

(ONDITIONS

EE
V
E
N
T
E
E
E
N

WRITING

BY

WOMEN,

FOR

WOMEN,

ABOUT

WOMEN

conditions: 17

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

Copyright © 1990 by *Conditions*. All rights reserved.

No part of this magazine may be copied, reproduced, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without the permission in writing from *Conditions* or the individual author.

Conditions: 17 was supported in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Editing: Cheryl Clarke, Melinda Goodman, Paula Martinac, Mariana Romo-Carmona, and P. Mikie Sugino

Typesetting:

Rachel's Wife

PO Box 94, North Creek, NY 12853

Conditions: 17 was typeset in Palatino, using Microsoft Word and Aldus Pagemaker, on Macintosh computers.

Cover design and artwork: Eve Sandler. Copyright © 1990 by Eve Sandler.

Office manager: Juanita Ramos

Special thanks to: Pam Parker and Penny Perkins

ISSN 0147-8311

Conditions is listed in the Index of American Periodical Verse and the American Humanities Index.

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

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper by McNaughton & Gunn, Inc.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	v
Fat Califia	
Gender Fuck Gender	1
I Love Butches	4
Robyn Selman Difference Between Us	7
Meena Alexander	
Blood Line	11
Toxic Petals	12
Cherry Muhanji Bitches Bite	13
Hitomi Sawabe Yuriko, Da Svidanya (translated by Eleanor Batchelder and Fumiko Ohno)	20
Sawnie Morris Smoke	30
Doris Moromisato (translated by Mariana Romo-Carmona)	
A Este Cuerpo Enamorado	40
Morada Donde la Luna Perdio Su Palidez	42
La Inmaculata Historia de Mnasidika, Mi Amiga.....	44
Jacqueline Woodson Idella's Child, Tyler	46
Paula Martinac Heroines	50
Leslie Lopez	
Underwater	55
Across Landscape	56
Maureen Seaton The 8:48	57
Frances Negrón-Muntaner	
Estampa Puertorriqueña en Filadelfia (translated by the author)	58
Sorpresa (translated by the author)	60
Penélope (translated by Kurt Fendeisen)	62
Habla Cuerpo (translated by Kurt Fendeisen and the author)	64
Melinda Goodman February Ice Years	68
Deb Parks-Satterfield [17 Years Old]	70
Carolyn Gammon Packing	71
Eloise Klein Healy Changing the Oil	72
Anne Haines Orange Poem	73
Stephanie Byrd	
Sweet Potato Pie	74
Libido	75

Margaret Randall Touch #2.....	76
Joan Nestle Our Gift of Touch	77
Joni Van Dyke excerpts from <i>Dyketionary</i>	79
Mariana Romo-Carmona 2280	89
Carolyn Gammon Letters from Montreal	99
Yasmin Tambiah	
May Day, 1985	101
The Civil War	102
Sandalwood	103
Annharte	
The Art of Talking Indian Art Shows	104
Upbraid	105
A. J. Verdelle Classified	106
M. Corbin Gould Weather Report	112
Nikki Herbst Live Girls	113
Yolanda Ingianna M. Círculo Perfecto (translated by Mariana Romo-Carmona)	114
Terri L. Jewell	
Family Jewel Heretics	118
Sleep in Unfamiliar Arms	119
Karen E. Outen With Jada.....	120
Sapphire Mickey Mouse Was a Scorpio	126
Diane Palladino HIV Infection:	
The Construction of the Disease in Women.....	128
Kathryn Daniels The Bonds of Sisterhood	
(review of <i>The One You Call Sister</i> , edited by Paula Martinac)	138

INTRODUCTION

With the seventeenth issue of *Conditions*, we celebrate our seventeenth year of publishing a journal of writing by and for women, with an emphasis on writing by lesbians. We have maintained an all-lesbian collective through the years, involving new members in the production of the journal and drawing on the perspective and expertise of those who have stayed with *Conditions*. Although none of the four founders is part of our editorial collective today, we are committed to their goals of publishing work that is affirming of women and of giving access to new and previously unpublished writers.

This year, it was our hope to produce a volume devoted to erotic themes. There has been a great deal of excellent erotic material published by women in recent years, and we envisioned *Conditions: 17* making a contribution to the erotic genre. We also wanted to present an ever-expanding international perspective in women's writing, a commitment we made with the publication of *Conditions: 13* in 1986.

The material we received, however, did not reflect the range we deemed necessary for a truly diverse erotic issue. For that reason, while you may be expecting an erotic focus, we present here instead writing on a variety of subjects of importance to women. We are very happy to be able to bring together the perspectives of writers from different parts of the world.

