay for a few moments, then turned to find something to do. She picked a jar of bubble soap from the bottom of the bookshelf where she kept some toys and games. She opened the jar, dipped into the soap and blew bubbles across the room. The baby laughed and reached. The little girl blew again. The baby kept laughing. The little girl came closer and blew once more. A bubble burst on the baby's cheek. She started. The little girl leaned over, Are you all right? It's okay, they're only bubbles, she crooned softly. Are you hungry? Is it time for your lunch? She leaned closer, carefully put the jar of soap to the baby's mouth, and poured.

Two years later. The summer of 1949 was hot and dry. Ellie and Amanda ran wild all summer with the other children. In this group Amanda was the youngest. She didn't talk much to the other children, only to Ellie or to herself when she thought no one was listening, but she could keep up. The older children invented a game called swallows. They made nests in the tall grass. They ran up and down the golden fields. They flew from nest to nest, pieces of timothy in their mouths, feeding their babies. Amanda was a baby swallow. She waited obediently in her nest, twittering for her mother to bring food. Other days they played on rocks. They took their lobster boats to sea and came back with a good catch. Amanda was the passenger.

That winter and the next and the next the days were long. Ellie went to school each day on the yellow bus. Amanda waited, filling the hours with solitary games. She watched out the windows for the bus to come through the trees. Finally each day the bus would come. Ellie would run up the hill from the road, and Amanda would meet her at the door. Ellie was the planner. Ellie made up the stories. The little girls played school. Of course Ellie was the teacher. She knew what went on in school. Amanda was the willing student. She worked hard, and Ellie taught her whatever she had learned that day. Sometimes

Amanda couldn't do the work. She learned the state capitals of New England, but she just could not say Montpelier. Ellie was angry.

In the fall of 1951 grown-up life finally began. Amanda started school. School was not quite the way Amanda had pictured it. She went to school in a taxi, not a big yellow bus. And it seemed to her that school was mostly play, not work. It didn't feel quite as grown-up as she had imagined. There were no desks, only tables. And she didn't learn anything new. She tried hard to sit still. When there was nothing to do, she read ahead in her reader.

That winter they invented the game of Black Beauty. They marked stalls and barns and pastures on the hall floor with chalk. Ellie was the farmer, and Amanda got to be Black Beauty. Black Beauty's life was filled with sad and painful events, and Amanda enjoyed playing out the melodrama. She also enjoyed imagining herself as a beautiful black strong horse. The hall had a full length mirror at the end of it. Amanda would prance down the hall, tossing her mane, admiring herself in the mirror.

When she was Black Beauty, she could forget the strange things that were happening. But she couldn't always forget them. Sometimes when the family came home, it was clear that someone had been in the house in their absence. There would be dirty dishes in the living room, cigarette smoke in the air, the back door might be standing open. They took to locking the house when they left, but still someone was getting in. No one talked to Amanda about this, but she could see for herself. She could also see that her parents knew who was coming in when they were gone. She could see her father and mother look at each other when they opened the door. She could feel how tense they got as the car got near home. She could hear their voices when she was going to sleep. Once she heard her mother saying, This has got to stop. You have to do something, James! She wondered what her father would do.

One night Amanda looked up at her window to see a face. She lay very still, her heart pounding. If she called out, what would happen? If she moved and ran out of the bedroom, would the person climb

in? She lay as still as she could, and the face disappeared. Too frightened to move, she did not go for help. She lay there quietly, till she fell asleep in spite of herself. In the morning she didn't tell anyone what had happened; perhaps it had not really happened after all.

But still there was grown-up talking at night. There was shouting. A policeman came to the house. There were new locks on the doors. Now when they came home, no one had been in the house. Amanda didn't see the face at the window again. After a bit the tension receded. They stopped locking the doors. The shouting stopped. Sometimes Amanda would look up at her window, remember the face, and be afraid. But after a while, it seemed no more than a bad dream. Gradually she forgot about the whole thing.

In 1954 the family moved. Now their house was not surrounded by woods. There were houses on both sides of the new house and across the street. There were neighbors. There were children. In back of the house was a stream. Across the stream were more children. It was lucky for Amanda that there were so many children, for Ellie had changed. She didn't want to play any more. She wouldn't play school. She wasn't interested in blocks or playing Black Beauty. Amanda was angry. Ellie had deserted her. She had decided to become boring and grown-up. Amanda was lonely. Ellie didn't like her anymore. She was too little to be Ellie's friend.

Amanda made friends with a little girl next door. She liked to play with Dinah, but she always felt just a little guilty playing with her. She didn't love Dinah the way she loved Ellie. It seemed as though Dinah wanted her to love her. Amanda tried to love Dinah, but she couldn't change how she felt. So instead she felt a little guilty and a little angry.

Ellie didn't make many friends. But that didn't make her want to be with Amanda. She just didn't seem to want to do anything fun anymore. Amanda learned to stop asking her.

Sometime during that winter when Ellie was eleven and Amanda was seven, Ellie showed some interest in Amanda. She invited her to come into the bathroom. The bathroom was a large room with an

old-fashioned tub. Ellie instructed Amanda to take off her clothes and perch on the edge of the tub. She examined her vulva and as the teacher, explained what the different parts were called. She inserted her finger into Amanda's vagina and carefully told Amanda that this was called her gullet. Both girls found this name very funny. In fact, the whole game involved much giggling. It wasn't easy for Amanda to remember the names that Ellie taught her, but she tried hard, and sometimes at dinner she could make Ellie laugh with her if she used one of those words in the general conversation. She liked to make Ellie laugh.

This time of connection didn't last long. When it was over, Amanda felt deserted anew. She cast about for ways to get Ellie to pay attention to her. She did not try to get her to come to the bathroom. She invented a game in which she took a lasso and laid a trap in a doorway where Ellie was bound to walk. When Ellie came through, she pulled the lasso tight around Ellie's feet. This didn't really work well as a trap, but it did make Ellie respond with nervous giggles and shrieks. Another good game was to walk toward Ellie pointing a finger at her. Ellie would back away, begging Amanda to stop. Although Ellie hated both these games, somehow it didn't seem to Amanda that she really wanted her to stop. Besides she didn't want to stop.

Amanda was a cowboy now. She had a black hat with a silver design on it. She saved her money and bought a pistol at the general store. She played long games with her friend John from across the brook. They crept down the rows of corn in the hot summer sun. They rode their horses across the stream and through the orchard. It was a rule that guns and hats came off at the table. Amanda hung hers on the back of her chair.

Fairly often Amanda looked up to find Ellie watching her. She couldn't tell what Ellie wanted. If she invited Ellie to play, Ellie never wanted to. Sometimes when she found Ellie watching, she would ask, What? Nothing, Ellie would answer and she would return to her book.

Ellie did not know much about the games that

Amanda played with John. She probably didn't care much about those games. Ellie would never be a cowboy.

Amanda got a bicycle. She painted it green and white so it looked almost new. She put a basket on the handlebars. She rode up and down the streets of the town. She rode through the paths of the wood. She rode on the country roads outside the town. She found that she could ride up the steepest hill if she just kept slowly and steadily pedaling. She found she could speed down those same hills when she lay flat over the handlebars. She felt strong and she felt happy.

She forgot about trying to get Ellie to like her, to pay attention. She forgot about Ellie. Ellie didn't ride her bike much. Ellie didn't do *anything* much, but Amanda didn't bother to feel angry about that anymore. She raced home from school, tore off her dress, pulled on her dungarees, and went out on her bike.

Once on a trip downtown, she ran into Ellie with two of her friends from the junior high. They were all in cotton skirts with wide patent leather belts. Amanda was in her dungarees and t-shirt. After dinner that evening Ellie caught Amanda alone in the kitchen. She grabbed her arm and whispered fiercely, Don't ever speak to me downtown again! If you see me, then just pretend you don't know me. Amanda pulled away. Why? Let go. What's the matter with you? Ellie squeezed more tightly. Just do as I say. I don't want anyone to know you're my sister. You look like a freak. She dropped Amanda's arm and pushed past her into the living room and up the stairs.

Amanda rubbed her arm. She stood still in the dark kitchen. For a moment she felt as though she were lying on her back with someone leaning over her, someone very big. She shook her head impatiently. What *was* the matter with her? What was Ellie talking about? She got the book that she had left on the table and began to read.

Amanda discovered horses. Bicycles were good, but they weren't really horses. They weren't solid and warm. They didn't have grace and power and

movement. They didn't speak to you softly when you came out in the morning. For several years she saved her money. She took bottles to the store. She ran errands for Ellie. She saved her allowance. She found odd jobs. When she was thirteen, her parents, impressed by her persistence, surprised her by giving in. They would help her get a horse.

The horse came. A red and white painted pony—smart and stubborn and strong. A real horse was very real. By the end of the summer she had come to terms with the realness of this horse, his unsentimentality and his determination to do what he knew was right. And the horse had come to terms with her as well, her stubbornness, her temper, and her willingness to see when he was right. Ellie was afraid of the horse, but she wanted to be part of this event. Before he even arrived, when Amanda was trying to think of an appropriate name, Ellie suggested Sachem, an Indian word for chieftain. Amanda wasn't sure; she wanted to choose her own name. But Ellie began to call him Sachem, and Sachem became his name.

The actual physical horse, Ellie wanted nothing to do with. But Amanda knew that Ellie watched her that summer. She watched Amanda ride the horse, groom the horse, hate and love the horse.

Years passed. Occasionally Ellie would suddenly show interest in Amanda, or she would invite Amanda to show interest in her. Amanda would feel hope flare, but she didn't give it much room. She knew now. She didn't want much from Ellie anymore. Ellie went off to college. Amanda got Ellie's room.

One spring Ellie invited Amanda to visit her at school. Amanda was pleased. It was like a different world. It seemed that Ellie was proud of her here, that she was showing off her interesting little sister. Amanda liked Ellie's friends. It felt good that they liked her. She was a little uncomfortable when she was alone with Ellie. What did Ellie want? Did she have something she wanted to say? Amanda couldn't tell; she always felt that Ellie wanted something, but it was never clear what she wanted.

Amanda knew she wanted to talk to Ellie. Over the last few years she had found that good friends could

be lovers. Although sometimes it seemed like it, not every friend-turned-lover would panic and go out and find a boyfriend. To her pleasure and surprise she discovered that with sex a part of her from childhood was renewed. She could be a cowboy. She could even be Black Beauty shaking her mane and trotting down the hall. Pride and pleasure in her body did have some place in the adult world after all.

She wanted to share this new knowledge of herself with Ellie. She tried and Ellie seemed to listen. But something was wrong. Amanda couldn't tell if Ellie had heard her, if Ellie understood what she was talking about. Had she told it right? Had she told it at all?

Amanda retreated. She learned not to try to tell. When she did tell, she told only parts of the truth. Sometimes she told all the facts, but she kept the whole of the truth for herself. She moved thousands of miles away. When she visited members of her family, she kept her real life separate. Sometimes she would want to share herself with them, especially with Ellie. Then she would tell an important fact: she was a lesbian, she had fallen in love, a friend had died. Sometimes someone was listening and sometimes not.

Then Ellie began to tell. And tell. And tell. She called Amanda. She wrote. She told what she had not been free to remember. She told of being sexually assaulted as a small child by the doctor, the doctor who had not understood how sick Amanda was as an infant, the doctor who was a family friend and neighbor. Assaulted not once, but many times.

At first Amanda had felt only appropriate horror and sympathy. At first it was easy to be supportive. That was after the first call, and the second, the third. Maybe even the fourth. But there was no end. Ellie called. She wrote. She told of the assaults. She told of her terror. She told of her resistance. She told and told and told. She asked Amanda to tell no one. She called Amanda in the long nights and whispered her fear and horror and struggle over the telephone wires. She clung to Amanda like a lover.

Amanda felt trapped. She listened and listened. Then she could not listen any longer. She answered, she responded, but she could not listen. She felt

guilty; she felt overwhelmed and alone. She didn't want to hold this secret. She felt angry. Later Ellie wrote, saying Why were you so angry? Amanda didn't know.

Ellie called less often now. Sometimes she called when she was upset. Sometimes she called to test Amanda's mood. Then she would be tentative, her anxiety reaching over the wires, curling around Amanda like a web.

One night Amanda dreamed. She dreamed of a wicked witch, but a witch whose wickedness was well-concealed. In the dream Amanda was a young boy, who innocently assumed that he could walk away from the witch and live his own life. But the witch showed her true spirit and descended upon him, weaving him about the webs of her own making, and keeping him with her.

Amanda awoke from the dream, tears running down her face. She remembered the pain, the infant, the fear and loneliness. She could not hold the memories of solitary games, of Black Beauty, of the powerful and independent cowboy. She did not think of bicycles or horses. She thought only of the small and helpless infant, of the little girl trying to please her sister, of the face in the window that no one talked about, of the heavy, dark feeling of knowing that Ellie wanted and needed something from her that she could not give. She thought of Ellie watching her through the years, the sense of unwanted sexual energy. She felt the powerful pull of wanting to please her sister, to protect her, to give her what she was asking. She fought against the memories from her infancy. Surely they could not be real; surely they were a dream, some twisted part of her inexplicable anger. Surely Ellie had been the victim, not Amanda. But still she felt the infant's pain, the little girl's protest, her own physical need to save herself, to exist, to fight back.

As she remembered, she began to move. She worked her way through the tangled webs bit by bit. She took each step in fear. If she tried to walk away, then the witch would punish her. She knew that really this could not be true. She didn't imagine any particular punishment actually occurring. But that didn't

change the feeling. Ellie hung over her crib; how *could* she walk away? Surely to walk away would show everyone how bad she really was? How selfish? How uncaring? How could she think of herself when Ellie had had such pain?

She took each strand of web and slowly untangled it, examining it in minute detail. What was this stuff? How did it hold her so effectively? What was it made of? Could she keep it and use it for herself? She took the strands and wove them together into a new pattern. Then she examined the weaving itself, each strand holding its own, each color standing out, with an overall texture that was new and unfamiliar. She felt the roughness, the newness of this cloth, this armor. She held it close and wrapped it around her body. She stood back and tried to make sense of the pattern. She wanted it to make sense. She wanted it to be her own, to fit, to feel comfortable—secure, but loose and flowing. She wanted to be able to move freely, but she wanted the patterns to be clear.

Weeks went by, then months. Still Amanda wove. Sometimes she unraveled what she had begun. Sometimes she worked quickly, yards of silvery cloth surrounding her. Gradually she found the cloth seemed almost to have become a part of her. The colors became the colors of her hair, her skin, her life. She felt a comfort and an ease that she had never felt before. Protected and decorated with her cloth, she began to act. She made choices. She made decisions. She reached out. For the first time her life became her own. And as that happened, she wanted more freedom and more movement. For that, she would have to remove the cloth. Carefully, she did so. Carefully, she hung it on her bedroom wall. Carefully, she stepped back and looked clearly for the first time at the tapestry she had woven.

On the tapestry the baby cried. The little girl dreamed. The horse galloped. The lover loved. The cowboy crept through the corn. In one corner there was Ellie, leaning over a desk, teaching the names of the capitals. Near her the lilacs bloomed. The grown woman felt the warm earth beneath her feet. She turned her face to the sun. She stretched. She moved. She danced. Amanda.

NIGHT HUSH FOR SISTER

Terry L. Jewell

Leaves fall
as they have fallen before
and a girl threads
the surface of her palm
with black silk strands,
dots her eyes with needles,
pounds her fists
upon her brother's back
because
the drawing she made
in pen and wax
spreads out before hesitant eyes—
daddy's large hand
colored peach then dark
cleaning private spots
a young headless statue.
Momma sees the rushing growth
of her daughters's flesh
but not the scissors
of her husband's fingers
as a girl cries sleeplessly
whispers solemn epitaphs
for her own bones.

MOTHER IN EXILE

Jackie Kay

for Lorna

My twins are fourteen now
the last time I saw them
they were five
by the time they're twenty
they'll probably hate me
if they don't already.

The sea slaps. I want to watch
Moses walk across to her twins.
The sea slaps. How could she?
Even the blacks who live there
Are exiles—

PASS PASS PASS

The waves froth at the mouth of themselves
There are no words

Coming here you told me about the man
Who walked into the sea singing an Azanian freedom song.
Now I hear him—his voice swells the waves
He sings in such a deep bass the very fishes leap

Everyone watched him
till the sea came higher and higher
he looked so happy

On the beach half-skeleton fishes lie
Surreal as a war scene

My husband? He didn't approve
of my political activities
you know what he said to me?
You can have everything you want
Mercedes and servants, can you imagine?

PASS PASS PASS

- [illegible]e told the twins
[illegible]other is a hippie
[illegible]e told them
[illegible]other is a commie
[illegible]e tells them
[illegible]other is dead.

[illegible]ight I dreamt
[illegible] the twins again
[illegible] were dolls shrinking
[illegible]ke soaking
[illegible]mes like this
[illegible]oss in tides

[illegible]e waves froth at the mouth of themselves
[illegible]ere are no words

[illegible]e man at the bottom of the sea
[illegible]s singing for all his might
[illegible]s body is decomposing
[illegible]e fishes are feasting

[illegible]u know I phone all the way from London to Cape Town
[illegible]s present wife tells me they're sleeping
[illegible]rite letters and send presents
[illegible]e writes back saying
I don't know why you bother
[illegible]ey never receive them
so *now I don't, I don't bother*

Your mother-tongue is Afrikaans
His is Urdu; you used to speak in English

I wonder whether I'll even like my sons
when they come to find me
they'll be like their father
doctors with wallets and wives, Mercedes and servants
you know he's the Head of the Dept of Psychiatry
all these blacks he diagnoses paranoic
can you believe that?

PASS PASS PASS

The night before last
I lay in bed trying to imagine
my twins now
the photo I have is nine years out of date
each year on their birthday
I add some flesh, some height
but they keep reducing down to five

How can you be a mother
When your country and your husband won't let you?

The first time I had the nightmare
my twins were only an inch long
I was playing with them on the sand
one minute, the next they were gone
I dug and dug until I found them
two tiny worms
their mouths and eyes drowned in sand

The waves froth at the mouth of themselves
There are no words

We walk in silence
Your eyes have the sea in them
Your back is stiff
There is no comfort I can offer

The waves roar
I can see him wading the water
The sea coming higher and higher

We walk in silence
listening to the tide coming in

SOME BLOOD
Laurel Speer

When our first baby was six months old, she crawled
into the living room & discovered your books.
She was curious; she had no automatic responses.
You were a student. Nothing was ever more important.
You didn't beat that baby; tear off her arms & legs
& crush her skull. You yelled & tore the book
from her fingers & slapped her.
There was a moment of stunned silence. I was there.
I remember thinking, "Someday I'll have to leave him."

MY GERMANY
Dagmar Schultz

1
"What do you know about Nazi Germany?"
"I may be Jewish"
"Too bad for you"
I spit closely past him, do not lash out
—last time I hit a man I was arrested—
Some moments never leave me
sit in the pit of my stomach
like a bomb with a wet fuse.

At fourteen I asked my grandmother
what had happened to Jews in her time
she told me of cattle cars loaded with people
standing for days in the summer sun
on a station near our house.

She said she hated Hitler
could not understand
her son going to war convinced.
Yet she never turned the home
that had become her woman's prison
into a hiding place for Jews.

My aunt paused on the Kaiserdamm
"Here the Gestapo
kicked an old Jewish man onto a truck."
Upon her protest they had turned to her
"You want to go with him?"
She had watched them leave—silenced.

Her words of protest stayed with her
never to be used again.
She pinned them with the laundry on clotheslines
she dropped them with potato peels into garbage cans
swallowed them with the gas she used
to lay herself to rest.

2
Our first encounter
you the Jew incognito
me the German educated
so I could talk with you till dawn
about my country and its history
and not know you were Jewish.

That sweet spicy summer in southern France
your voice rose over silent depths
rippling through wood and stone
erupting into light
"How do people live who cannot let all that beauty out?"
you asked the echo of your song
and followed me from France to Berlin
trusting I would protect you in hostile territory.

3
"Germany gets nuclear power"
I hear the news on a New York subway
from the angry mouth of an older man
and I turn hot and cold inside.

A Jewish woman asks me
what has impressed me most in the USA
I answer "The race problem"—she retorts
"Germany solved that twenty years ago."

4
In the year of the Harlem riots
you call out to our Black friends
"It was *my* parents
who lay in the streets for Paul Robeson
I will not carry the water
in your revolution"
before you turned what they call 'crazy'
before you told me "You are like all Germans
following the crowd"
and begged "Kill me, I am asking you to kill me"
and then, from ten thousand miles away,
"You have poisoned my food, admit."

I was never the friend to be there
when the police overcame you
at a corner in Harlem where you stood
screaming
"Justicia über alles"
a friend to be there when your mind starts reeling,
and not be scared.

5
Now
we celebrate Pesach with your family
twenty years of exchanging the secret knowledge
of our bodies aging
our dream of living with a lioness—a circus poster
plastered on your wall
twenty years of feeding one another
fragments of visions realized
we hold each other—mast and sail.

Your trust
propelled me into protest
it forms the living frame
of my courage.

Kaiserdamm: a main street in Berlin
Justicia über alles: Justice over all
Pesach: Passover (Yiddish)

GENERATIONS
Jackie Kay

The land was never just the land
emptying and filling, fertile and barren
generations of our family worked
stitching and sewing its plaid skirt

The story of the land on her lap:
my great four times grandmother
was burnt alive in her croft
she would not move off the land
my three times grandmother escaped
with my four times grandfather.

The land was never just
the earth did not yield often enough
to keep all our bellies full
it was emotional

We ate the morning rising light
supped when the night smoothed out
the earth, soft as her cheek
our dreams were pine forests
dense as secrets
in the morning we smelt them on our skin.

The land was never
what it is now:
the earth wrinkled like a newborn's skin
the crops never cried for milk

Generations of my ancestors
grew up here: some were
trees standing firm in the storm
others were struck
but they never failed the bloodline
why not her, why not mine?

The land was
my mother before she died
the earth eyes
her sunset voice

Perhaps she would have made the choice:
keep her, keep your black baby
bring her up on this high land
my mother would know the land is part of her
running through her blood
like wind through barley

THE GATHERING TIME
Canyon Sam

She found an empty compartment and lifted her small suitcase and raincoat onto the luggage racks above the forward facing window seat. She hated to sit riding backwards—*better to see what lay ahead* beforehand than to have it come up from behind you. All the signs were in Chinese of course; for a moment Evelyn felt herself still in awe of this huge, vast nation in which she had been traveling for two and a half weeks, where the faces mirrored her own, the spoken word called and answered her words.

Yet it was not like the Hong Kong where she had lived for twenty years, or like Oakland where she had resided now for almost twenty-five. She would stare at the faces of the Chinese people while they stood in a quickly formed, closely packed crowd, peering at her group as if they were a museum exhibit—with intense curiosity, and with the respect given the unknown from other civilizations, other ages. This open staring was disconcerting at first, but the group eventually became used to it, and came to expect it. More than their overcoats, styled hair, and leather handbags in contrast to the functional gray and blue cloth garments of the people, more than the Japanese-made tour bus they tumbled out of at every stop in contrast to the bike-riddled scenes everywhere, more than the people's ordinary comings and goings in contrast to her group's bustling about—descending *en masse* onto temples and stores, slinging bulky, expensive cameras around their necks—this collective eye of the people that stared at them wherever they went, set them apart. Held them at arm's length. She wondered if her mother would also look upon her with this strange fascination, if she too would treat her in the polite, distant manner with which the Chinese people treated her and the other Chinese from America.

Two young men took seats in her compartment. Serious, preoccupied, she guessed, when they opened their books and quickly became absorbed in

the pages, that they were students of some sort—perhaps going to Shanghai for some important tests. In any event she was glad she would have some peace during the ride. So many thoughts and emotions were flying through her, throwing themselves against the walls inside her head like monsoon waves crashing against a beach front wall. Up and around and out of the Nanjing Valley the train pulled, until the river was a brown magnetic tape falling in loose curves over the tall green grass of the rice fields.

What would this woman, her mother...it sounded strange. She never thought of herself as having a mother. *Other* people had mothers. Her mother was not a person as much as a puzzle—the outline of which was tiny scraps of information wrenched from her father and grandmother. The flesh of which was a faded fantasy. As a very young child she had envisioned her mother wearing a flowing white dress, very stylish but proper. She was pretty and kind and soft spoken. The hope that her mother was still alive—wild dreams she thought until a short time ago—had grown stronger in the past few years...until it happened: China opened her doors to the West. Hopes became intentions. Now, unbelievably, she was closer than she ever had been to seeing the real person who was her mother. That woman she had never in her memory seen or touched, but who had given her life, blood, flesh. Ever since the official telephoned Evelyn in Nanjing saying that his department had located her mother in a small town on the outskirts of Shanghai, the sixth Loo Wei Chein they had contacted in a city of twelve million: each day, each step vibrated with a heightened aliveness, with a sense she was moving through a living dream.

What would her mother look like? Evelyn had never seen a photograph, and of course, her father had divulged nothing. Would she be old and stooped from a lifetime of hard labor, with gray hair cut square at the shoulders and pinned behind her ears? Would she be tall and graceful, carrying the dignity of her years? Would she be warm, effusive, tearful? Aloof, cool, formal? Would she be hearty, sanguine?

Frail and brave? Would she see herself in her mother? See parts of herself now in a way she had never seen them before? Recognize them and claim them as coming from her mother, in the same way her resemblances to her father had always been pointed out: his pointed chin, his narrow cheekbones, his high forehead. Would she see the source of her gumdrop eyes? Her undercut jaw? Her square and determined hands?

At the thought of her father, her face grew red and her eyes gazing out the train window did not see the steadily changing scenery, but the picture of him sitting on the divan. It was one of the only times she had seen him lose his composure. When he had seen how angry she was, it had truly unsettled him, and he recouped with a nervous chuckle.

"Ha ha...now honeygirl," he said solicitously. "I've told you, I've told you all along. You have no mother...she died shortly after you were born.

"Complications from the birth. She had always been a bit sickly. Yes, it was a sad thing...she was so young and beautiful; and here you were, just a tiny infant. The Japanese were coming fast, taking over the land, so your Yun and I took you and fled." He smiled his same affable smile that stretched in a wide, gentle arc across his face like the long boats she had loved so much as a child, crowded in the harbor with the great blue bay behind them.

"All those letters from the Mainland those years... those men that used to come around asking questions. I remember how angry you would get, until one time you threatened to call the police, and then they never came round again. You always said it was relatives trying to get money from you. Were they sent by my mother to search for me? My mother who is *alive*, as much as you and I are alive, and who for seventeen years has sought me out?"

"No, darling," he said in a soothing manner as if to a child. "No," he shook his head.

"You're a bold-faced liar. I know the truth now, and the truth is my mother lives—"

"No!" he exploded, the smile gone, the face breaking.

"And has been seeking me for years. You have been hiding me from her all these years...and her from me!"

"No! It's not true! It's not true! You are wrong!" he raged, jumping to his feet, his smooth porcelain forehead purple and creased.

They glowered at each other, stubbornness and indignation locked in a long stare.

Finally, in a normal voice she asked, "Why, Father?"

"Lies, you have heard lies! I have told you the truth. Your mother is dead! She died when you were an infant. And we'll not talk of this craziness anymore. Ever again!" he roared half in command, half in warning, and stalked out of the cluttered windowless sitting room.

"Excuse, Siujeh." The polite young voice broke into her thoughts. "We're thinking of sleeping now, may we turn out the light?" His green cap in hand, one of the youths who had been reading looked directly at her with tired, red eyes.

"Yes, yes, that would be fine," she replied. Yes, sleep would be good. I should relax. Rest up for the big day tomorrow. Try to be more peaceful. The young man nodded good night and sat down as his friend reached for the switch behind the window curtain and flicked off the lights.

Though it was only half past nine, the countryside was very dark, with no moonlight. Once in a while, they would pass a village and flickers of yellow gold—the burning light of the one-story homes—glittered like starry constellations across the shadowless, enigmatic countryside. The beauty and the gentle glow of the lights were strangely comforting. They seemed to reassure her in the darkness, through the waiting, like the hall light first breaking the endless night when she was a child in Hong Kong, casting a thin bar of light under her bedroom door. A signal that her grandmother had heard her cries and was coming down the corridor to help slay the nighttime demons. The train, a model thirty years behind those in the States, pulled smoothly overland, rhythmically rocking its passengers to sleep.

She thought of her husband, Benson. They had hardly ever been separated in their twenty-three-year marriage and now as night came on, her thoughts turned to him. A quarter to ten. He would be in the hotel room in Nanjing padding around in his fleece-lined mocassin slippers trying to get the heat to work. Failing at that, he would go downstairs to the lounge for a couple of Chinese beers—whose flavor he couldn't get used to, but would drink anyway to help him sleep. Maybe now he was in the lounge chatting with the others in the tour group. She would meet up with Benson and the group again in Beijing. Her husband had so looked forward to this trip that when the call about her mother came, she insisted he stay with the group. He seemed relieved and promised to take many pictures. Anyway, she thought, she needed time to think.

The group was a pleasant one. Mostly middle-aged, Chinese-Americans like themselves who were anxious to visit China soon after the P.R.C. opened her doors to tourists three years ago in 1977. They had all come back from four days of free travel in Heungsan, the Cantonese countryside with stories of their relatives, Polaroid snapshots, and their bellies full of homecooked country style Chinese dinners. They had been fussed over because they or their parents were the ones who had immigrated to Gum San, who had left the village and travelled across the seas to make a new life in the foreign land, in America. Evelyn's father's relatives in the village deluged her with questions about everyone: How is cousin Bo? Why doesn't he write us? How is little Bo Jai? (Little Bo Jai is Leonard now; he's six two, drives a Camaro, and plays goalie on his school's soccer team). How is Ah Goo? Third Aunt? She still have that good job at the sewing factory? Her half-wit brother still knocks on the door at her old house, doesn't understand why she never comes to see him anymore.

The memory of Evelyn's discovery of her past came back to her. Ah Yun, grandmother, had bid her to her bedside that evening—the day after the old woman had suffered her first stroke.

"Lai lai," her grandmother had begun softly, addressing her by her nickname. "I know sometime...when you young kit...you maybe feel bad...like you missing something...no Ma. I try to be likka you Ma..."

She sat beside her grandmother, gazing tenderly at her half-shut eyes, the skin on the crest of her grandmother's cheekbones still smooth as twenty years before, but her whole being weakened and, it seemed to her now, restless and disturbed.

"Your Baba...he not want you to know...I could not say anything," she choked, stopping for a moment to catch her breath. "But not right for a sum mein jai to think she has no Ma...when...when she...does have a Ma," the old woman's voice tapered off to a barely audible whisper, her hands slowly fingered the bed sheets.

"But how can that be? Baba said she died when I was a baby! She is alive?"

The old woman's eyes did not move off her granddaughter's stricken face.

"Where is she? What happened to her?" She felt her speaking voice tighten to a dry scream in the back of her throat.

"Your Baba...never like her. He love another girl, but I arrange marriage for him when he young boy...so they must marry. When you born, she get sick...she sick for two years...never get better...no good medicine. Your Ba want to move to Hong Kong when the Japanese come...he very afraid...all the time hiding...hide ourselves, hide our money...long time...till we could not wait anymore. We left. Your Baba tell your Ma he would send for her..."

Her stomach turned over, a wrenching like the most violent movement of the earth. She felt her ears being stretched up behind her head, and then come flying off her head, reeling through space at an unearthly speed. So fast her ears heard nothing more. So fast the skin on her scalp and head and neck felt like it was being pulled off—pulled off from behind like a mask—making her forehead and temples tighten tighten tighten like the skin on a drum.

"Later when you young kit, he just pretend she

had died. It was...easier..."

"Why?" she cried. "Why did he not tell me even when I grew older?"

"He was afraid you go back...very dangerous...the Goong Chaan take over. He want you to stay in Hong Kong...Hong Kong safe. When some men from your Ma's family come look for you, he chase them very angry...like he see bandits robbing his house."

In the dim light of the tiny room, she sat numb with her grandmother's ancient, hard-worked hand in her own. The old woman's eyes pleaded in their half-strength for understanding. Slowly, she tucked the top of the bed coverings in around her grandmother's neck, and then drew her head—her long black hair spreading like watercolor over a wet canvas—into the softness of her grandmother's shoulder.

"Father, I am going back with Benson to live in Gum San. We are going to be married and live in Sanfansih."

Legs crossed, he sat sideways at the breakfast table. Easier to face the glass wall that looked out onto the empty rooftop than sit head to head with his accuser/daughter.

She had attempted many times in the past two years to get through to her father; but whenever they grew friendly enough that she thought about inquiring after her mother, he would become distant again. Since her grandmother had died, he had become even more isolated and now spoke rarely at all. She was grateful for her studies at the University, and her growing relationship with Benson, a Cantonese graduate student from America studying on campus, for they kept her even-hearted.

Her father's face was as reliably unchanging as the old ceramic teapot he brought out to the table every morning. He played with his pipe, holding it up to his lips, sliding the bit into his mouth, sucking distractedly, then taking the pipe out, tapping the bowl lightly against the table top, and returning it again to his mouth.

He had never been a talkative man. She had spent hours as a little girl sitting on his lap mesmerized by

his paper tricks—the silver flash of the scissors, the nimble skillfulness of his hands, the white paper unfolding—turning lines into circles, circles into rings, rings into chains, chains into figure eights.

Infinity, he said. And he would do it over and over, and each time it held the same fascination for her. She was not the child who wanted to look beyond the mystery, who sought to probe the secret of his tricks.

She loved the show, the dance of his fingers and the paper and the forms taking shape in the air. She had loved her father, and never doubted the power of his magic.