We are particularly proud to produce issue seventeen given the climate of censorship threatening all artists today. Much of the focus of the attacks by Jesse Helms and the American Family Association on NEA-funded artists has centered on the "homosexual" nature of some of the work. Singled out in Helms's direct mail campaign have been the three lesbian writers who received literature grants this year, Chrystos, Audre Lorde, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, all of whom have been published in *Conditions*. In June, lesbian playwright Holly Hughes and three other artists who deal with sexual politics in their work were "defunded," after being awarded grants by peer panel review. We are reminded that, in 1984, *Conditions* was denied an NEA editor's grant by a panel that characterized us as "more lesbian than literature." We are also reminded of the attack on *Conditions* in 1988 by the *New York Post*, which sought to "expose" the so-called preferential funding by the New State Council on the Arts of lesbian and gay organizations. The fight goes on and has es-

calated. It seems likely that any artist who stands apart from the mainstream will be denied public funds as long as Helms and others like him are allowed to continue their crusade against free expression.

We call on all writers, and particularly lesbian writers whose work we have emphasized in *Conditions*, to stand up to this homophobia publicly, to rally, write letters, and make phone calls. Most crucial is that you continue getting out your work, including that which celebrates sexuality, and making your specific voices heard above the censors' rage.

Finally, we would like to announce that this is the last issue of *Conditions* in journal form. The collective is currently in negotiations with a feminist publisher to "adopt" *Conditions*. This means that *Conditions* will appear from now on as an anthology, devoted to specific themes, and will be published less frequently. We found that with full-time jobs and other community commitments, we could no longer devote ourselves to the work required to maintain *Conditions* as a yearly journal and as an organization; but we wanted to ensure that it would continue to exist as a source for new writing by women. *Conditions*, the anthology, will still publish the best new writing by women, with an emphasis on writing by lesbians. We are excited by this transition, which will release us from a lot of routine tasks to concentrate on the editorial work we love to do. We are dedicated to making *Conditions* a forum for the international exchange of women's ideas and work, and we hope our readers will continue to support *Conditions* in its new format.

We would like to thank all the women who have made possible the continued existence of *Conditions* and hope that it will remain an honest and creative alternative.

In Sisterhood,
The Conditions Collective
Cheryl Clarke, Melinda Goodman, Paula Martinac, Mariana Romo-Carmona, and P. Mikie Sugino

GENDER FUCK GENDER

Pat Califia

You make me wish I had a cock.

~~Between~~ your long colt's legs
I ~~press~~ and press,
~~Imagining~~ the swell and rigid length
~~Shoved~~ into you,
Your juices welling up around it,
~~Pumping~~ them out of you,
~~Fucking~~ you until I come,
~~Staying~~ in you until I get hard again
~~And~~ fucking you again,
My cock coming out smeared with
Your thin and my thick fluids,
The shaft tangled in a net of
Your clear strings
Knotted with my milky white ones.

On your belly,
You make me hurt to have a cock,
To wrap my arms around
Your boy-slender waist,
~~Fit~~ into the cords of muscle
That bind your broad shoulders.
I want to cover the grapefruit-curved
Cheeks of your ass
With my broader hips
And take you
Up the ass,
Cockhead against the tight sphincter
Until my words in your ear,
Whispered but sharp as spears,
Opens it up
To the shove and thrust and hump.

House me
In your body.
Give me
Your open holes—

Mouth, cunt, ass,
Cupped hands—
Your nipples to bite
While I drill you,
Have you,
Use you,
Fuck you until the
Rapidly closing and opening,
Fluttering and swallowing
Circle of your weeping satin sheath
Coming
Milks me and I come, too,

Come in you.

Maybe then I could have enough of you,
Hear you groan, seize your thrashing hips,
Stare into your open mouth
While I hurt and fill and punch into you,
Fuck you and be satisfied,
Feel that I have finally had
Enough of you.

Or would I just fuck you
Until my cock was as raw
As your cunt gets
Every time I dabble my fingers
In your oil
And my biceps swell
And my forearm gets hard
With the need to drive into you,
Pull you back onto me,
Make you ride me like a locomotive piston
To that crazy destination
That has no name and no hotels.
It's only a whistle-stop.
You can never stay there.
Pissing takes longer.
But oh the ride to get there,
Oh to arrive and wait
For long mindless seconds
Until you are snatched away.
Oh to leave it and get just a little ways away

And be grabbed by the back of the neck
And put on the train again,
To be driven back
To hang in air
Over it
Again again again—

Fingernails in my back,
My name ringing in my ears,
Blood in my mouth,
Killing myself so I will not rend you.