"Lo'sa money," he said, after a long silence, still sucking his pipe. His thin sharp features that had once given his face so much definition looked vague and hollow, as if he did not own them.

"Yes," she agreed simply.

"Attention, attention," crackled the voice in Mandarin. "Attention, attention," it announced in heavily accented English. "Attention, attention," repeated the voice a third time in Japanese. What time was it? She blinked her eyes open, noted the fuzzy crack of daylight from behind the window curtain. It was morning. The Chinese kept their public address system at volumes that would only be reserved in the States for air raid warnings. Farsighted she was, but she was not hard of hearing. She sat up in her seat, gently arching her stiff neck.

"We have been notified of an obstruction in the rails two miles away on the north side of Tsaio-bing, which we will be approaching in about five minutes. Therefore, it will be necessary to stop the train in Tsaio-bing. Passengers may disembark, but please stay within hearing distance of the train station, so that you will hear the announcement to return to the train."

Tsaio-bing, it must be a tiny place, it isn't even on the map, she thought fingering through her pocket map.

Small clouds of dust billowed up from the ground as the passengers stepped down from the exits along the long locomotive. They stood at the town's edge,

at the end of a wide, dirt lane lined by one-room mud brick dwellings and shops. The tiny hamlet was one of a string of hundreds like it scattered through the nearby countryside, a home for the farmers and families who worked the surrounding land, and a stopover for comrades hauling goods to Hangchow, the nearby city. The street was quiet except for two elderly women sitting on the stoops of their homes, one with an infant in her arms, and some young children about two years old. Young and old alike stared at the train as it disgorged an unheard of number of visitors into their town. There were clumps of tourists from Japan, one group from Canada, and then some Army troops: women and men soldiers in green outfits and matching red-starred Mao caps. The rest were Chinese civilians.

The air was fresh and mild, and Evelyn longed to enjoy the unexpected stop in the country. The town was on the crest of a hill, with a ridge of trees in the not-too-far distance. She walked down the lane, through to the other side of the village, and there she saw a magnificent valley below. Most of the fields she had seen before were gray and watery with oxen bathing in the nearby canals; this valley floor was green, a gigantic quiltwork of feathery rows of a thin stalked crop, three or four feet high.

Barley? Flax? Peasants were stooped over with huge straw baskets on their backs. Some baskets, stuffed full, seemed double the size of their carriers. At one edge of the field, the valley floor rose gently and a group of children sat listening to a woman under the shade of a tree. Pink culottes and red pants on their small folded legs. Some long-chinned pearl swallows swept weightlessly across and around the valley in long, silent circles. She stood for a long time captured by the natural beauty of the land and the hum of human activity below.

She was almost there. She was almost about to meet...her mother. Her mother! She had talked with Arthur only days ago in Shanghai, and now, the fate of the winds behind her, she was returning to that city.

"Ah, yes. I remember you mentioning this situation, Evelyn," Arthur Lai, their tour guide had said

at the end of a wide, dirt lane lined by one-room mud brick dwellings and shops. The tiny hamlet was one of a string of hundreds like it scattered through the nearby countryside, a home for the farmers and families who worked the surrounding land, and a stopover for comrades hauling goods to Hangchow, the nearby city. The street was quiet except for two elderly women sitting on the stoops of their homes, one with an infant in her arms, and some young children about two years old. Young and old alike stared at the train as it disgorged an unheard of number of visitors into their town. There were clumps of tourists from Japan, one group from Canada, and then some Army troops: women and men soldiers in green outfits and matching red-starred Mao caps. The rest were Chinese civilians.

The air was fresh and mild, and Evelyn longed to enjoy the unexpected stop in the country. The town was on the crest of a hill, with a ridge of trees in the not-too-far distance. She walked down the lane, through to the other side of the village, and there she saw a magnificent valley below. Most of the fields she had seen before were gray and watery with oxen bathing in the nearby canals; this valley floor was green, a gigantic quiltwork of feathery rows of a thin stalked crop, three or four feet high.

Barley? Flax? Peasants were stooped over with huge straw baskets on their backs. Some baskets, stuffed full, seemed double the size of their carriers. At one edge of the field, the valley floor rose gently and a group of children sat listening to a woman under the shade of a tree. Pink culottes and red pants on their small folded legs. Some long-chinned pearl swallows swept weightlessly across and around the valley in long, silent circles. She stood for a long time captured by the natural beauty of the land and the hum of human activity below.

She was almost there. She was almost about to meet...her mother. Her mother! She had talked with Arthur only days ago in Shanghai, and now, the fate of the winds behind her, she was returning to that city.

"Ah, yes. I remember you mentioning this situation, Evelyn," Arthur Lai, their tour guide had said

that morning ten days ago sitting around the garden table. "Let me see if I can get the cooperation of the ministry here. Why don't you give me the information and I'll see what I can do." He reached for the pen in his shirt pocket. A retired chemist and friend of Benson's from their boyhood days, he was one of the most experienced Chinese American tour guides to the P.R.C. from the West Coast, and was on excellent terms with the Chinese.

"Good of you to help me, Arthur. I realize it's a full time job just keeping this group together...here," she said, unfolding a copy of her birth certificate and smoothing it down in front of his open notebook. "Here's her name: Loo Wei Chein." Her finger dropped down a line. "Born October 14, 1917."

"Do you know anything else about her? Whether she's still in Shanghai? What district she lives in? If she remarried, her husband's name?"

Given the scanty information, he was less than hopeful.

"It's a big city, twelve million people, give or take a couple of hundred thousand. Their records are not complete, it's been such a mess here the last twenty years. And it's all done by hand, no computers here, very slow. But I'm sure they'll do all they possibly can," he said. And then added: "But they may not find her. She may not be in Shanghai anymore. Or she may not even be alive. Or she may not want to see you." Knowing what he had said made them both a bit uneasy, he rose from his chair. "Let me call my friend at the Ministry right now," he said excusing himself.

The sky was overcast—not a thick, opaque gray but that condition of the sky which just seemed to change the light so that colors were deeper and truer, so that the air seemed to settle, and the glare and harsh shadows of the afternoon gave way to softer edges. She had always liked the late afternoon sky. This was the time of day when the "chickens came home to roost" as they said at home.

She remembered when the children were young and they came walking home from school. Dawdled was more like it, leaning into their giggling friends. How the setting afternoon sky would fill the kitchen.

Yellow streaks of light streaming in the windows, billowing the chintz curtains with the fullness of light. How slowly...slowly...imperceptibly...as she was reading, or stirring the evening's dinner, the light would change to a pale shade of rose. And by and by after that, the children would straggle through the living room door, and Benson would pull up in the driveway. Even after they had grown, if she were working in her office and looked up and saw this light in the sky, she would always think of this time in the day's sky as the gathering time. The gathering time of each to herself. The gathering of each with the ones she loved.

Tomorrow she would share this time with her mother: the woman who had given her life. Given her life at the expense of her own health. Her mother who had been abandoned by her husband and stripped of her child. Her mother who had vainly sought her offspring in another land, despite a total lack of freedom in her own. Her mother who had survived decades of political upheaval and turmoil and still desired to see her child: a stranger, a foreigner. Whatever else her mother was beyond this, it suddenly did not seem to matter.

Evelyn swept her eyes across the autumn shaded countryside, and then back towards the lovely, dusty hamlet. She was making this voyage home...finally. In the fair September air, a calmness emerged like a tiny rose bud behind her clasped hands...and spread through her like fragrance. She felt the event of her journey. And she was not afraid.

Siujeh: little sister
Gum San: America, literally, Gold Mountain
Sum mein jai: child, children
Goong Chaan: Chinese Communists
Sanfansih: San Francisco

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Joy Harjo

We lived next door to the bootlegger, and were lucky. The bootlegger reigned. We were a stolen people in a stolen land. Oklahoma meant defeat. But the sacred lands have their own plans, seep through fingers of the alcohol spirit. Nothing can be forgotten, only left behind. The land covers its own tracks, and will seek out the walking dust who understands praising.

Last week I saw the river where the hickory stood; this homeland doesn't predict a legacy of malls and hotels. Dreams aren't glass and steel but made from the hearts of deer, the blazing eye of a circling panther. Translating them was to understand the death count from Alabama, the destruction of grandchildren, famine of stories. I didn't think I could stand it. My father couldn't. He searched out his death with the vengeance of a warrior who has been the hunted. It's in our blood.

Even at two I knew we were different. Could see through the eyes of strangers that we were trespassers in the promised land. The Sooner State glorified the thief. Everyone and no one was Indian. You'd best forget, claim a white star. At three my mother told me this story:

God decided to make people. He put the first batch in the oven, kept them in too long. They burned. These were the Black people. God put in the next batch. They were uncooked, not done. These were the White people. But the next batch he cooked just right, and these were the Indian people, just like you.

By then I was confused.

At five I was designated to string beads in kindergarten. At seven I knew how to play chicken and win. And at fourteen I was drinking.

I found myself in a city in the southwest at twenty-one, when my past came into focus. It was near midnight. We were walking home and there he was, curled in the snow on the sidewalk, that man from Jemez. We had all been cheated. He hid his shame beneath a cold, downy blanket. We hid ours in poems. We took him home where he shivered and cried through the night like a fighting storm, then woke in the morning, knowing nothing. Later I would see him on the street, the same age I am now. It was my long dark hair that cued his daughter, the chili, the songs. And I talked to him as if he were my father, with that respect, with that hunger.

I have since outlived that man from Jemez, my father and that ragged self I chased through precarious years. But I carry them with me the same as this body carries the heart as a drum. Yesterday there was rain traveling east to home. A hummingbird spoke. She was a shining piece of invisible memory, inside the raw cortex of songs. I knew then this was the Muscogee season of forgiveness, time of new corn, the spiraling dance.

POUVOIR DU POEME

Jocelyne François

Le poème relie les secrets en une tresse plus serrée que les cheveux. Au même instant il rend les secrets transparents. S'approcher du poème, le lire, c'est s'exposer à une transfusion de peine, parfois prendre un bain de paix. Le poème ne sait pas ce que nous savons et sait tout ce que nous ne savons pas. Il ressemble à l'eau d'un jardin, le soir, quand les grillons commencent leur chant monocorde. Il passe sur nous, desséchés par le vent du jour. Il laisse aux gestes anciens leur tendre écorce, celle qui empêche le bois de durcir. Il n'agit ni par le dire ni par les mots mai par ce qui se glisse dans l'étroite ouverture fatale comme tes yeux quand ils me regardaient vraiment dans un autre monde.

THE POWER OF A POEM

Jocelyne François

Translated by Marguerite Le Clézio

The poem binds together in a braid tighter than hair. At the same time, it unveils secrets. Coming close to a poem and reading it amount to leaving oneself open to a transfusion of pain, or, sometimes, to a bathing in peace. The poem does not know what we do, and knows everything that we do not. It is like water in a garden, at night, when crickets start their monochord song. It sails past us when we are dried by the day's wind. It leaves to ancient gestures their tender bark which keeps the wood from hardening. Its power comes neither from speech nor from words, but from what slips into the narrow and fated opening, like your eyes when they really looked at me in another world.

VIVRE
Jocelyne François

Reprendre sans fin au ras des herbes
ce qui, s'échappant, nous constitue.

Comme l'air, avec sa constance dans la surveillance des territoires, avec son instinct dans l'équilibration des masses mouvantes, bouger en soi.

Pierre parmi les pierres. Souffle sous les ouragans. Étincelle dans le feu. Pas de ligne tracée mais la savoureuse forme de ce qui s'aventure rigoureusement en nous. Revenir inlassablement à cette forme unique voilée, dévoilée selon les jours.

A l'abri du mur de septembre contenant l'été non épuisé encore, limitant sa pente du côté où la lumière décline, viendront des journées alenties d'un silence poignant. Des mots n'auront plus lieu, des élans fous. Seuls les arbres, les vignes, les terres produiront selon l'attente. Une attente indéfiniment reconduite, plus fragile que les respirations, plus imperceptible que les cillements des paupières.

Vivre coûte ce prix que nul n'ose dire à voix haute.

LIVING

Jocelyne François

Translated by Marguerite Le Clézio

Endlessly taking up again, level with the grass,
what fleetingly gives us our being.

Like air which constantly watches over territories,
and instinctively balances off mobile masses,
governed by essential motion.

Stone among stones. A breath beneath hurricanes. A sparkle in the fire. No drawn line but the savory shape of our inner and rigorous ventures. Tirelessly coming back to this unique shape, intermittently veiled or unveiled, depending on the day.

Sheltered by the wall of September which still holds the unexhausted wealth of summer, and curtails its slope towards the declining light, poignantly silent days will slowly unwind. Words will no longer be in order, nor mad rushes of desire. The trees, vineyards and lands alone will bear their expected fruit. This waiting is indefinitely postponed, frailer than breaths, less perceptible than the blinking of eyelids.

Living is at a price which no one dares speak loudly.

EAT
Sapphire

"You too good to eat my pussy?"
I don't believe it, I thought.
Sunlight strained through deep purple velvet curtains, breaking through the white lace which was draped in front of the velvet. She sat at the head of the big comfortable bed surrounded by her dusty finery. Her body seemed like a series of alabaster poles resting blankly inside blue denim.
"Cough syrup?" she queried.
I nod.
"It's from China," she informs me, "high opium content."
"Really," I murmur, "I thought they weren't into that any more."
"It's not from *that* China," she spit out.
"Oh scuze me," I said apologetically.
Bob Dylan poured aquamarine and indigo from the stereo.
with your mercury mouth in the missionary times
"Did ya hear what I said?"
"Yeah bout China."
"No," she said emphatically, "bout eating my pussy."
Wow, this was deep. I wanted the cough syrup but I wasn't gonna fuck for it.
"Here," she shoves me a dark amber bottle in a crumpled paper bag, I hand her a twenty. I look down at my string bag on the floor, filled with bread, cheese and sweet, gold-flecked, green grapes. The sounds of the street seep in through the window. I'd forgotten about Fontaine the six years I'd been away. The week after my aunt's funeral I'd found myself walking from one end of the city to the other. My feet had stopped in front of the old hotel remembering what I'd forgotten—the music: Jimi, Janis, Buddy Miles; water pipes, syringes, acid and strawberry incense, and Fontaine. I couldn't imagine she still lived here. I couldn't imagine her living any place else though, I'd thought as my feet padded

across the faded maroon carpet, my nose taking in the odor of old wood, perspiration and cigarette smoke.

"Miss Fontaine please, room 522," I had asked the faded little man behind the desk.

"Go right up," his voice limped softly.

It seemed like years now since I had stepped out of the elevator. Fontaine gaunt and emaciated stared at me with hard eyes. Anorexia, I thought, reaching for my bag.

"You just got here!" she wailed.

Dylan crooned:

with your sheets like metal and your belt like lace
and your deck of cards missing the jack and ace

She was dying and I was leaving as fast as I could get up and get out of there. But I didn't go. I sat there staring at her quilt, astrological symbols on blue velvet squares juxtaposed with red roses on yellow squares. I looked at her shiny black leather riding boots. She looked at me looking.

"Brand new," she shrugged gesturing to the boots. "Never wore 'em before."

My knees felt like they had rusted but somehow I got up. I moved away from the curtains fighting the light, away from the red roses on their yellow squares. The door was not far. I would get there.

sad eyed lady of the low lands
where the sad eyed prophet said no man comes

I look back at Neptune on blue velvet and her long white arms coming out of her denim jacket.

my warehouse has my Arabian drums
should I put them by your gate

Against the deep purple drapes she is whiter than the white lace.

oh sad eyed lady should I wait

Bones are revealed in stark relief as she strips away her clothes. Her body is an elongated tear. I am standing where I had been sitting. My feet move but not where I told them. I am kneeling beside her now, helping her slide the hard boots off her feet, one, then the other. Now the jeans, I gasp at the cavern between the two pale flares of her pubic bones. I pull her pants off dropping them beside the bed. Her arm goes around my neck like a hook.

"Wait," I plead. Her smell is harsh—fear, nicotine, perfume. No heat, no sex-odor.

My breasts drop from my bra warm with the heat of my body. Opening my jeans I am aware of the roundness of my brown belly as I slide my pants down. Dropping my pants on the floor next to hers I pull back the quilt, pull up the wrinkled sheet and slide under the covers like a little girl. My hand on her arm tells her to do the same. Her eyes are silent beggars. I pull her on top of me. She seeps into me like sand. My hands move slowly over the psychic battlefield that is her body, over the war she is losing. Sadness fills me. My hand spans her thigh, her buttocks. Hold her, hold her, *hold her,* my soul screams. And it feels so good to hold someone I stop being horrified at what she has lost and marvel at what she has—life, breath, her legs between my opening thighs.