What I want from you
is more than a cock could give me.
Getting a hard-on, blasting my load into you
would only make me come myself,
And get stupid and sleepy afterward,
Forget the ache the itch the craze to
Have you again
On your back, your belly, your side,
Fuck you onto the floor and
Back up onto the bed,
Against the wall and
Through the mattress—

God. oh God.
Stop me.
You will have to stop me.
I cannot stop myself.

I LOVE BUTCHES

Pat Califia

I love butches.
The muscles, the short hair,
The refusal to pick up
Where their mothers left off.

I especially love to watch
Those biceps jump
Under a faded denim jacket
With the sleeves torn off.

My pearl-handled flick knife is
Kept sharp enough to create and enhance
Decorative tears in T-shirt fabric.
I love to watch little nipples
Twitching on little breasts
When they feel the cold edge of
That knife coming close,
Opening a slit
For the nipple to poke through.

And I love the angle of a knee
Wearing its way out of a faded pair
Of 501s,
Scraping the dirty floor of a dark alley,
Kneeling in the dark,
Sucking cunt.
My cunt.

My fingers can always find
A hold in that short hair.
Even a crew cut.
I just twine right down to the roots
And get ready to grab that head
And turn it
To look at me.
Cunt juice smeared and shining
Across that James Dean jaw line.

I'm a connoisseur
Of that practiced sneer that says,
"I'm tough. Look out."
I've got a practiced smile
For an answer that says,
"How fine you are,
Posing and flexing and fighting.
As I don't care who's tough
As long as I get to fuck you."

I love butches
Because I'm the woman who takes up
Where their mothers were afraid to go.
I can't resist the call of that
Deep smoldering anger,
The girlboy who can never forgive herself
Until Mama relents and says
Standing in a dark doorway,
Spraying herself with perfume),
"Forget the old man.
Come to bed with me tonight."

Butches need my hands
My mouth, my eyes
Because I see, I handle, I bestow
The hard-on, the female phallus,
The sweet prick of the androgyne
Forever erect at the service of women.

They need my expertise
With male dick, too, because
Otherwise I wouldn't be qualified
To see, handle, bestow
What they need so badly from me.

The boy part
That wants to be a man says,
"Let me show you how much I can take."
And I can perform that ritual.
I know the ordeals, the lessons, the trials.

Butches are my heroes.
Studs, hoods, juvenile delinquents,
Bikers, rock and roll stars,
Construction workers, soldiers,
Mechanics, outlaws—

Understand me.
My pets are butches.
Not men, not boys,
Butches.

Even if they seem like boys
With female parts to you,
I know they are women,
And I am there for the part of them
That needs to be conquered and fucked—
Not as a gesture of contempt or competition
But as reassurance, a reminder.
I am a dyke.
I lust after beautiful women.
And butches are the most beautiful women
In the world.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US

Robyn Selman

I hoped you would stay in New York. You hoped
I would fly to France. You showed me a map.
I like the sound of Vence and the way you
described your rented Parisian flat.
You are traveling in from France via
Air France. I wane. I pace the floor I wish
I had energy to wax. With a craftsman's
tenderness, my mind passes two-by-fours
in my heart. No matter that I've been
dishonest or that you've been not-so-good
a listener. The things we have do not knit
easily into branch, bough. What we have:
a house, a plane. I'm this house and you are
the plane moving fast, then moving past us.

Then planes moved fast but did not pass by us.
It was times like that I wanted to say
to your ex, the then assistant D.A.,
Here's the proof, here's a night's messed up sheets—ours—
here's the pudding, and look, here's the way it
set. I waited in the airport's holding
pen where she waited with her kid and just
like the sun rose, the sun set, and no I
haven't traveled with her yet, but soul to
soul I have. Still more proof: I have seen her
early mornings cross the room like the calm
spirit of past, present, like our future
will be. I have seen all of this in dreams,
ended up here now. The dream has ended.

Ended up here. Now that the dream has ended
we go in like gangsters: Mugsy, Bugsy.
We shoot fast, ask questions later. We know
how to get the right information, know
truth when we hear it, who are our friends.
We're a couple of Faye Dunaways in
Bonnie and Bonnie. We're making movies.
We can play the same roles (roll 'em easy!),
We're Ma & Ma Parker's long-lost children.
We eat raw crickets, chew on blades of grass.
We grew up in the dust bowl and Taos.
There's no birth certificates behind us.
We save each other's day but never ask.
We never look back while we're moving past.

We never looked back. We were moving past.
In a cab on my own I head downtown
tilting your latest poem toward the street light.
The night had been high except for the back
of your gown. The papillons are beating
inside. The push and pull of my tense thighs,
uptown, downtown, and the time I hustle
for her, for me, leaves not one of us pleased.
We haven't gone to bed yet but we think
about it. (It's the hearts that cheat and do
what bodies won't suffer through.) As if you
and I had fucked, slept, spit in the same sink
now for weeks. Sunday's high becomes Monday's
bile. Another cab home, the long way.

Another cab took me home the long way.
Darling, I'm downtown, you're uptown tonight.
What's come between us is Alphabet soup.
The shortest distance between me and you
is a bee-line (bull!). That isn't quite right,
it is instead, love, this snapping turtle
head, it's new love with old lover's sounds,
two tongues meeting on new love's ground,
and needs needing streets of buy and sell. Tell
me you need me less, know I'll need you worse.
Be what you can, I'll supply the rest. Love,
be the love I love enough to curse.
When we say, new one, distance between us,
it rolls off our tongues: Difference between us.

They soothe the tongue of distance between us:
Hey mister DJ, play us a slow one,
one that blows the loudmouthed ghetto-blaster
back to the most primordial wind, faster
than its rap beat can clash with my slow long-
ing. I'll put a buck in your Brandy glass.
Five bits each from me and my gal. Sing one
from me, one that's to me, one for the one
who says she loves me (quick before it passes!)
We'll build like your songs do, slow, tickling
the keys in the key of her tongue traveling
over me, which is C, slow, and rocks me.
Play it like we've never heard it before.
Play the slow songs for what they were made for.

Play the slow songs for what they were made for.
Here are no strangers that seem appealing.
I go to the local, watch the sailors.
Then trouble bubbles up from beer like an
ominous savior. My opening line
to those men in uniform: What are you,
nurses?—never does bring appropriate
congratulation, then on to talking
about women, defense of the nation.
I'm pretending the night has a stormy,
yet bittersweet ending. It's taken these
months to be able to talk to myself.
The three years before are too large to need.
I hoped she would stay in New York. She hoped.

BLOOD LINE
Meena Alexander

For Svati Mariam, one year old

My child is rain
on the tamarind tree

She is an enemy
to burnt grass,
to fruit sieved
with metal

Struck
from a stunted branch.

She is my mother's
mother who cries in me,
my line of blood
our perpetuity.

When wild deer
track the mud
for buried roots

I'll grip my blouse
and loosen it

I'll show her how
my throat can hang
a woman's weight.

In the sky's bowl
after a season of storm
we'll watch girls
with antlers in their hair

Dance, confounding
ancient hunters
who stumble westwards
broken bows in hand.

TOXIC PETALS

Meena Alexander

From where I sit
summer's blossoms are headless
tearing uphill

Trees tossed in weeds
swivel the sky
to a blue hole
it sucks up my reflection

I have no face,
my skin is a net
stretched to rock

Where the river
pounds so dark
it is more than memory

And the warrior, my cousin
wades right in.
Light swarms to his cut knee
his eyes are not wasted with killing

He bears me in his arms
I am no belle dame
I am black, featureless,
chock full of poems

Toxic petals
torn from the landscape
buzz and snarl in me

I share his arms
I am a goddess now
four armed and skinless

Neither of us is
cut in gold.
I feel the cold come on.

BITCHES BITE

Cherry Muhanji

An excerpt from *Her*, a novel-in-progress

Laphonya was moving down the stairs as quietly as she could, but the stairs, being used to the commotion of the cousins on their way out long after they should be in and quiet for the night, creaked, signaling Miss Charlotte from her parlor.

"Ya on yo' way out?"

"Uh hum."

"Where to?"

Laphonya's usually short hair was brushed back and the overhead light in the hallway caught its hint of red color. The light had come on so suddenly that Laphonya jumped. Angry, she asked in disbelief, "Come again?" She wore a shirt and necktie, a jacket with a vest underneath, a chain going in and out of the vest pockets on either side, and a long shirt and high boots.

"Do Lizzie know ya be sneakin' 'cross the street to Ricky's everytime she got 'Girls' Night In'?"

"Who?"

"Rick . . . Wintergreen's . . . If Lizzie knew . . ."

"Raisin' grown folks twice don't suit ya much, Charlotte."

"Lizzie'll raise hell if she knew 'bout. . ."

"It ain't Lizzie none of us gotta watch."

Charlotte ignored the accusation and reached to pick a thread from Laphonya's jacket. Laphonya, never sure of Charlotte's intentions and feeling like she'd been caught, jerked her shoulder back and said, "Ya been playin' Miss Rich and Propah Bitch fo' a long time now. The question is what *you* gon' do tonight?"

"Me and Solomon . . ."

"Cut it Charlotte, ya and King ain't never had nothin' goin' . . ."

"What, Wintergreen, do you want?" Samantha demanded when Wintergreen called.

"Another night," Wintergreen said, into a stubborn phone that didn't seem to be conveying her message very well. The white girl *would* want the club the same night as "Girls' Night In."

"What do you expect your receipts to be?" Samantha asked.