"Turn over," I whisper. Prayerfully my hands begin to move over her body like the wind, everywhere, finding armpit, shoulder, neck, lips, thighs, knees, breasts, stomach, buttocks, eyebrows, hair. I am putting a shell to my ear, trying to hear the sea. She begins to talk the way the sea does, in whispers, moans, churnings. I move down in the bed and pull her vagina to my mouth. My tongue searching for life between her legs. One orifice pressed to another, to suck. First thing we know to do when we're born, suck—or die. My tongue beats her clitoris, joy spreading over my face as the sea begins to flow in my mouth.

"Please," she whispers.

I keep on, my mouth a warrior in a pink battlefield pushing back death. Feel, feel, *feel,* I will. Her body begins to rock in the old time rhythm and I know it won't be long. I keep on and on, her body mine, mine hers. I feel the soft moans coming from her throat before I hear them. My will is transformed to power. I pull her on top of me and we press our bodies together rocking like Naomi and Ruth musta rocked. She pulls my head back down between her legs, the taste is alive in my mouth. She comes again and again. We hold each other quiet, long. She laughs like a warm soft bird in my arms. Stroking my

face she whispers, "Momi, what can I do for you?"

I hesitate for a second, then reach for the string bag on the floor, pull out the sweet grapes, holding them to her mouth I say, "Eat."

PROMISETOWN
Jacqueline Lapidus

1
This clandestine morning, kissing before work,
our affair still imminent,
you wouldn't take your shirt off;
your nipples, tempted,
hardened in their harness.
This afternoon
breasts are bursting out
all over the gay beach, palm-
oiled, cocoa-buttered, ripe apples,
lush melons and papayas (*mamão*
is Portuguese), oh mama I'm
thirsty, let me! Your house guests,
life-partner, schedule, secrecy
won't hold me back. I'll hold my tongue
for a chance to taste yours, dare you,
bare you, lie at high tide
under your twin moons.

2
Hidden in beach grass amid mosquitoes, before dark,
you kneel in the sand and turn me into ocean,
plunge deep, tongue on my salt—far from work,
committees, old lovers, domestic tension.
Everything I've done all week was meant to lure
you to this. Next time we'll be in bed
glancing at watches indoors, the pure
audacity of this first taste already
tamed. Some fifty yards away a weathered
house, like a huge cat, guards the path you chose;
incongruously a policeman passed, not bothered
by two sporty ladies in a Mercedes (two of *those*),
only a few minutes before. "I want to lie
with you, feel you inside and out," Oh, so do I!

3
I was on my way to cocktails with a friend;
you were standing on the sidewalk waving, cool
as a Cape Codder, the top button
of your shirt undone. As a rule
I don't go in for Federal offenses,
but this was too good an opportunity:
you thought of what we'd done in bed, your defenses
crumbled and you got in the car. Immunity
guaranteed. "I'm going to drive east until
you tell me to turn around." Pale lunar land-
scape of the dunes, miles of motels, your hand
gripping my right hand, left on the wheel.
"I want to spend a night with you, wake up
in your arms." Let's keep going and not stop!

4
Pale lunar landscape of the dunes, my hand
caressing you. I could drive all the way
to Boston if I didn't have a mand-
atory date in half an hour. Play
time, stolen. I'm doing sixty, how
can I keep my mouth on the road if you
look at me like that? "Turn here. Now
go uphill to the top and park." The view
stretches, shimmering like a mirage,
clear over Pilgrim Lake to Provincetown.
Whatever we may lack, it isn't courage.
Greedily we kiss, again and again
and again. Oh, you're a handsome
woman, worth a few risks and a queen's ransom!

5
The Sunday *Globe* mentions "vanilla stock."
Is that shares in what they call vanilla sex?
I'm pretty tame, myself, as an investor, oc-
cupied as I am with copy editing, specs
for the printer, part-time retail selling;
and as for making love, there's no telling
when my lover (secret, tough, a lady
strapped for time) might ever strip for me again.
That of course, is the trouble with shady
deals. Pay up, let go, take chances. Certain
pleasures yield small profit, only blessing:
driving through Truro's back roads Monday night
as the fog swirls around us, kissing
barefoot on the deck at Highland Light.

6
I'm on the road, running before the wind
toward Provincetown to beat the hurricane.
You're taping up your windows. Heavy rain,
high tide could flood you, wash your in-
dependence out to sea. Heavy fog over
Boston when I left early this morning.
Is the bridge open? Is she still my lover?
Police from Hatteras to Maine are warning
all beachfront residents to evacuate
to higher ground. *She must be standing hers,*
I think, rounding the rotary, *she prefers*
not to give way. Darling, let's make a date,
survivors' party after the storm: no doubt
you'll still ignite me though the power's out.

7
During the hurricane I took a nap,
woke when the power failed. Past ten, the town
tosses in sleep under a harvest moon.
I dress and tour the cottage grounds, inspect-
ing for damage: a giant tree's torn up,
crashed through the fence into the yard next door,
missing my neighbor's boat. The clothesline's wrecked
What's left of us? It's a short walk to your
hundred-and-fifty-year-old house. No rain,
no flooding tide; dead branches block the lane
but I slip by to catch a glimpse of you
reading by candlelight, quite unaware
I'm prowling. As the wind dies, will it spare
our frail connection, or has that failed too?

8
From a glassed-in terrace we can see trees
flushed for a moment before turning bare.
Over cocktails and cold shrimp my *eyes* say *please*
don't break it off. Bright sun today. I care
too much to be persuaded that it's wrong,
this heat, this melting in my intimate
recesses when you touch me. We're both strong,
honest, fair, responsible and all that.
Your lips release your wineglass and admit
I want you very much. I want you. Now.
Delicious seafood salad, one dessert
(chocolate, of course) between us. Darling, how
to love freely, not whether, is the issue.
Your face, your voice sustain when I can't kiss you.

9

I waited underneath the "Dead End" sign
thinking, we need live beginnings, now, again
You picked me up just after four and drove
slowly to the breakwater and around
via the marshland road to Herring Cove.
So beautiful, I murmured, meaning you
as well as the pastel clouds. The sun grew
fiery, then dropped, cymbal without sound,
into the dark bay. *It's over,* meaning
the sunset. When you told me of your day
and I made light of my unsettled state,
behind our careful faces we were keening
for passion, salt, ephemeral as spray.
Once we... *It's getting cold. It's getting late.*

DUCK BLIND
Anne Brashler

The camp is asleep and night comes alive, dark folds around her, keeping her company. Her back aches, her feet hurt. She is incontinent. "You are incontinent," her doctor has said. For a moment, she thought he'd said she was to go to the continent and imagined Italy, maybe Paris, one of those places. "Surely you jest, doctor," she said. "I think not. Get the old-fashioned cloth diapers. They hold up nicely," he'd said. She chooses Birch Point camp for practice, the place where they took the children when they were little. Now at four o'clock in the morning, she decides that, after this trip, a mission, she wants only city lights, gay nights and low throaty jazz, glasses and glasses of wine. Loons, those crazy loons have at it with their loony cries, *ha-oo-oo*, and falsetto wails, their barking in flight.

She bends down, turns on a valve, lets the gas heater suck the air then scratches a wooden match against a square of sandpaper which has been nailed to a wooden post. She lights the heater, then the stove, then puts on a kettle of water. The coffee looks black and strong. Later, in the duck blind, she will make more coffee, mix in a raw egg, the way, her son once said, the Marines made coffee in Vietnam.

She pulls on two pairs of pants, one pair of wool socks, hiking boots. "Work from the bottom up," her husband used to say. He'd taught her to fish though not hunt. She's never hunted in her life. Darly would be amazed, she thinks, missing him, wondering why she lasted so long and he didn't. She continues: three sweatshirts, mackintosh jacket of black-and-red checked wool, matching hat with visor and ear flaps. Everyone in the family had worn the jacket: sons, daughter, husband. Once the mac had saved Darly's sanity; the time they were stranded by ten-foot waves and couldn't cross the channel in Rainey Lake. God, how long ago? Ten years? Fifteen? Darly had had a tic douloureux attack and the mac kept his face protected from sharp Canadian wind.

They'd hunkered down on an island, waiting all night for the winds to calm.

Well, they used to be here and now they're not, she thinks. And that's that. She pulls on gloves and heads out of her cabin.

Forgot to drink the coffee. Lordy. Lordy. She returns to the cabin, slams the door. Drinks the coffee and listens as waves slap the shore, hears stones move underneath the lake, hears the low reedy notes of a bobolink. "Who says I'm deaf?" she says. She studies the slate-blue sky, thunder clouds rolling in. The duck blind will be cold. No matter. Nothing matters anymore. "Sorry, God," she says. "I didn't mean that." She wants to tell Him more, tries to remember what it was. Had to do with her children, how she loved them. "Oh, well," she says. "Whatever." There's that damn song again, "Sweet Hour of Prayer," no way of turning off that record in her mind. She turns off the gas heater, shuts off the burner. Thinks: don't slam the door, don't wake the campers next cabin over. Thinks: damn fools. Poker all night. Would've ruined everything if they saw me leave. No one goes fishing alone.

They'd been to Birch Point many times. First family there in fact; man, wife and two children at an all-male camp. The men had resented it, their being there, but Darly didn't mind. That first year, the guide had thought it funny, his mixed party with a woman and little kids bringing in the biggest catch. Over the years, going back to Birch Point, the guide taught the boys how to fillet; herself and their daughter how to handle a motor.

The children, think of the children, in their thirties and forties now, all grown. She'd called last October for May reservations. "Four adults," she'd said. "Two children." No one knew; not even the grandchildren. When she'd arrived at Birch Point, they'd expected six in the party for cabin eight. "Family's coming later," she'd told them at the lodge. The guide's son ran the camp now. His kids call her gramma. "Wanted to take my time travelling and came along early," she said. She registered for the duck blind at Footprint Lake, reserved a boat, motor, full tank of gas. So early in the season, scarcely anyone will be

on the lake to notice she's alone.

Fishing rods and reels, bait, tackle box, Remington, all in the trunk of her car. She's already planned how to unload the trunk. Packed loose were: bucket to sit on, skillet, coffee pot, fishing gear, waders, the Remington. She must remember not to wade deep. Darly had done that while portaging once. His waders filled, anchoring him to the lake bottom. Their sons had pulled him out but it wasn't easy. They'd sliced the waders with fillet knives.

Supplies which would last a lifetime were divided into two duffel bags. The number-one bag contained peanut oil, flour and cornmeal mix, salt and pepper, spatula, coffee, a sharp knife. She slipped a raw egg in the mac pocket, sealed in a Ziploc baggie. The number-two duffel held wool socks, tennis shoes, more diapers, soap, a thermal blanket. Extra shells for the Remington were in her tackle box, along with Bufferin just in case. Never know what might happen. Darly taught her that.

The drive to Footprint is slow: she wants to remember everything: those tall pines with hundreds of years of brown needles on the floor of the forest, white birch with its bark the white of an egg, the boulder in the road you watch for. She shifts into low gear to climb the hill. Footprint Lake spills out at the top of the hill like a giant moccasin. Long ago, Indians from the Cree tribe named the lake. She's fished in all the coves, found secret walleye holes, caught a seven pounder but lost it when her daughter dropped the net.

Waves slap the dock in quiet splashes. Her boat is ready in the water. The motor is in place, tipped forward to protect its blades. She knows she'll have to row out to the end of the pier before she can start the motor. "Can do," she says. She heads the car into a parking space along the beach then backs up close to unload. Good. The sand is firm; she won't get stuck. She moves her gear to the boat, struggling with the two duffel bags which will balance the load. She's taken two Bufferin. If she's lucky, her back will hold.

She's wearing two diapers, already damp. No mat-

ter. Later she'll build a fire. No time now to change. She must settle in the blind before morning light comes. She must blend in with the bulrushes, the marsh grass. The colors of the mac might alert the birds, but she has no choice because she needs the warmth. When she gets chilled, she piddles more. She's learned to stay warm, reasonably dry. She'd not counted on incontinence. "Bastard," she says, blaming the doctor. But in a practical way, clean and dry, diapers double as tourniquets, wiping cloths, handkerchiefs. Or, knotted and wet, can protect her from the sun.

She loads the boat, pulls the car back into the parking slot, slides the key under the front floor mat. A squirrel is chattering on the rim of a trash can. The wind has died down. A gray morning, four o'clock. She twists her bad ankle getting into the boat, forgetting that aluminum is slippery. She rows to the end of the pier, dipping oars in gentle circular motions. She's pleased with how easily the boat slides through water. The lake is so clear that when she looks down, she can see the bottom. Pebbles and rocks look like washed bones. At the end of the pier, she draws in the oars then places them in their locks. She pulls on the choke, squeezes the feedline to the gasoline and hopes she doesn't have to suck the tube to prime it. She pulls the starter rope once and the motor purrs, "Sweet hour," she says. "Of prayer." She waves to a lone man fishing off the pier then points her boat out toward the lake.

She takes the lake at full speed, although fifteen horsepower isn't much. Cabins along the shore are empty, too early in the season for campers so close to the water. She slows down when she rounds a bend, remembering the raggedy-edged boulders just below the surface in the narrow pass. The boat drifts over boulders while she guides with the oars. The lake is deep enough this year; a blessing. A deer is feeding offshore. A heron stands on one leg. She smiles, pleased. She rubs her ankle which has begun to swell.

The rapids are a piece of cake. She's watched her boys and Darly pass through them many times, going uphill to the next lake, speeding down on the

way back. She'd always thought they'd pulled off magic, shooting the rapids, but finds it's all a matter of guiding the boat. She's not as strong as she used to be but no matter. Determination is what counts. She guns the motor when she's up and into the next lake, Lake Despair. She's wondered often about that name. How did the Crees know that word? Had they tried to cross the lake and a wind came up? Lake Hope, she calls it now.

The duck blind is across from Tepee Point. She's seen the blind many times. Two-by-fours and planks of wood covered with tree limbs, bulrushes. Someone has placed an imitation mallard near the opening of the blind, a marker. The wooden duck is tied with fish line and floats in the water, bobbing on waves.

She cuts the motor and drifts toward the blind. The wind has come up; she has trouble guiding the boat into shore. Weeds and water lily vines strangle the motor blades. She pulls the motor up out of the water then stands in the boat to guide it with an oar. She can put only a little weight on her sprained ankle. Easy does it. She thinks of the heron. A platform the width of the blind rises out of the water. She decides to leave the duffel bags in the boat, takes the rods, tackle, tackle box and the Remington. She's been told the Remington must stay dry; that it has a kick to it when fired. She feels she'll deal with the kick when the time comes.

It takes longer than she expects—moving gear with a swollen ankle. She swallows two more Bufferin, using clear lake water to wash them down. She feels she is running late. She baits her line with a Red Devil which she's repainted with fingernail polish to make it shine. She loads the Remington, places it across her lap, then drops the bait in the water. She hasn't yet figured out what she'll do if she gets a bite. She hopes the fish wait because she wants to think about how she'll handle both the gun and the line. She wishes she'd brought a thermos. Oh well.

She waits. Outside the blind, the wooden duck bobbles in the water, up and down and up and down. It could use another coat of paint. She checks

her bait then changes to a jig, going for walleye. Walleye are gentler to handle because they nibble rather than grab. Northerns grab and can take your arm off. Northerns are called snakes around here. But their fillets are flaky and fresh. They used to eat them for shore lunch, picking out bones with their fingers. Didn't use forks, just hands and fingers.

She waits. The sun comes up quickly, brilliantly, like a burst of fire. Blue-green painted feathers on the mallard decoy glisten. The lake is azure-blue, white caps in the distance. A single gull circles the blind. He's the scout, the gull that checks out food for the gang.

She waits. She is warmer now, the ankle a dull ache. She knows now that death is a hawk with large flapping wings, a full yellow beak, legs outstretched beneath its body, claws extended to grab its prey. In dreams, which she reads as warnings, she's seen the hawk every night since last October. The gun is cocked and ready. She'll take aim and shoot that hawk with all the might that's in her. She'll shoot death down with a bang. She wants to see Paris again, listen to jazz, drink more wine.

She sights down the Remington for practice. A sea gull's belly fits in the squared-off patch along the barrel. She'll never shoot the gull because gulls take care of their own. She's waiting for the hawk and will kill it with a perfect shot. She's as ready as she'll ever be.

It gets warmer with the sun shining so she takes off the mackintosh hat and jacket and places them on the platform. She knots a diaper and drapes it over her head to protect bald spots. Her hair has always been thin. She parts the flap on the blind so she can get a wider view of the sky. Hawks are easy prey, she thinks. You aim straight and fire then fire again if you have to. She sits on the bucket, her diapers soaked. She raises up her leg with the swollen ankle so that it rests on a limb inside the blind. Incontinent, indeed. She's just getting started. Life is just beginning. Paris is around the corner and nothing can stop her now. She'll shoot that sucker before it knows what hit it, she's that ready. Sweet hour, she thinks. She waits.