Wintergreen made up some astronomical figure, and, to her

surprise, Samantha raised it by five hundred dollars. The white woman started to set up schedules and arrangements, as to when she would be over with the liquor and the money, when Wintergreen surprised herself by saying, "Just one minute, white girl, this is my club, and I decide." She slammed the phone down, and let out a slew of French, English, and Amharic she had learned one long night in Morocco sipping sweet Turkish coffee.

Wintergreen was not in the mood. The crowd was smaller than last year, and her mind was on the money she was *not* making, when Laphonya stepped through the door, not in a good mood either. Each looked at the other, Wintergreen from her piano bench and Laphonya from the end of the bar.

"Richelle," the name slipped into Laphonya's mind and softly through her mouth. Not because she willed it so, or even because she was thinking about it. It just came. One of those just because . . . The stack of letters with the funny stamps, Charlotte glaring at the letters each time one came. Silent on the subject of New Orleans and New York even when she talked nonstop about everything else. So this was Ricky.

To cover her mood, Wintergreen had put on the pink cut-away tuxedo, white top hat, and carried a pearl-handled cane. Tonight she didn't play piano. The surprised crowd watched as she tipped the top hat to them, carefully setting it down on the far side of the piano bench as she slid to the other.

Women came in from everywhere to this affair. "Bitches Bite" was how the contest was billed in the neighborhood. Each year, signs were posted up and down John R. Street. Every telephone, lamp, utility pole, and shop window had signs with "Bitches Bite" in bold print glaring out from them.

Former winners arrived early, each wearing the *look* that had won her fame. There was as much excitement from the crowd over them as there was for the hopefuls. People would line up outside as Julius Caesar, Bojangles, Billy Eckstein, Houdini, Satchmo emerged from sleek cars. The Kodaks went wild.

As the contest began, former winners, some of them judges by now, others part of the crowd, began to whisper about the newcomers, who didn't at all, as far as they were concerned, know a butch-look from a soft dick—wearing things that they, even at this time in their lives, wouldn't be caught dead in.

True, styles change, but the hopefuls were crass, and taste *will* always be taste. They whispered, "These bitches or, excuse me honey, lay-dee's, couldn't find a *look* if it walked up and smacked 'em in the face."

Each fall Wintergreen's was the place to be. A place where some women, unable to tell the lyin' motha fuckahs they lived with or the women they didn't, how being who they couldn't be most of the time felt good. But other women like Alvira the telephone operator came in every night and sipped a short brandy—waiting patiently for Frankie the practical nurse still in uniform to arrive—hurriedly, and always out of breath. They would linger as long as they dared quietly talking, occasionally laughing—Alvira tossing her head back while Frankie lifted Alvira's open palm to her mouth and tenderly kissed the inside of it.

Alvira never came to "Girls' Night In" but Frankie did. By the time Frankie was on drink number three she was unbuttoning the fifth button of her nurse's uniform. By drinks number four and five her nurse's whites were draped over a chair, a bar stool, or a table top and Frankie, on top of the bar by now, would be doing the splits. By drinks number six, seven, and eight Frankie, keeping time with the music, would be "laughin' like a big dog" and lassoing women at the end of the bar with her garter belt.

Then too there was the nightly collection of "blues" women like Lola who didn't *have* nobody, didn't *want* nobody, and came in even when the bitches didn't bite. Joey with her bluesy self dressed in three-piece wool worsted suits, who, in placing her pin-striped trouser leg and Stacy Adams between the unsteady legs and high heels of young girls, turned them on and out. And there was Big Baaad Delores to split up couples every chance she got. Not to mention Jonnie Mae Brown who owned and operated Brown's barbershop where *real men*, it read on the door of her shop, *meet and greet the baaadest lady barbers in Dee-troit city*. The blues women were there nightly and when the "girls" flooded the bar during "Girls' Night In" they tugged at their trousers and straightened their ties, and shook themselves all over getting ready to "Booty Green" and "Walk the Dog."

Autumn was early this year and filled the air with an immediate chill, causing a riot of color in the few trees that lined John R. Street. Normally summer delayed its exit in the Motor City and with that delay came the gratitude of its southern residents who wished it would stay just a little while longer. This year deep shadows birthed behind buildings along the strip and northern Blacks unused to fields and forests would impatiently wait for winter and the sharp intake of breath making them dizzy for a long moment while they felt for the unremembered feel of baby rabbits buried deep inside the blue haze of early winter. Only for them, the rabbits of their imagination were

romping tin cans, out-dated newspapers, discarded paper bags, damaged paper cups, crumpled potato chip bags, and wax paper on the rampage that guarded, if only for a few seconds till they blew on, the entranceways, doorways and stairwells of the inner city.

Jake stayed and worked in Wintergreen's office for the night. And Cook had his wife come in to prepare the food. Aromas coming from the kitchen were strange. Many of these women were cooks, fed fickle children, demanding men, and whimsical Miss Annes, but none dared to question Cook's wife and what she served. To complain would be betrayal. Besides, they were glad to be served for a change.

After Wintergreen had surprised them with her saxophone, Laphonya joined the small band of women who hovered over Wintergreen on the piano bench. Laphonya said, "Ricky, let's dance."

It had been that way with Charlotte too, Wintergreen remembered. No matter what somebody was doing or about to do, she would blurt out the impossible—and just that casually, "Let's dance" or "Let's fuck." She'd let out a yowl, and, because Charlotte was Charlotte, she got away with it. Even if the scene had to be repeated, or the song resung, or the dance routine danced again.

Now here was Charlotte's voice, wink, and impulse happening after all these years. Wintergreen slowly took in the face that was filled with Charlotte and just as slowly drew the face to her with her hands and eyes, and said, "I don't dance, Sugar. But I do smoke, so why don't you light my cigarette, and tell me how you know my name is Ricky."

The club was filling up. The sisters-in-law billed as the Berry twins were almost ready to go on, but were stopped at the door by Sappho the bouncer with the hysterical pregnancy. Twenty-seven months.

Sappho didn't seem to mind that she was the butt-end of some cruel jokes. The baby, she said, was due any day now; and if they would sing "Stormy Weather" tonight, she was sure her water would break.

"Not while *we're* on," the sisters said in unison, as they set up to go on.

"I don't dance," Ricky was repeating. But Laphonya had decided to ignore her.

"You mean you won't dance with me."

None of the women encircling Wintergreen knew if Laphonya had jerked her off the piano bench, or if, in the exchanges she

had gotten too close to the edge of the bench and fallen off. Laphonya had managed to down a few straight whiskies before missing that Wintergreen dance, and she was just a little bit out of hand. But all the same Wintergreen tumbled.

Loose fragments of the past entangled her. She crawled toward a dark corner of a small cell. The cold cement floor seemed, in the odd uncertainty of the dream, to be the place for her to give birth. But she was not only giving birth, she was dying—both at the same time. In the cold night air she trembled and in the dream she wondered why her mother, sitting in the opposite corner of the cell, spoke but made no sound and watched her squirming in her own shit.

The dream was real. She was in a cell and crawling in shit. She had been left in it for days. As she rolled to put her weight on her knees and finally her feet, the damp cell fell in around her.

Whatever it was—a jerk or grab or slap—that brought Wintergreen off the piano bench and onto the floor, the sight was funny at first. Until the crowd realized, and so did Laphonya, that she couldn't get up. She was trying to raise herself up on one knee, smelling herself again, as if the pink tuxedo with the purple cummerbund had become one big scent. In the process the cummerbund unsnapped, snapping Wintergreen, who crawled backward away from it, eyeing it like a frightened dog. Then she slowly crawled toward it. Confused and erratic she sniffed it as it lay loose, like an afterbirth still pulsating from its bloody run. They were all amused at first, until tears began to streak the perfect face and fall onto the bowed mouth painted, like angelic wings, onto a perfect pair of lips now parted and whimpering.

Jake, never noticing noise, exploded out of Wintergreen's office at the loud silence thumping in his head. He saw her, half crawling, half falling. He charged into the crowd of surprised women as they stood attracted and repulsed by Wintergreen, powerless as a beetle on it back.

Jake scooped up the trembling Wintergreen, her eyes closed, her pain descending into his large arms as he carried her off stage and up the winding stairs. He shouted to the Berry sisters-in-law to get on with their act, "God damn it! And now!"

"Ricky, you can't go back down there. Not tonight."

Wintergreen opened her eyes for the first time. She was lost again on the cold cement of the very dark cell and, from the sorry dream, asked Jake who was leaning over her with concerned eyes, "Since when have you called me Ricky?"

Jake stuttered, "I - I - I don't know it just came . . . out."

"You never call me that. Even when we first married. It was

Wintergreen. Not Ricky . . . Why tonight?"

"Because, you needed . . . me."

"You? I never lied, Jake. Remember? I never lied. Hand me my purple strapless. And see if I have any silver glitter left."

As she got older Wintergreen layered her face with glitter to hide the bags under her eyes and emerging jowls, when getting ready to go on stage. Under the stage lights the sheen from the silver, gold, or crimson sparkles seduced the audience, while she wooed them with the left-hand playing style of Erroll Garner, or occasionally blew them away with her sax, or her whimsical scatting of "A Foggy Day."

"Jake! Did you hear me? Hand me my purple strapless."