A POUND OF CHERRIES
Dagmar Schultz

The eve of solstice
I take you home with a woman you love
driving off into the lightest night
a box of cherries on your seat
I fling the promise of fulfilled desire
to witches in the shade
who caution me:

free your plants of dead blossoms
watch those you failed to water revive
before the moon rises
call the past to hold you
in these hours of suspension

what I know came to me

from villages stirred by the shrill scream of
fighting cocks
and the staccato calls of their owners

from moments of swinging onto a huge wide wave
having overcome the fierceness of the breakers

from my sister and her fellow inmates
eyeing me from afar
hurrying to hold my hand

from the red soil of the South
and the voices of its children
singing survival songs

from the masked faces of women
cradling rocks in their fists
the sound of crashing glass
detonating the night

from my grandmother's hand
slowly stroking my hair
and her stubborn ways of resisting pain and death

from the wrinkled arms and the grey hair
of a young woman
who sold her children to strangers

from the frightened face of a boy
who smashed his keys into my childhood mouth

from the silhouette of my mother
picking flowers in the morning sun
"Men are from a different star"

from the words of poets
who drew letters with their own blood

from women moving
to music through my body

the goddesses lick my fingertips
for the sweet red juice of cherries
squashed in my hand
and their flickering tongues whisper
"remember her happiness"

I dive into wine
moon shining through me
the edges of the bleeding sea extend
into unknown landscapes
may I be able to transform the fish
into a bird of prey
for exploration

you stand at the bow of an old strong vessel
Yemanja towering the sails
one foot on Afrekete's joke box
you cut the waves at self-determined speed
complain about the weather changing your course
call out to me
to preserve my courage upon this journey.

Yemanja: Yoruba goddess of water

CROSSING THE HIGH COUNTRY
Amber Coverdale Sumrall

The narrow trail into Round Lake winds up and over a high mountain pass in a series of steep switchbacks. The morning air is cool and sharp, it stings when I inhale. This is my first backpacking trip since I lost my leg fourteen years ago in an auto accident. I climb slowly and methodically, not yet acclimated to the altitude. I wear a below-the-knee prosthesis on my right leg and a foot brace on my left. I am aware of every stone, every piece of wood on the path. One false step, one twist of my ankle or knee and I would have to be carried out of the Sierra Nevadas. For leverage and balance I use a gnarled branch of madrone as a walking stick.

I have been walking and practicing yoga for weeks in preparation for this. On my back is a daypack, stuffed with my sleeping bag and a dozen wool stump socks. A pair of field glasses for bird observing hang from my neck. My husband, John, carries forty pounds of gear on his back.

"You set the pace," he tells me, following several steps behind. "You'll get to flush the birds too." He has hoped ever since we met that I would someday be able to experience the high country and is prepared to do anything to make this possible. We will walk for five miles, then make camp.

I have known John over eight years. The fact that I am an amputee made not the slightest difference to him when we met. It does now though. When I limp around the house, steeped in self-pity, and loathing my "condition" as he calls it, his patience wears thin. "Everything's conditional." he says, the way hippies used to say, "everything's relative." John thinks I should have a hut to go to at these times, modeled on the menstrual huts of Native American women. A quiet, solitary place to reflect and heal. He refuses to indulge my self-destructive moods but will massage my foot, back, neck, legs, whenever I am in pain.

It is early morning in the Sierras, the sun has not yet crossed the snow-capped peaks. Robins and

purple finches punctuate the silence with song. Across the valley patches of snow are melting, becoming streams that feed Woods and Winnemucca Lakes.

Last week I had the screws tightened in my artificial foot and bought a new pair of hiking boots. At the last minute I decided in favor of my old, well broken-in work boots. As we climb up the mountain my artificial foot begins to creak. So much for sneaking up on birds, I think, wondering if this leg is going the way of my last one.

Several years ago at an art exhibit, I found myself falling mysteriously in slow motion. I grabbed onto a table of leather-bound journals to stop my descent but they tumbled down with me. I noticed that my foot was hanging by a thread from the rest of my prosthesis. It swung back and forth like a pendulum. A crowd formed in record time, unable to comprehend that this was not a flesh-and-blood foot. "Is she drunk?" someone asked, in response to my wild laughter at their horrified expressions. "Drunk or crazy," someone else replied, as I sat on the floor wondering how to escape the pandemonium. A fellow amputee, sensing what had occurred, pushed through the crowd and carried me to my car. It was worth the discomfort and embarrassment to see the shock register on all those faces as they stared at my rapidly swiveling foot. I felt as if this was my initiation into a secret, esoteric club. Able-bodied need not apply.

At the summit of Meese Pass we stop to rest. I gulp air greedily, attempting to make up for the reduced oxygen. The rising sun has illuminated the meadow below and for as far as I can see there are wild blue iris, bright yellow mules ears and purple lupine. I remove my outer flannel shirt, change my stump sock which is wet and hot. I will have to change them every thirty minutes to prevent blisters and sores. They slip easily through the loop on my pack and will dry in the breeze while we walk.

Clark's nutcrackers dart from tree to tree, collecting pine nuts from Jeffrey pines as we enter a series of meadows, threaded with tiny streams. I want to come back as a bird. To choose whether to walk or

fly. It is no coincidence that my dreams of flying have increased lately; I have been so frustrated with the sheer effort of moving my body from place to place. It seems that as soon as my ankle recovers from tendonitis, or my sciatica is in remission, my stump develops a painful pressure sore which necessitates hours of not wearing my prosthesis. Flying appears to be so effortless.

It is a rare occurrence when I'm not dealing with some imbalance in my body. Most of the time I am able to take it in stride and chalk up more writing time (sitting at my desk requires no great energy expenditure other than tremendous willpower). But on the bad days I internalize anger and contempt for my body as if it were the enemy, plotting my demise. When the simple act of walking down to my garden for tomatoes or squash irritates my ankle or stump or both, I become afraid and withdraw. The "how could anyone ever want to put up with me" mantra resonates through my head and the familiar fear of dependency wells up to such an extent that I refuse to answer the phone or reach out to my friends. I clump around the house ranting and raving like a mad woman and even my cats avoid me.

John and I stop at the headwaters of the Truckee River to wash our faces. Removing my prosthesis, I check for redness and bathe my leg. From this point it is all downhill to Round Lake, through sub-alpine meadows, then forests of red and white fir. Dozens of woodpeckers, warblers, lazuli buntings and nuthatches flit overhead and the rising warm fragrance of crunched pine needles beneath our feet permeates the air. Finally, we pass through a dense canopy of lodgepole pine to arrive in a beaver's marsh bordered by a quaking aspen grove.

"The lake's just beyond those trees." John says, "I'll scout the easiest way in. How are you doing?"

"I'm exhausted, ready to eat."

"Yeah, me too. It's the altitude."

He sheds his pack and disappears beyond the aspen grove. Unstrapping my prosthesis, I check for swelling or irritation. The air temperature is cool at this elevation, a critical factor. My stump is fine.

"There is no simple way down," John says on his

return. "We have to make our own trail from this point. There are lots of rocks to climb over."

Slowly, we pick our way across the maze of granite boulders. This is extremely difficult for me, my artificial foot is not flexible, does not yield to the surface beneath it. It wedges in the small clefts between boulders. When we arrive, hand in hand, at our chosen campsite there are no other people at the lake. We have the water, the birds, the fish, all the beauty of this place to ourselves. Above us are pinnacles of vertical rimrock, eroded into strange formations, lifting from the lake. A perfect nesting site for golden eagles and red-tailed hawks.

Two days ago, when John was working on our sauna, I told him I was ready to go to Round Lake and he said he'd take time off. I first heard about this magical place from him, he'd been here long ago. My decision was not a conscious one. Rather, my body gave signals that it was capable and I responded, trusting as I have recently learned to do, in its innate wisdom.

Last spring, when I was putting in my garden, I refused to stop digging when my stump began to hurt, needing to go beyond the pain, to "overcome" it. As a result I was unable to wear my prosthesis for days afterwards. Used crutches and a wheelchair.

After a short rest, during which several mountain chickadees and stellar's jays check us out, we pitch the tent and hang our food to keep it safe from bears and raccoons. Choosing the perfect rock overlooking the lake we devour our lunch of hardboiled eggs, trail mix and bananas. It's true what John says, *anything* tastes gourmet after hours of hiking.

His sense of humor tends toward slapstick but he has never hidden my leg as a practical joke even when he knows I am liable to ruin his morning on any given day, by following him around the kitchen with a full list of grievances. When I kicked the basement door in, totally enraged after the third of three custom-made prostheses in one month didn't fit, he calmly stuffed the jagged hole with newspaper. Later he transformed one of them into a planter, filled with forget-me-nots, for my birthday.

Tossing the last of the trail mix to the juncoes we

make our way down to a slab of smooth granite at the water's edge. John unpacks his fishing creel and baits a hook with silver lures to attract cutthroat trout. Shedding my clothes, I stretch out in the hot sun, close my eyes and listen to the whir of the reel.

A week ago I was at Tassajara Hot Springs, east of Big Sur. Women of many ages and sizes lay naked together on the deck by the creek. I felt shy when I took off my clothes; even when I did not observe them looking I felt their eyes on me, their unspoken questions. As I entered the steambath with my friend Dana, who carried my prosthesis in and out (it's not waterproof) as I needed it, one of the women asked about my leg. When I told her about the accident she took both my hands in hers, looked me in the eyes and said, "Thank you for the courage and beauty you bring to this place."

I did not grow up loving my body. The messages I received, as an able-bodied Catholic girl in the fifties, were consistent in their negativity. My body was considered a temple of the Holy Ghost, on loan from God, to be held in trust like a gold certificate until I died. A woman was classified as virgin, whore or mother. How to get from virgin to mother and still have a good time was a dilemma for many of us. I opted for becoming a tomboy.

If able-bodied women can't accept their bodies how do they view their disabled sisters? And, more importantly, how do we view ourselves? The great white homogeneous society sees women as sex objects or they don't see us at all. Disabled women are perceived neither as sexual beings nor as invisible. In a world of commodities we are "damaged goods."

Actually, it is a relief to be the square peg in a round hole. To defy the labels and stereotypes. To be the tomboy again. So that at Tassajara, when I sit among women, naked and vulnerable, it frees me to accept my body a little more.

Sliding off the rock into the icy water I swim over to the beaver dam that we walked across a few hours ago, a bridge of aspen limbs, mud and dried grasses. It appeared so fragile I couldn't believe it would support us. Water hyacinth pads float across the lake; lazily I glide among them as John lifts fish from the

water. As the afternoon shifts to evening we return to our clothes and gather wood for the campfire. John prepares dinner: pan-fried trout, rice and cheddar-cauliflower soup. The stars appear, one by one, the Big Dipper directly overhead. We drink hot chocolate as the flames die down, relaxing into the serenity of this place. My entire body aches but it is a good ache, muscles exerted to their capacity. As the moon rises we bed down in the tent, sleeping bags zipped together, our bodies twined around one another.

The loss of my limb did not affect my sexuality. I decided after the accident, at age twenty-eight, that anyone who would reject me on purely physical grounds was not someone I'd care to be lovers with. Because I could "pass" as an able-bodied woman most of the time it was often quite a shock for a potential lover to learn of my disability. I confess to a perverse delight in witnessing people's reactions over the years. John is fond of saying, "It's not how you're built, it's how you're wired."

Something wakens me in the night, a receding sound close to the tent like a large animal scuttling away through the woods. I imagine it is a bear, can't get back to sleep. There is always some fear to deal with, tangible or intangible. Ultimately, it is the fear of dying that permeates all the others. I believe that those who are most threatened by the disabled are those who do not acknowledge their own mortality. Those of us who are disabled are continual reminders of nature's random workings. I prefer to think of those who are not disabled as *temporarily* able-bodied. Sooner or later most of us will experience a major disability. Not many of us die in our sleep these days.

At first light I awaken again to the raucous sounds of a Clark's nutcracker picking through the ashes of last night's fire. It flies off with a small clump of rice. There are days when I feel like such a scavenger. Days when my stump retains water before my period, and my prosthesis will not fit properly. Days when my ankle will not support me. I am like the bird, searching for sustenance among the ashes. Sometimes I manage to pull something out: a book, a

remembered chunk of advice, a phone call to a friend, the appearance of a special bird at my feeder, a poem that surfaces, or the stunning beauty of the day itself.

After breakfast of trout and eggs, and one last swim, we prepare for the long hike out. My clean stump socks are drying on a rock; I loop them through the pack, they will dry as I walk. It is noon, very warm and an uphill climb most of the way. I need to stop frequently to rest, drink from the canteen, change socks. It takes over four hours to reach our car at the trailhead. I allow my body to carry me slowly, to take the time it needs.

After the place where the mountain pass levels out and the switchbacks end there is a wooden plank crossing a stream. Lush plants spring up on either side. The plants and herbs are unfamiliar but their fragrance is not: a blend of citrus, lavender and sage. An image of my grandmother Nellie June's bedroom comes to mind. Of course, it is the way her room smelled when I visited. The mixture of sachet, dusting powder and orange blossoms from her fruit trees outside. She has come from the spirit world to greet me here. Her words echo down the canyon, "Honeygirl, if you listen to your own inner voice you'll never go wrong." My grandma with her wisdom and Mohawk connections to the earth taught me to believe in myself. I silently give thanks for her blessing, for this crossing.

As John and I pull shoes, socks, dirty jeans off by the car I am already contemplating my next adventure. I want to participate in the upcoming blockade at Concord Naval Weapons Station, a major distribution point for arms shipments to Central America. As a sanctuary activist this is an issue close to my heart. Because I need my arms free, for equilibrium, I cannot allow myself to be handcuffed. A wheelchair is the only alternative. This means I will leave my prosthesis at home. I am afraid of being so vulnerable, so dependent on others. I am scared and uneasy and I am going to do it anyway. For Nellie June, for all disabled women, for myself.

THE WILLOW TREES
Marilyn Fox

I like to think
my mother's back
behind the willow trees
among lost children
and half-remembered dreams.

The air is more than air there
sweet against the skin and strong
enough to hold her quiet stare of resignation
in a fine suspension
like the deep blank eyes
of a mourning dove
hung
between the leaves
at dawn.

I like to think
she knows me
when I move up close
to frame my homesick hands around
her fragile (almost wild) expression

But no.
I only see
the flash of recognition
crushed
behind the two black holes
of her eyes
collapsing
back
to stardust.

THE LAST SUPPER
Gina Rhodes

the meat is still tender
though fallen from the bone
floating in the still warm liquid
of what we first cooked

i hope we can rest
in the many years
in the drift in the wind spices
be if nothing else
the drained off juices of
when our meal was still hot
over the steaming vegetables
your name collects and falls
from my face into
i cannot see where
i only now am anxious
to keep this broccoli firm
and fix this night
separate
unclumped from the others
to give you once my perfect rice
if this should be our last supper

PAGAN CHASTENE
Lou Robinson

"Stay there," she says, "I want you to smell something—what does this remind you of?" "That violet soap in Elsie's bathroom!" The smell of the powdered bath salts, the cornflower crayola, the fairy sticks snipped and rolled to cool on a buttered marble table. Intensely fragrant pastels. I shriek, "The goatskin glove," and Pagan and I both see and smell it, white covered with pale peach, pink, lime green dyed sugar, worn to punch color into the white stretched toffee while it is still warm. We are celebrating our reunion and the cult of the grandmother.

My second cousin Pagan stayed out all night with a drummer in Glen Miller Park when she was seventeen. The first and last time she ever lay down with a man. When she found she was pregnant, she left Richmond and ran away to Cincinnati. She'd been raised by my grandmother Elsie after her parents died in a suicide pact in Chillicothe, when the crash came. Pagan's mother, Helen, had been Elsie's sister. Elsie Firth was the seventh child of a seventh child, born in Paisley, Scotland, with the caul over her face, full of the sight. She still had her Scottish ways. Once years later we were all sitting around in the kitchen eating sugar cream pie, and my mother asked her, "Why didn't you just stir a walnut in a bucket or something and draw Pagan back home?"

Called the Seven Sisters, built on seven hills and still rosy with brick, Cincinnati harbored rebel white girls like it once hid slaves, graciously, carelessly, not caring whether they lived or died. She rocked them to sleep on the great Ohio and roused their battered spirits in the gay dives along her shores. There, Pagan nearly died from a bad abortion, alone, on Eden Avenue. Her landlady found her after three days, nearly frozen and blue with peritonitis. Down on the river, at Angels, a club in a houseboat strung with Christmas lights, she met Julie, an artist from Philadelphia, and Pagan began to heal. She felt her

uterus lift and tighten.

But I didn't know any of this for seventeen more years. I'd been two when Pagan left. Then I'd seen her every year at holidays, after she and Elsie reconciled. Pagan would drive up from Cincinnati twice a year to help Elsie make the holiday candy. With my grandfather, known as Rollfie to the pack of children who trailed him, Elsie owned and ran Rolf's Confectionery. When she wasn't dipping caramels in chocolate or cranking out cinnamon pillows, Elsie painted. I've seen that riotous color—not just the paintings, but the candy, rainbow-stained smock, globbed palette, red and white striped satin blouses, strawberry-blond hair, walls papered in deep blue bachelor buttons...in one other place—when I went to find her birthplace in Renfrewshire, Scotland. Old women living alone in blue cottages crammed full of heather, chintz, wild flowers, mulberry jam, jars of purple thistle, plum balls of yarn. So it's not true that there is just more color to the past. Elsie was the one who changed Helen's baby's name from Megan to Pagan. The fate was on it, she said.

When I was twelve and Elsie died, I didn't see Pagan again for years. Not until I ran away to Cincinnati with Doug, my high school boyfriend. In 1969, year of years, nothing connected to anything, who could think of family history? I didn't until Doug and I met a runaway on Calhoun Street. Melissa, younger than us, talked about a high school teacher who had helped her get an abortion. "Pagan Chastene." The name broke over my fevered exile and washed me, like a tributary, to her door.

She drags Doug and me inside her bungalow overlooking the Queen City. Here was her green green carpet, everything so big and so new. Hadn't the suburbs been abolished? Hadn't they been blown up? But this one meant to be a harbor. In Orangelawn, where all the Catholics have stone madonnas, Pagan and Julie have erected a stone poodle by the barbecue. In the garage they raise minks. Pagan takes us downstairs to a built-in black leather bar with red stools and a stereo playing Billie Holiday. A lacquered blond brings us beer in frosted mugs.

The last time I'd seen Julie was the last summer

Elsie was alive. Pagan and Julie had driven up for Elsie's Annual Garden Art Show. I hung a painting of Black Beauty. Julie brought her portfolio, but everyone shunned her because she was "commercial—a Shillito artist." I thought this was a genre until I moved to Cincinnati and discovered Shillito's Department Store. Julie's white blond hair is still held immobile by a silver clasp. Back then Pagan had worked across the river at a TV station. Elsie would always say to me, "If you didn't bite your fingernails you could be on TV like Pagan." Pagan's hands had been the ones holding the bowl in the Betty Crocker cake mix ads.

Doug is saying, "I'm probably going back to Oberlin in the fall. Art History. I work two nights a week at St. Mary's on Mitchell. All the waiters are boys. We carry trays of German potato salad to the old men playing bingo." He is preening, entranced to find himself with a sophisticated audience.

"Where's Barney?" I ask my cousin.

"He died. He was ancient, like me. Time has passed, kid."

"I loved him. He was afraid of everything. Horseflies made him throw up."

"I'll never have another chihuahua. Now it's poodles. Julie gave me Simone for Christmas. Come here Sissy, meet my little cousin. Simone has been in heat for two years, we can't understand it.... How is your mother? She never writes to me. Elsie kept the family together, or the candy did. Do you know that when she died your uncle Bob, your mother's own brother, Elsie's own *son*, sold all her paintings at auction? See that sea gull painting above the bar? Come on a tour. I have traveled all over Indiana buying these damn things back."

She gets me upstairs in the kitchen. "Do your parents know you're in town? How long have you been here? Why aren't you in school? You're not trying to scare them on purpose are you? Mona doesn't deserve that. Eddy, well maybe a little. How long have you known this boy? All right, I'm going to put my foot in it. That boy is as gay as Liberace, you know that don't you?"

"Of course."

"Oh well. Good then, I just wanted to make sure."

"He's leaving. He met someone named Rodrigo selling the *Eye* and they're going to San Francisco."

I say this from deep within my coma. I am not thinking of living alone or picturing anything, drugged with denial in every cell. I could have been operated on without flinching. I spent months in this state. When I got his first letter from San Francisco telling me he had clap and I should go to the free clinic, I went, thinking nothing. The doctor said, "Where is your pulse. You have the blood pressure of an amphibian."

The way scabs are fascinating before you learn they are just dead skin, I cover the worst with the most beautiful of surfaces. This period of exile—from home, from body, from reflection, is opalescent. I lived in a riverfront tenement two floors up from a ground floor leather store. All the other apartments were empty. Someone before me had painted my walls black with pink fluorescent woodwork. The hall was mauve, with one blue light bulb in the high ceiling. Plaster fell out whenever you walked down the hall. After one chunk fell, I discovered a note wedged in the wall behind it: "I hate you. You make me pregnant and then you leave. I'll get even if it's the last thing I do." By day I worked at American Linen Supply on Reading Road, where all the white women wore green cardigans against the chill of the air conditioning, a glass partition between us and the black women sweating over the steam vats. I did billing, hallucinating relationships between the numbers. Two and Two were kind gay men. Four was decent, upright. Five completely untrustworthy and must never be combined with Six, who hadn't the strength to resist. At night I let fall the same three albums in the same order, Jefferson Airplane, Blind Faith, The Band. Clinging to an atmosphere of teary promise rising over misery—religion.

There was a hole the size of a dog in the back room wall through which I could watch trains hauling coal from the river barges. The surrounding walls were the color of Pepto Bismol. Finally I called her again, from the pay phone on Calhoun.

Pagan offers to come and get me and my laundry

and we'll watch TV. "The Children's Hour" is on. Julie has just moved out, back to Philadelphia. I don't ask why. We get very drunk. Pagan on scotch, me on rum and ginger ale.

"I could strangle your skinny white neck," she says to Audrey Hepburn. Pagan is a schoolteacher now herself, she feels this movie in her throat, stomach and fingertips. "Cousin, I'm going to tell you something I hope won't send you away. I am a Homosexual."

"Of course," I say, "so am I, I think. Pass me the Vernors. Remember when you used to feed my china horse spinach whenever I wasn't looking? I called her Coaly Bay the Outlaw Horse. I believed she ate it. She ate it, right? What's the big deal. Why did she leave anyway? You're better off without her. Her hair has turned into concrete."

"Oh, get you. Your pretty boy gets his blond out of a bottle."

"Yes, and he uses Bio-Cure on his ends. He told me it really helps."

Pagan imitates perfectly the way he flips back his hair, hands held out to the side as if to catch a cloud, but not touching. I imitate how he slaps my hand away if I touch the fringe on his jacket. We are laughing so hard one of us is crying.

"I knew I'd hear from you because a gypsy gave me a reading at a party at Angel's. He said a long lost relative would come back after seven years. He also said a 'Kate' was trying to contact me. That could have been any number of people. I used to call everyone I loved 'Kate' after Katharine Hepburn. Elsie and I called each other 'Kate' for awhile. I figured it was her."

"Do you remember how she used to prescribe color cures for the whole neighborhood? 'Madge, you have too much red in your system. Paint your bedroom lavender.'"

"Remember how much she hated it when your dad gave her a pitcher made in the shape of Elsie the Borden Cow?"

We got together several times that summer. She'd pick me up at my place on Calhoun in her blue Mustang with the houndstooth top, in her cat-eye

shades. Once Simone got out, wearing a contraceptive diaper, to the consternation of the tattered row of fifteen-year-old faggot junkies on the sidewalk selling incense or the *Eye*. We'd eat at the only place Pagan would go—Captain Ahab's on the river, where they knew her. In those days Pagan wouldn't even go to the grocery without wearing lipstick, for fear someone would guess. I ordered shrimp, she tried to get me to eat steak. We were absurdly nostalgic about Elsie, us, as if we ennobled the concept of family with a reunion so miraculous and fragile it would surely splinter before we knew it. She must have seen me as her youth, running from a drummer. The same escape to Cincinnati from small Midwestern town, same bitter ambivalence about the men in the family, same terrible longing-amounting-to-a-religion for the women. She must have thought she could see my future and what a burden.

For so long I hadn't imagined any future but loss. Nothing I saw was for me, wives, mothers, secretaries, salesgirls, factory jobs, massage parlor jobs. At American Linen Supply I was ostracized because I talked to the white prostitute and the black steam room workers, and I wore black tights. No one spoke to me but Laura, aged sixty, who every day would say, "You should get a job at Big Boy where you could be with your own age." Being with Pagan made we want things—a bed, an antique emerald velvet dress we saw on Mt. Adams. What would I do with a dress? I'd feel like I was in drag. It was like wishing for the dead to rise.

Meanwhile I watched Pagan take herself in hand. She quit drinking. She took yoga classes. She wrote notes on little square pads of blue paper of everything she accomplished in a day. These little notes struck me as pathetic. But I began making my own plans. I wrote to friends I'd left behind. I sent away for school catalogues.

I left before she invited me to move in with her. I heard it coming. Some shred of integrity remained to pull me short of doing that to her, callous and needy as I was. I moved on, made friends, became more human, and visited her every summer.

Pagan met a woman named Liz, and they bought

a farm across the border in Indiana. Pagan shed years. No more lipstick for the run to the store. She taught me how to shoot a rifle. Once a snake followed us along the creek. Once we rescued a dog we found starving and hairless in the woods and named it Blue.

By now I was twenty-seven and living with a woman named Helen, in a cottage on Silver Lake, near Pinckney, Michigan. Helen was the name of Pagan's mother. All the women on my mother's side had hair in shades of red. To oblige me, Helen has dyed her hair the color of wet cinnamon nylon stockings. All their shining heads. The winter of '77—we are snowbound on Silver Lake.

On the news they say the Ohio has frozen for the first time in history. What do they know about history. Coal barges can't reach either shore; thousands are trapped without power or heat. I keep saying, "People are dying in Indiana." Helen tells me I am driving her crazy with this pronouncement. Outside, our lake is alive and heaving. Now another phrase is laden forever with death—coal barge. My mother calls. Pagan died in the night, of cancer. None of us knew she had anything wrong. Liz had nursed her. I call Liz at the Indiana farm.

"We fought it with all we had, kid. She wouldn't let me tell anybody. If her friends called I'd have to say, 'she's resting,' when I wanted to scream *help me*. I'd been making two meals, food for me, baby formula for her. Then three days ago she pleaded for a taste of my chili. I gave her a spoonful and she began vomiting blood. Great clumps like a period. I had to dig us out of this snow hell and get her to the hospital. They said not to let her have water, they wanted to let her throat heal. I gave her ice chips and then made her spit them back in my hand. Looking at me like a wounded deer, nothing I or anyone could do for her. Right before she died, she said, 'Liz, I'm in a green place.'"

Helen and I went down the following summer to visit Liz. She took us out on the Ohio in the pontoon boat. We listened to Pagan's tapes of the Four Seasons, rocking in the waves from the passing coal barges. When I had lived on Calhoun, "across the

river" was laden with threat. Rednecks from Kentucky came over at night to fight Cincinnati blacks and hippies. Once I had gone out after curfew for a hamburger and couldn't get through the crowd. Later I learned a woman had had her eye carved out with a broken bottle. Violence and my father came from Kentucky. Indiana housed all the women and the candy, and Ohio was a kind of rebel child.

"When I first met Pagan in Cincinnati, we stayed in bed for a week. We'd have a friend bring us food and wine. She called in sick at the high school. When we finally went back to work, I'd come home and she'd be standing on the porch, shaking her hands, saying, 'Liz, I'm so in love I can't *stand* it,' I'd say, 'Honey, just lie back.'"

CHECKING THE CLOSETS
Donna Masini

Middle Sister, Melinda Goodman, MSG Press, Ltd. 47 East Houston Street, New York, NY 10012, 1988, 82 pp., $7.95 + $2 p/h, checks payable to Melinda Goodman.

> Getting older means...
> you act like there's nothing in your closet
> you don't even check.

In *Middle Sister,* Melinda Goodman's first book of poems, she checks the closets. She checks lovers, dolls, marriage, racial etiquette, maraschino cherries, lobster dinners. Continually peeling back the familiar, she reveals its mysteries, uncovers its ghosts. In a clear, unfettered language she ferrets out the strangeness in ordinary life; she creeps up on the mystery until you can't tell where the familiar ends and the extraordinary begins:

> the dolls with their hard faces and noisy eyes
> clicking open and closed all the time...
> little skinny plastic people that can't pee or drink
> when I lie them on their backs
> their eyes stay wide open
> they can never relax
> they stare up at me watching
> like I'm going to kill them.

Goodman's approach is narrative, her form anecdotal, her vehicle, intuition. She allows herself to circle her subject slowly, moving closer to the center, until the trap door cracks open and we fall with her into the more lyrical associations of the inner life. What is often exhilarating in these poems is her daring to speak the unspeakable, the frightening, not-quite-formulated, as in "The Wedding Reception," where we watch the speaker's complexity of response to a seductive eight-year-old girl. I feel Whitman behind these poems; the Whitman who said,

> Unscrew the locks from the doors.
> Unscrew the doors themselves from the jambs.

Her meditations occur in laundromats, women's bars, unemployment lines. Like Whitman, she mines the city. Her landscapes are urban, her rhythms urban. She races, she watches, she catches its cadence and pulse:

> Driving on the New Jersey Turnpike
> watching in the rear view mirror
> as my brake lights flash a red glow
> across the bumper of the card behind me
> it doesn't feel good
> it doesn't feel good to be
> heading into the Holland Tunnel
> after a week away by the ocean
> crawling like a parasite
> up one of Manhattan's many assholes

Her world is acutely observed. She's got a sharp vision and an ear for the way people *really* talk. She takes on the things of this world from cheap cigarette lighters to framed pictures of Angela Davis and Jesus Christ that hang in kitchens. These things ground her, and in her best poems the visions and meditations are tacked down with a series of highly specific and striking details. She trusts herself to these details and allows herself to be led by them. Here she watches a retarded boy in a laundromat:

> he's wearing a black fake fur and plastic coat
> chinese shoes he keeps shifting from foot to foot
> rocking
> watching the suds and flowered house-
> coats go by
> year after year I am trying to forget you

The surprising emotional discoveries are made through her choice of and attention to specifics, and what I can only call trust—the ability to abandon herself to the spontaneous improvisations in rhythm and music that lead her forward.

Through the specificity of detail she evokes a time and place, most often the early sixties of her childhood, the late sixties and the seventies of her adolescence. The drugs, music, displacement, paranoia and crazy energy of those times pulse through the poems.

As the title of the collection indicates, Goodman locates herself in the family and, from that base,

moves out into the world. Central to the book is the mystery of the mother. Simultaneously the person most familiar and most strange, she appears throughout these poems in various guises creating many different emotional textures. In a striking poem ("Cobwebs"), Goodman captures all the desire, awe, fear and wonder a young daughter might have toward this older, familiar woman:

> I walked around in my mother's high heels
> I put her stockings over my head

As the girl rifles through her mother's drawers amid purses, bras and pale soaps, she grows more daring:

> the second drawer to the left were slips and nighties
> perfume blue and barely pink
> I plunged my arms up to my elbows
> in soft folded petals of my mother
> I fingered the tiny rose bud
> that floated on her neck lines
> summer nighties blizzarded with flowers
> slippery thin straps I liked best
> the ones that were most worn when she wore them
> she looked like she was dressed in sheets of rain.

Listen to the musical repetitions of those soft *p*'s, *b*'s and *f*'s throughout this section—how that "perfume blue and barely pink" leads into the plunge farther and deeper into the mother. As the poem ends, the children have been plunked into the tub. As an afterthought the mother tosses in her nylons. The children remain in a weird gleam, like awed, discarded lovers:

> we played till our fingertips shrivelled
> we played till our lips turned blue.

Goodman catches the way children long for their mothers—those tangled, inchoate emotions of childhood:

> I want my boot to stay stuck
> to my foot forever
> feel your hands around my ankle
> smell your breath

She summons up the chaos of our mothers' kitchens and our chaotic responses to them. The mother who

chloroforms the guinea pigs is the same mother who, in a wonderful serio-comic moment recreates those wild bomb-shelter days of the early sixties:

> remember when Mom came home from the lab
> covered in radiation
> she was like Midas only everything she touched
> turned hot
> they gave her a Geiger counter to check things out
> and we followed her around the house with it
> laughing
> click click click click
> mommy mixed Hamburger Helper into some
> chopped meat
> with green peppers it was hot
> her side of the bed hot
> even the accelerator pedal in the car

In these family poems we see the beginnings of a theme that runs throughout the volume: the ways we fail one another—the mother that fails her daughter who is very high, very scared and needing her, the woman who fails her lovers and the lovers who fail her, the governments that fail their people, failures of understanding, communication, the acts of imagination we cannot or will not make.

Yet the movement is toward a kind of redemption. In what feels like one of the emotional turning points of the book—"I Am Married to Myself"—Goodman turns the institution around and enacts the struggle toward self-love:

> I was nervous wondering
> would I run out on me at the last minute

And I think of Whitman again; his own exuberant struggle toward self-love: "Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile."

For the most part you go with her. Whether she's asking the painful questions of adolescent alienation:

> did they throw the bottle because I'm a hippie
> or because I'm a dyke?

or delineating subtle differences in ethnic etiquette:

> Puerto Ricans...the rainbow people...
> if you don't kiss everyone when you come in the door
> they wonder what's wrong with you

a hard habit to break once you get into it
...but in this town
you don't go kissing your friend's mother
when you come in to the house
she thinks you're crazy
"just say hi hi is enough," my friends tell me

or examining our unquestioning acceptance of daily violence:

the restaurant is crowded but I'm aware
only of the sounds of crabs blasting open...
it takes five minutes of calculated destruction
just to get one satisfying forkful.

or exposing the ways we can protect ourselves from the truth even while professing to seek it out:

quick
what's another word for starvation?

you trust the vision, the attention to the truths of experience. These are poems that feel, for the most part, like they had to be written. No obligatory or workshop poems, forced images, metaphors, connections. At her strongest, Goodman trusts her images and achieves a clarity of music and language, a textured and emotionally resonant voice.