"Now?" he finally asked, slumping in a chair opposite her.

"Indeed yes!" she said, surprised that he would ask such a question. "It's more important than ever now. I'll be the only *lay-dee* in the place," her voice jarring him out of his reverie as he leaped to help her undress. Finishing, he turned to go.

"Jake! Help me with this necklace . . . Then too, I'll . . . I want you to carry me downstairs. I'll be at the piano when the twins finish."

Laphonya, who was now drunk, had taken the guitar during the set of the sisters-in-law, announced to the crowd, "I'm gonna play this box like it oughta be played." The twins were ho-hum tonight and the crowd didn't seem to mind when Laphonya interrupted them.

Abruptly the stage light came up killing the downest, dirtiest blues this crowd had heard in a long time. The crowd booed and hissed until they realized it was Wintergreen, upstage in a purple strapless, standing by the piano, smiling. The stage light careful to stop at her waist.

Laphonya, who was as surprised as anyone, grabbed the mike and asked the crowd, "Now ain't she hot?" The crowd whistled and stomped. Then Laphonya, thumping the guitar and keeping time with her right foot, began to sing—making it up as she went along.

"Now ain't that a pussy? Da, da, da, da, da. Now ain't that a pussy? Da, da, da, da, da." Wintergreen got into the mood of the thing and seated herself at the piano. Reaching to the side she picked up the sax, and began trading eights and singing in response:

"Now this is a pus-say! Da, da, da, da, da. Yep, this is a pus-say! Da, da, da, da, da."

No one could believe it! There were Wintergreen, the hottest

~~time~~ in the house, and Laphonya in a jam session. As each of the ~~women~~ traded eights, the crowd joined in. The call and response ~~between~~ them went on for better than half an hour.

Everyone forgot about the crawling, falling Wintergreen, ~~except~~ Wintergreen. The pain of that evening had marked the ~~underside~~ of Wintergreen's secret. It was one of those nights. ~~Women~~ talked about "Girls' Night In" for months after that.

YURIKO, DA SVIDANYA (GOODBYE, YURIKO): THE YOUTH OF YOSHIKO YUASA *Hitomi Sawabe*

Translated by Eleanor Batchelder and Fumiko Ohno

Yoshiko Yuasa was born in 1896 in Kyoto, the third daughter of a prosperous fish wholesaler. She studied Russian privately and then attended classes at Waseda University, eventually becoming a specialist in Russian literature. She loved various women in the course of her life, but her strongest feelings were for the geisha Sei Kitamura, with whom she lived from 1920 to 1924, and for Yuriko.

Yuriko Nakajō was born in 1899 of a wealthy and learned Tokyo family. Her father lived in London for some years and was very westernized for that period. She published her first book at seventeen, astonishing the literary world, and was famous from that time. She audited lectures at Columbia University in New York, and there married Shigeru Araki, a man fifteen years her senior, in 1919. They had a stormy relationship, in New York and later in Tokyo, until they separated permanently in 1924. In that year, Yuriko and Yoshiko began their life together, which was to continue for eight years.

In 1927, Yoshiko and Yuriko went to Moscow to live. In the spring of 1929, they toured Europe, then spent the summer in Paris. Yoshiko returned to Moscow in August, but Yuriko remained until the end of November in 1929. Always coquettish with men, Yuriko took a male lover while she was in Paris, but soon tired of him and was glad to reunite with Yoshiko.

This was a time of ferment in the Soviet Union, and Yuriko was deeply influenced by her experiences there. On their return to Japan in 1930, she became a political radical, and eventually left Yoshiko to marry the left politician Kenji Miyamoto in 1932. As Yuriko Miyamoto, she was widely known as a leading militant proletarian writer. She died in 1951 (the year Hitomi Sawabe, her biographer, was born.)

*Yoshiko continued to translate many works from Russian to Japanese, including Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* and *Three Sisters*. In later life, she published two books of her collected essays, *The Lone Wolf at seventy* and *The Wolf Is Not Yet Old at seventy-seven*; when she was eighty-two, she collected Yuriko's *Letters*. She recently celebrated her ninety-fourth birthday in a nursing home in Shizuoka.*

*Hitomi Sawabe majored in literature in college and has taught in middle school and college entrance school in Japan. She has published essays on women's identity. What follows is an excerpt from *Yuriko, Da Svidanya*, her first book.*



Yuriko and Yoshiko, 1920s.