Melinda Goodman was my first peer as a young poet, the first to impress me with the importance of the ordinary in our poems; of the need to use the things of our lives. Writing across the table from one another in kitchens or cafes we'd challenge, encourage. Sometimes her mere presence kept me going. Sometimes I'd watch her take hold—the way her pen raced to keep up with her rhythms, her wild wit, her powers of association, her astonishing recall for telling detail. Which is to say I was present at the births or early hours of many of these poems. They ring as true for me now as they did then.

LA NUEVA MESTIZA
Mariana Romo-Carmona

Borderlands/La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa, Spinsters/Aunt Lute, San Francisco, 1987, 203 pp., $8.95.

Borderlands/La Frontera is a work of tremendous importance for "the new mestiza," as subtitled on the book's cover. The first section, "*Atravesando Fronteras*/Crossing Borders," traces the history of *el otro México*, the people who call themselves Chicanos, whose home is the southwestern United States, originally known as *Aztlán*. The book places this history into the context of Chicanos'struggle for identity and cultural freedom.

Gloria Anzaldúa begins by touching the center of "the open wound," and keeps the reader in a heightened state of awareness and sensitivity throughout: "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds." The graphic quality of her writing brings the reader to this state, until it is impossible to avoid the force of the truth she reveals: "And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country, a border culture."

Anzaldúa tells the story of the borderlands by weaving the old legends (of the culture nearly destroyed by Spain during *La Conquista*) with the progress of the Chicano culture in the southwestern and western U.S. It is her own struggle for identity, against racism, against homophobia within and without her culture, against the nearly genocidal effects of legislation on Latinos and Native Americans. The first part of the book is divided into sections which reveal the elements of the culture from which she finds strength; "Movements of Rebellion and Cultures that Betray," "Entering into the Serpent," "The Heritage of *Coatlicue*," "Towards a New Mestiza Consciousness." In these sections she uncovers the origins of the legends: Guadalupe, the Virgin Mother; *la Chingada (Malinche)*, the mistress of Cortés, the raped woman; and *la Llorona*, the mother, the spirit who weeps in

the night. Anzaldúa examines the symbols of these figures whose identity has been subverted and used to minimize female and Indian heritage, and how their influence survives.

La Virgen Guadalupe became the Holy Patroness of Mexico, more venerated in ritual observance than even God, or Christ. Zapata used her image as the defender of the people during the Mexican revolution; she was champion of the grape strike in California, the Chicano farmworkers in Texas, and in daily life, she continues to be "the most potent religious, political and cultural image of the Chicano/*mexicano*."

The heritage of *Coatlicue* is that of the goddess *Tonantsi* who was separated from her dark side, *Coatlalopeuh*, and became the Virgin Guadalupe. Anzaldúa, then, claims this powerful female force for the Chicana lesbian, *la nueva mestiza*, the woman who wages war against oppression, with weapons as old as the history of her people.

Describing the shamanic state, or entering the serpent, Anzaldúa brings the reader into her deep meditation, explaining that here is the fountain of her creativity. Anzaldúa doesn't keep secrets from her reader, she goes directly to the source of that power: the female dark side, blood, death, transfiguration, life, the raw power of the feminine, the frightening subconscious state from which we can reach for a universal energy connecting all things.

The first section is unsettling, provoking, and it lays the ground work for the second part of the book."*Un Agitado Viento/Ehecatl*, the Wind" contains poetry that is at once beautiful and bears a terrible force because her writing no longer hides behind pain. Anzaldúa brings the pain, the fury, and the intense love of her people to the fore. From "White-Wing Season:"

> Her eyes shiny pellets
> watching the wind
> trying to lift their wings.
> Tinges of pink
> small twisted necks
> line the furrows.

She dunks the doves in the boiling pot
plucks out the feathers

in her belly a rumble
the sky reddens then blackens
a flurry of night rain
gentle as feathers.

from "El sonavabitche:"

Car flowing down a lava of highway
just happened to glance out the window
in time to see brown faces bent backs
like prehistoric boulders in a field
so common a sight no one
notices
blood rushes to my face
twelve years I'd sat on the memory
the anger scorching me...

I see that wide cavernous look of the hunted
the look of hares
thick limp blue-black hair
The bare heads humbly bent
of those who do not speak
the ember in their eyes extinguished.

During a conversation with the author about writing this book, she talked about the tremendous exhaustion that comes after finally finishing a work that "nobody wants." Whites don't want to know about the secret war of the Southwest, waged nightly across the Rio Grande, with flashlights and dogs. Chicanos don't want to hear about the identity of the Chicana lesbian, perhaps the resurgence of the dark side of the goddess, and the voice who speaks the truth about that war. Why should we air our dirty linen in front of the gringo? In "*Tlilli, Tlapalli:* the Path of the Red and Black Ink," Anzaldúa writes: "I cannot separate my writing from any part of my life. It is all one. When I write it feels like I'm carving bone. It feels like I'm creating my own face, my own heart—a *Nahuatl* concept...learning to live with *la Coatlicue* transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience."

The final poem,"*No se raje, chicanita,*" which literally means, "don't tear yourself," is dedicated to her sister. It is an exhortation to hold on, directed to all her sisters, and a reminder of the ancient origin

and pride of the Chicana. This last poem is, like the book, a call to arms for *las mujeres de la serpiente,* the women warriors of the Serpent.

No se raje mi prietita,
apriétese la faja aguántese.
Su linaje es antiquísimo,
sus raíces como la de los mesquites,
bien plantadas, horadando bajo tierra
a esa corriente, el alma de la tierra madre—
tu origen.

A PASSIONATE MUSE
Lourdes Torres

The Margarita Poems, Luz María Umpierre, Third Woman Press, Bloomington, IN, 1987, 39 pp., $5.

The Margarita Poems represents a revolutionary addition to Puerto Rican letters. Never before has a Puerto Rican woman (or man) portrayed the homosexual experience in such an honest, explicit manner. With this collection Umpierre explores a subject that has usually been taboo in Puerto Rican literature—the existence of lesbianism in our communities. Umpierre dares to speak of what Cherrie Moraga refers to as "*lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*" (what never passed through her lips). In her introduction Umpierre states that among other things her text is "an answer" to Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* (South End Press, 1983). The two books share the distinction of being the first literary works to incisively explore lesbianism in the United States Latina (Chicana and Puerto Rican) communities.

The Margarita Poems is Umpierre's fourth book of poetry. As in her previous works, *Una puertorriqueña en Penna* (1979), *En el país de las maravillas* (1982), *Y otras desgracias/and other misfortunes* (1985), Umpierre challenges traditional notions and contradictions surrounding the struggles of Latinas to exist and survive in the United States. Umpierre's dynamic manipulation of English and Spanish, her ability to mix the linguistic codes available to U.S. Latina/os, also challenges the reader. In her earlier works the poet approached the issue of racism at the personal and institutional levels. She consistently explored sexism both within and outside the Latina/o community. While sexuality and gender issues (specifically lesbian sexuality) have been the targets of her sardonic wit and linguistic play in other works, with *The Margarita Poems* Umpierre delivers a powerful, unapologetic and lyrically erotic exploration of love between women.

At one level the text takes the reader on a tortured quest for the unattainable lover, Margarita.

Throughout the collection the painful agony of unrequited love is explored in all its passion and inevitable humiliation, and there is no attempt to mask the urgent sexual desire that is an essential ingredient of the journey:

> I am crossing
> the MAD river in Ohio,
> leaving possessions and positions,
> shedding my clothes,
> forgetting, oh, my name,
> putting life on the line,
> to bring my Julia forth,
> lesbian woman,
> who'll masturbate and rule
> over my body, Earth,
> parting the waters
> of my clitoral Queendom,
> woman in lust,
> who'll lose her mind
> and gain her Self
> in want,
> in wish,
> in pure desire and lust
> for the rosy colored lips
> covered with hair
> of Margarita
> my yellow margarita.

This powerful, uncompromising eroticism permeates the text. *The Margarita Poems* is certainly a celebration of the power of women's sexuality. However, the experiences of lesbianism are not simply glorified. As can be sensed from the above lines from the volume's first poem, "Immanence," living as a lesbian often means taking risks. Like Moraga, Umpierre makes clear that loving women is "loving in the war years." Because of her sexual identity the narrator must endure assaults that injure both her spiritual and mental well-being. As "Immanence" implies, the release of Julia, the muse, the wild woman in the speaker who allows her to "come out," exacts a heavy price.

The agony of rejection by the unworthy lover is compounded by the cruel oppression of social forces bent on demeaning her:

> They would like
> to put the tick and flea collar

around her neck and
take her for walks on sunny afternoons
in order to say to their neighbors:
"We have domesticated this unruly woman."

The narrator's enemies, those who can not bear her challenges to their patriarchal rule, do everything possible to control her and break her will. But the narrator never surrenders the right to her voice, and the right to love whom she chooses. Thus a constant battle ensues and the narrator/poet is committed to a lifelong struggle.

The collection also highlights the creative spirit's will to survive. The struggle of the writer/poet parallels the struggle of the frustrated lover. The mystery of creation and the forces that attempt to strangle the voice of the poet are familiar themes for Umpierre. In *The Margarita Poems* these concerns are interwoven with the quest of the narrator for her absent lover. Margarita is presented as one of the narrator's muses, who, ironically, is also a prisoner of her own making. She, for reasons which remain unclear, first incites and accepts the narrator's love, but then withdraws her commitment. In Umpierre's world, muses are not solely ideals to be revered and worshipped, they are also flesh and bone women capable of shallowness, weakness and betrayal.

It is finally the writer, the creator who is a healer capable of saving herself and the elusive idol, Margarita. In "The Mar/Garita Poem," the complex multilingual culmination of the collection, the writer/speaker triumphs, but not before almost drowning in a state of total psychological and spiritual paralysis:

Buried, cemented in,
20 feet down,
under the sea,
50 chains,
two cinder blocks,
vaulted metal;
concrete;
subcutaneous,
mummified, petrified
in her language.

Abandoned, alone, from the depths of despair she is able to rise again.

El mar vestido en faldas
de colores, viene silbando
MAR sin garitas,
MAR libre, LIBRE mar.

Julia de Burgos,
Marjorie Agosin,
Marge Piercy
me han prestado sus palabras,
y la mar a llegado a mi puerta
ya hoy
mi isla ya tiene su mar
y su lenguaje.

Through a transformation of other poet/women's voices the narrator invents a new language capable of freeing her. It is a language of truth and power that will not only liberate her from the forces that oppress her, but also liberate Margarita from herself and allow the better part of the imprisoned Mar/Garita to achieve a union with the narrator.

Umpierre's collection is difficult to read because it is so brutally honest, replete with unmasked pain and hurt. The soul of the obsessed lover is bared, in all its despair, degradation and desperation. Ultimately, the text is liberating, not only because the author dares to engage in an exploration of lesbian love and sexuality, but also because the struggles of the narrator are not solely personal, but symbolize the quest for freedom, and the possibility of liberation for lesbians, Latinas and oppressed Third World peoples. The new language, the creation of a Latina language, free of the mind-paralysing chains of patriarchal doublespeak offers at least a beginning, a vision of "*libertad y luz,*" liberty and light.

Collective Notes

Cheryl Clarke: *conditions* has kept me going since 1981. I'm proud to have been joined with all the lesbian editors that have kept ***conditions*** going since 1976.

Melinda Goodman is a lesbian poet. She teaches at Hunter College and has recently published a collection of her poems entitled *Middle Sister.*

Dorothy Randall Gray, semi-hip renaissance woman/child. Sybaritic sister from the South, living in Brooklyn after growing up in Chinatown. Too much for words and herself.

Pam A. Parker

Just to *be* here
    is a delight!
        You knew that too
you girls who seemed
    deprived of it.
—*Duino Elegies*

Mariana Romo-Carmona: happy to join the collective, and be part of the effort to gather the best women's writing year to year. I bring another language to the magazine, another rhythm (having been raised in the Third World where you can't set your watch by the train schedule—but then you can't do it in New York City either). I feel right at home.

Sabrina

But I—that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph....
—*Richard III*

Contributor's Notes

Gwendolyn Bikis was born 1958 in Rome, NY. Came of age in Baltimore. Formal education is in Sociology, informal education in poetry, community organizing, social work, teaching, mental health care, pamphleteering, and the blues changes on the alto saxophone and in love life. Sun sign Capricorn, rising sign Scorpio. Living, working and writing in Boston. Published in *Poets on the Horizon* (Thomas Dodd, Boston), *Womanwrites 86* Anthology of the Womanwrites Southern Lesbian Conference, and *The Guilford Review* (Greensboro, NC).

Anne Brashler's short stories have been recently published in *Confrontation, Southern Humanities Review, Ceilidh, Other Voices.* Stories forthcoming in *Iowa Woman, The Literary Review, Balcones, Ohio Journal* and *The Maryland Review.* Poetry forthcoming in *New Letters, The Uncommon Reader.*

Marilyn Fox was born in Dayton, KY in 1947. She has been writing poetry since 1969. She received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Kentucky and is presently the Assistant Director, Publications at the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Jocelyne François, born in 1933 in Nancy, France, is the author of four novels in the autobiographical vein—*Les Bonheurs* (1970), *Les Amantes* (1978), *Joue-nous España* (Prix Femina, 1980), and *Les Histoire de Volubilis* (1986). Her publisher, Le Mercure de France, also brought out her collected poems, *Signes d'air* in 1982.

Writing is an act which precludes any references in a published text to the author's love life. I am a writer, I am a homosexual woman, but I am not a homosexual writer. I likewise question the term "lesbian" as it alludes needlessly to a mythical Hellenism and sets women apart from the homosexual people.

—Jocelyne François

Joy Harjo was born in Tulsa, OK in 1951 and is of the Creek Tribe. She has published three books of poetry, including her most recent, *She Had Some Horses* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 93 Greene Street, New York, NY 10012, $6.95). She is on the Board of Directors for the Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium and is the Poetry Editor for *High Plains Literary Review.* She also plays soprano sax.

Virginia Holmes was born in 1946 on Mt. Desert Island, ME. After years of leftist and lesbian politics and collectivity around North America, now she has come home again. She is interested in children, words, animals, the land, people's pain and her lover.

Terri L. Jewell, born 10/04/54 in Louisville, KY, is a Black Lesbian Feminist presently committed to reviewing Black women's work, expressing the truth within her own poetic vision, working a 65-hour week and living alone. Her work has been published in *Black American Literature Forum, Catalyst, Sinister Wisdom, Woman of Power* and *Visibilities.*

Jackie Kay was born in 1961 and brought up in Glasgow, Scotland. Published in various anthologies including *A Dangerous Knowing* (Sheba Feminist Publishers, 10A Bradbury Street, London N16), *Beautiful Barbarians* (Onlywomen Press, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WCIXOAP) and *Lesbian Plays* (Methuen). I am currently completing a cycle of poems called *The Adoption Papers.* Other publications include: *Black Women Talk Poetry* (Black Womantalk, Box 32, 190 Upper Street, London NI IRQ), *Dancing the Tightrope* (The Women's Press, 34 Great Sutton Street, London ECIV ODX) and *Charting the Journey* (Sheba).

Jacqueline Lapidus, born 1941, New York City. Still leading a double life in Provincetown/Boston and gearing up for the second half of her existence. Her latest book is *Ultimate Conspiracy* (Lynx, distributed by Inland, 1987).

Marguerite Le Clézio, born in 1940 in Mauritius, has a Ph.D. in French from Columbia University. She has taught French literature—most recently at Vassar College—and is the author of several articles on French women authors. She is currently residing in Paris where she works as a translator.

Paula Martinac was born in Pittsburgh in 1954 and now lives in Brooklyn. She recently completed a collection of lesbian short stories and is at work on a novel. She is also compiling an anthology of short fiction for Cleis Press on the subject of women and their sisters. Her short story "Like Mother, Like..." appeared recently in *We Are Everywhere: Writings by and about Lesbian Parents* (Crossing Press, Freedom, CA 95019, $10.95, 1988).

Donna Masini was born in Brooklyn in 1954. She was a 1986 recipient of a NYFA grant. Her poems have appeared in *Conditions, Thirteenth Moon, Pequod,* and *Early Ripening: American Women's Poetry.*

Pam A. Parker, born in 1950 in the Midwest, has had poetry published in *Semiotexte* and Penthouse *Forum.*

Debi Ray-Chaudhuri, born 2/21/1965, New York, NY. After growing up in central Ohio and attending Cornell University in upstate New York, she spent three years in Berlin, West Germany. Now studying art at Ohio State, she enjoys fishing, dancing and the support of other lesbians and gays of color.

Gina Rhodes is a lesbian, feminist, a poet and a teacher. She is the author of an unpublished manuscript, *Women of the Yet Unborn City,* and is currently serving as coordinator of the Audre Lorde Poetry Center at Hunter College.

Lou Robinson, born 2/24/1950 in Richmond, IN, writes prose/poetry, essay/fiction. Recent work has appeared in *Trivia, Quarterly, Woman's Art Journal,* and *Women and Animals* (forthcoming from Crossing Press). In 1987 she received a NYFA fellowship in fiction. She works at Cornell University Press.

Ruthann Robson born 1956, USA. She presently lives in Florida. A collection of her short fiction is forthcoming from Firebrand Books.

Mariana Romo-Carmona, Latina Lesbian activist, was a radio producer, welfare recipient, gardener, gas station attendant, community organizer, Spanish teacher. Born in Santiago, Chile, 1952, Virgo Dragon, writer, mother of a teenage son. Books include: *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence* (Cleis Press, Minneapolis, MN 1981), *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, New York, NY 1983), *Compañeras, Latina Lesbians* (Latina Lesbian History Project, New York, NY 1987).

Deborah Salazar was born in 1960 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. As an illegal alien in the US, she attended high school and college, wrote a novel and played flute with a professional symphony. She is a new US citizen.

Canyon Sam, b. 1956 lives in her hometown San Francisco. A writer and emerging video film maker, she has been involved in art and politics since 1974 when she was awarded an NEA scholarship in the Minority Leadership in the Arts program. Her work has been published in *Unholy Alliances, Hurricane Alice,* the award-winning anthology *New Lesbian Writing* and *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives,* among other publications. Canyon toured Central Asia alone for a year in 1986–87. An electrical contractor, she recently bought a house which she is fixing up.

Sapphire is the author of *Meditations on the Rainbow,* a book of poetry. (Crystal Bananas Press, Box 795, Manhattanville Station, NY NY 10027, $7.00 +$1.50 p/h). She is currently working on a novella about "faggots from outer space" and a collection of short stories. She lives in Harlem and teaches in the South Bronx. Born in 1950 in Fort Ord, CA.

Dagmar Schultz, born in Berlin, Germany in 1941, publisher of Orlanda Frauenverlag (women's publishing house). She lived in the US and Puerto Rico 1963–1973, active in the civil rights, peace and women's movements. Books include: *Hexengeflüster,* on women's health and self-help (Orlanda Frauenverlag, Pohlstrasse 64, 1000 Berlin 30, West Germany, 1976, $8) and *Ein Mädchen is fast so gut vie ein Junge,* on sexism in education (ed., Orlanda, 1979, $15, $10).

Pamela Sneed, born in Boston, 1964, is a poet, actress, black lesbian feminist currently living and performing in New York City. After the MOVE bombing in 1985 she began writing poetry "seriously" because her survival in this country depended on it. She is working on her first book of poems *Underestimation of Power* and a novel *Mary la Berry.*

Laurel Speer (b. 1940, Los Angeles, CA) has been published regularly in the small press since 1964. Her latest poetry book (Sept. 88) is *Very Frightened Men.* She writes a monthly column of literary opinion for *Small Press Review.* Books include: *The Scandal of Her Thoughts* ($4), *Second Thoughts over Bourget* ($5), (Geryon Press, 373 N. Wilmot #157-b, Tuscon, AZ 85711).

Amber Coverdale Sumrall, born in 1945 in California. She is the editor of *In Celebration of the Muse:* Writings by Santa Cruz Women (M Press, 4605 Fairway Drive, Soquel, CA 95073, $12 ppd). Her work has appeared in *Ikon, Sinister Wisdom, Kalliope, The Women's Review of Books.* Of Irish, Dutch and Mohawk ancestry, Ms. Sumrall lives in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Timea Szell was born in 1953 in Hungary where her first short story was published. She came to the US in 1970. Currently she teaches in the English Department of Barnard College in New York City. Her specialty is Medieval Literature.

Lordes Torres,born 1959, South Bronx, New York, is a Puerto Rican New Yorker. She teaches linguistics and writes on issues concerning the languages and literatures of US Latina/os.

Sonny Wainwright, 1930–1985, Bronx, NY. She was a poet, writer, teacher, mother and a lover of women who dedicated herself to helping other women find their words. Her gutsy spirit is still very much with us. Books include *Stage V: A Journal Through Illness* (Acacia Books, Box 3630, Berkeley, CA 94703), and *We're Working On It,* (7 Poets Anthology Collective).

Sonny Wainright wrote "For Those of Us Who Know We're Dying" in the midst of her struggle for life and her struggle to face death. She first read it at a fundraiser for other lesbian writers; a huge bouquet of flowers almost as tall as she was stood with her on a small stage. This is her most audacious poem because, with all her love of life, she spoke out about her terror of dying, and we had to look at her, to hear her. As literary executrix of Sonny's work, I have asked that the poem be published as she wrote it. Sonny bequeathed her writing to the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

—Joan Nestle

Shay Youngblood was born 10/16/59 in Columbus, GA. Writes short fiction, poetry, now exploring novels and plays. Themes of exile, artists, the creative process, the social responsibility of the artist, sex, death and romance. Published in *Essence, Common Lives, Catalyst, Conditions. Shaking the Mess Outta Misery: The Big Mama Stories* to be published by Firebrand Books, spring 1989. Lives in Atlanta with a wonderful, well-chosen family.

Submissions

Submissions are currently being accepted for the upcoming edition of ***conditions:sixteen***. The collective welcomes writing by women from all over the world who feel that a commitment to women is an integral part of their lives.

We are interested in manuscripts of poetry, fiction, drama, novel and correspondence excerpts, interviews, journal entries, translations, book reviews and analytical essays. The issues of race, class, age and women's/lesbian movements, relationships and institutions are of particular concern. We also accept photographs and other visuals for inclusion in our publication.

conditions magazine is especially committed to publicizing and reviewing women's press publications, and welcomes review copies.

Manuscripts

- Only writings previously unpublished in the United States will be considered.
- Manuscripts must be double-spaced, typed or printed from a computer word-processor.
- Submissions four pages or less may be submitted in any language if accompanied by an English translation.
- Submissions over four pages must be translated into English.
- Enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope for return of manuscripts or further correspondence.
- Include a fifty-word biographical statement which includes your date and place of birth, your current address and phone number.
- Be sure to retain a copy of your submission.
- If you wish to have receipt of your material acknowledged, please enclose a stamped self-addressed postcard.

Visuals

- Photographs, graphic designs, line drawings and visuals in any media should be suitable for reproduction in black and white 8 1/2" x 5" format.
- Photographs must be labeled with information regarding the subject matter, date and place of shooting.
- Other visuals should indicate media used and original size.
- Enclose biographical information and stamped self-addressed envelope for return of material or further correspondence.

Send all manuscripts and artwork to ***conditions***, Box 159046, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215-9046, USA.

The ***conditions*** collective is comprised of editors whose diverse cultural, racial and regional backgrounds reflect the magazine's continuing concern for recording the experiences and viewpoints of women of color, lesbians, working class, older and disabled women.

Advertising

conditions is distributed to individual subscribers, bookstores, universities, libraries and women's centers throughout the United States and internationally.

All copy is accepted at the discretion of the editors.

Display ads must be in the form of camera-ready copy. All ads must be accompanied by a check or money order. ***conditions*** has established the following rates for classified and display ads:

Classified

- *Women's/gay presses and businesses, small presses:* $.50 per word, 10 word minimum.
- *Commercial presses:* $1.00 per word, 20 word minimum.

Display

Women's/gay presses and businesses, small presses:

Full page (4 1/2" x 7")	$125
Half page (4 1/2" x 3 1/2")	$75
Quarter page (2" x 3 1/2")	$50

Commercial presses:

Full page (4 1/2" x 7")	$200
Half page (4 1/2" x 3 1/2")	$125
Quarter page (2" x 3 1/2")	$75

Please make check or money order payable to: ***conditions***, Box 159046, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215-9046, USA.

Subscriptions

Unlike a book or anthology, a magazine's financial backbone is subscriptions, not individual sales, though of course these are always appreciated. A subscription to ***conditions*** provides vital financial support and helps the magazine to reach as many women as possible.

Each issue brings a wealth of new writers, old favorites, insightful poetry, fiction and reviews. ***conditions*** continues its tradition of publishing the finest women's literature available.

A subscription to ***conditions*** is a perfect gift for any occasion. ***conditions*** also makes a valuable contribution to the libraries of any educational facility, mental institution, women's prison, shelter or center.

Subscribe now to make sure you don't miss any of our upcoming issues.

Individual (3 issues)		**$24**
Institutions		**$34**
Supporting subscriptions		**$35**
Overseas subscriptions		**$32**
Single issue		**$ 8.95**
Back issues	**1-3**	**$10**
	4-6	**$ 6**
	7-14	**$ 7**

Please make check or money order payable to: ***conditions***, Box 159046, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215-9046, USA.

Indicate which back issue your are ordering, and whether your subscription is a renewal. Please remember to notify us if your address changes.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Out Here Flying—strong, honest lesbian poetry by Jan Hardy. Previously published in *off our backs, Backbone, Sinister Wisdom*—now available for $3.95 plus $1.50 postage from Sidewalk Revolution Press, Box 9062, Pittsburgh, PA 15224. Checks payable to Jan Hardy.

La Bella Figura. Finally, a literary journal devoted exclusively to Italian-American women, with a special welcome for Lesbians. If you're an Italian-American woman wondering why your work is so often rejected, or if you're anyone wondering why you so rarely come across poetry, fiction, non-fiction and art work by Italian-American women, send SASE for writers/artist's guidelines and subscription information to: Rose Romano, Box 411223, San Francisco, CA 94141-1223.

Common Lives/Lesbian Lives. Quarterly, 112 page perfect-bound magazine documenting lesbian experiences, thoughts and visions through stories, autobiographies, oral histories, theory, photos, journals, graphics, correspondence, CL/LL makes a special commitment to soliciting and printing the work of lesbians of color, fat lesbians, lesbians over fifty and under twenty, disabled lesbians, Jewish lesbians, poor and working class lesbians and lesbians of varying cultural backgrounds. Published continuously since Fall '81. All back issues available. Single copies $4, 4 for $10. $12/year. Box 1553, Iowa City, IA 52244.

Against the Grain, a feminist deconstructive journal for the intellectually perverse. Sample $3, subscription $9. Send to: Box 12412. Columbus, OH 43212.

Literary Xpress: Wimmin of Color Quarterly Paperzine seeks unpublished writings, black/white photos, drawings, etc., by and about wimmin of color. Arah Kae, c/o Literary Exchange, Box 438583, Chicago, IL 60643.

Disabled Women's Newsletter wants stories, artwork, poetry, articles, ideas by disabled women. For information or to send your work, SASE to: 2 Sun Lane, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601. Both disabled *and* non-disabled women welcome as subscribers.

The 8th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, "Crossing Boundaries in Feminist History," will be held on June 7–10, 1990, at Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ. The Program Committee especially welcomes proposals addressing the relations between feminist history and social and political practice, or conjoining the discipline of history with other feminist studies, or taking a comparative approach crossing national, cultural, racial or ethnic lines.

We prefer submissions of proposals for complete panels (two papers, one commentator and a moderator) or roundtables. Indiviual papers will also be considered. The Program Committee may rearrange panels. Submission of a proposal will be taken as agreement with this proviso.

Please submit proposals *in triplicate by February 1, 1989* to: Jane Caplan, Dept. of History, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA 19019, or Nancy Cott, American Studies Program, 1504A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520. Further details available from either.

Feminism as Catalyst: Bridging the Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. Sixth annual graduate Women's Studies Conference, March 4, 1989, University of Maryland at College Park. Conference will emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies by bringing feminists together in a supportive atmosphere, to explore how our own beliefs about the world shape our work, the questions we ask, our conception of how to approach those questions and the interpretations we generate from our findings. Conference structure is flexible: individual papers, panels, workshops, round tables, exhibits, poetry or performances. Deadline for one-page proposals is December 20, 1988. Write the Graduate Women's Studies Conference, Women's Studies Program, Mill Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 for more information.

Gay Community News seeks submissions from People with AIDS for a weekly column. GCN is a non-profit, national publication committed to lesbian and gay liberation, feminism, anti-racism and an awareness of class issues. GCN seeks to show the many faces of PWAs—white, Black, Latino, Native American, Asian. We hope to provide PWAs an opportunity to speak for themselves on a regular basis in the pages of GCN. We welcome submissions about any aspect (political, social or personal) of living with AIDS that PWAs wish to share with the community. Submissions should be sent to: GCN, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 92116. Writers will receive a complimentary one-year subscription ($33 value) to GCN.

KITCHEN TABLE: Women of Color Press

announces its first titles

KITCHEN TABLE: Women of Color Press is commited to producing and distributing the work of Third World Women of all racial/cultural heritages, sexualities, and classes that will further the cause of Third World women's personal and political freedom.

HOME GIRLS: *A Black Feminist Anthology*

edited by Barbara Smith

400 pp. $10.95

CUENTOS: *Stories by Latinas*

edited by Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona

245 pp. $7.95

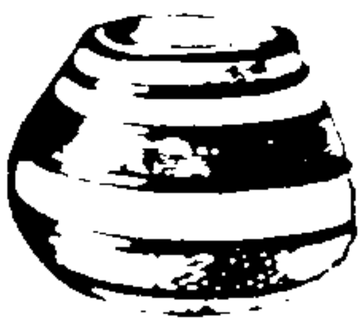
THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: *Writings by Radical Women of Color*

261 pp. 8.95

(Available in Fall, 1983) ed. by Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa

NARRATIVES: *Poems in the Tradition of Black Women*

by Cheryl Clarke 60 pp. $4.95



KITCHEN TABLE:
Women of Color Press
P.O. Box 2753
Rockefeller Center Station
New York, NY 10185

Individuals and Pre-paid orders.
Shipping: add $1.00 for first book, $.25 for each additional book.

Zonë A Feminist Journal for Women and Men

Discover the literary journal with a difference.

If there was a journal like *Zonë* already on the bookshelves, we would have celebrated it and not felt the need to create this one. It would be dedicated to gender justice and cultural pluralism. It presents writings by women and men of diverse backgrounds; it welcomes a gay writer as much as a straight white writer. *Zonë* is our affirmation that such a possibility exists.

Praise for Volume 1 (now out-of-print):

"Whatever the point of view there is no denial that it is as thoughtful as it is controversial."
—Bill Katz, *Library Journal*

"The editors of *Zonë* are 'aware of the growing tide of antifeminism' and want 'to assert another message: that feminism is on-going history.' They see a feminist work as one which is characterized by generosity of outlook,' making possible a male feminism, and suggesting that the good things which are happening for women are not 'invariably bad for men.' To many of us this undogmatic and optimistic approach is most welcome."
—Johanna Alberti, *Women's Studies International Forum*

"Zone is a book dedicated to the things that we just don't get to read in the mainstream of publishing—but not because they lack merit. If you don't consider yourself a feminist, you probably will when you discover just how much in *Zone* strikes your very soul."
—Carolyn Magnuson, *The Simmons News*

Announcing
VOLUME 2, *Crossing the Boundaries: The Immigrant Experience*

Poetry, Fiction, Non-Fiction, Essays and Artwork on assimilation/isolation, the marginality of ethnic experience, country as enemy and sanctuary, and the psychic boundary-crossing of fairytales and myth by over 50 contributors, including Marjorie Agosin, Nicolette de Csipkay, P. B. Parris, Gargi Sodowsky, Barney Bush, Barbara Jordan, Martín Espada, Ma-lee Ridge, Saúl Yurkievich, Rochelle Owens, Amy Uyematsu, Antler, Lola Franzen, Tony Maine, Marcia Sheer, Dennis Toner, J. Martin, Harlen Welsh, Edie Farwell, Martha Christina, Renny Golden, Barbara Crooker, George William Donaldson, and Jacqueline Moore.

Zonë is perfect bound, with a glossy cover; published annually. $5.50. Richard Waring, *Editor-in-Chief*; Nesta Demos, *Poetry Editor*; Mary Kay Delaney & Burchell Waring, *Non-Fiction Editors*; Peter Fong, *Fiction Editor*; Lily Díaz, *New York Art Editor*. We are now reading for Volume 3, an open theme issue. Manuscripts should be accompanied by an SASE and sent to the address below.

Subscribe now!

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

☐ Individuals $5.50 for Volume 2
☐ $9.00 for Volumes 2 & 3

☐ Institutions $7.75 for Volume 2
☐ $13.50 for Volumes 2 & 3

Includes postage & handling.
For subscriptions outside the U.S. add $1.00; payment in U.S. dollars.

☐ Friends $25-$49 ☐ Sponsors $50-$99 ☐ Patrons $100-$499 ☐ Benefactors $500+

Donations are tax-deductible.
Make checks payable to Zonë, P.O. Box 803, Brookline Village, MA 02147.