*Yuriko Yuasa and Hitomi Sawabe, 1987.
(Photo by Keiko Ishikawa)*

何のてらいも遠慮もなく「好きだ」を連発した。フランスからモスクワに帰るとき、百合子は書いた。

べこは、もやになら歡喜の涙をこぼして殺される。そんなに好きだ。もやが薄情女といおうと、何と云おうと好きだ。好きだ。(一九二九年十一月二十三日)

百合子の人生の、前にも後にも、これほど率直で飾らぬ愛の表現はありはしない。芳子は百合子の文体までも変えたのである。

芳子が百合子にもらったものは、向上心と不断の努力、それらのもたらす自信だ。あきつぽく、ともすると無為に流れがちな芳子が、百合子の存在なくして自分のライフワークを見出せたとは思えない。百合子の前に芳子もまた、初めてためらわずに自分の愛をさしだすことができた。ふたりは互いの産婆であり、親であり、子供であり、恋人であり、親友であった。ふたりは社会が女に押しつける、あらゆる不条理に手をたずさえて挑み、自らの全体性をまるごと取り戻そうとしたのである。

別れたふたりを待っていたものは昭和の暗黒時代だった。一九三二年(昭和七年)四月、新婚生活のわずか二カ月後に文化団体弾圧のための駒込署に検挙された百合子は、一九四二年(昭和十七年)まで五回もの検挙を受け、通算二年あまりの刑務所生活を強いられた。その間には母も父も喪った。

一九三三年(昭和八年)六月には、芳子も共産党へのカンパのため、治安維持法違反容疑で起訴され、半年あまり市ヶ谷刑務所で「臭い飯」を食わされた。出所した彼女は間もなく、かわいが

たが故に暮せたのだ」という言葉がその核にある。それは「私が私であった」ということと一対になる。百合子が百合子らしさを失わず、芳子が芳子らしさを失わずに、「互いにならないものをおぎない合い、助け合い、高め合う」暮らし。それがふたりの生活だった。言葉にすれば、ただそれだけのことであるが、現実にはなかなか得難いものである。

しかし、芳子は「彼女と暮していたのは暮せていたのは、彼女が女であったからではない」と、言う。そこには、彼女が子供時代からの直感で掘りあてた、男女関係が必然的にはらむひずみや、最近冗談半分に口にする「男しないと長生きするで」という本音は影をひそめている。彼女はまたしても百合子が言った「けちな昔な唄」、「やはり女は男がええのや。それがいちばん自然なんや」をくり返すのである。

もしもふたりが、互いの友愛と生活の意味をもつと信じてきたことができていたらどうだったのか。もしもふたりが、フェミニズムが市民権を勝ちえた半世紀のちに生きていたらどうだったのか。もしもふたりが、エロスまでも手に入れていたらどうだったのか。わたしの「もしも」はとどまることが知らない。

芳子と百合子がこうした生活を作り上げることができたのは、ふたりが「女」という社会的にマイナスの記号をもった仲間であったからだとわたしは思う。ここには、「男」と「女」の関係がもたらす嘘はない。ふたりは純粹に互いの他者となりえたのである。

百合子が芳子にもらったものは、何よりもその独立心と女としてのプライドであった。「男」この関係が、いかにぶら下がるにせよ、三つ又三つ文の弱さ、それに打ち克つ術を百合子は芳子との生活の中で

あのようなコンビネーションはなかなか男女の間にもあるものではない。

互いに助け合い、何ものかをおぎない合っている間に、自分たちはなかなかよい生活をしてきたのだ。自分にとって彼女が如何にかえがたい存在であったか、と云うことが今ハッキリと分つて来た。

自分にはもう女を相手に暮してゆく気はない。彼女と暮していたのは暮せていたのは、彼女が女であつたからではない。そこには性をはなれたもの、彼女が彼女であつたが故に暮せたのだ。彼女でない他の女と自分は暮そうとは思わない。自分は岡田のように誰でもよい自分を甘やかさ大切にしてくれる女なら誰とでも暮せるのではない。一緒に暮す以上互いに何ものかを与え得るような相手と暮したい。自分の気持が今のようにマジメであるとあの浮いた舌ナメズリをするような気持はあまりに遠い。(中略)

ここまで来るには勿論色々な感情の波があつた。性欲的なものもかつて感じなかつたものを感じたり(一種の刺激によつて)又それを処理するだけの方法としての女や男を考えたりもした。自分の中心的な生活から切離したものとして。

しかし、今日自分はそう云うものの考えようも同様にまちがいであることがハッキリ分つた。そう云う生活はやはり本ものではない。性的な生活は我々の生活の中心にはあり得ない。しかしそれを自分たちの生活から全然切はなしてしまうことも又同様に出来ない。(中略)

十二時過室へ帰る自分、何ものかを待つ気持まだある自分。ある筈のないものを待つ自分を笑え。

この日記を読むと、芳子と百合子の生活が何を意味するかがよくわかる。「彼女が彼女であつ

芳子との友愛を捨て、「男」の顕治との恋愛を選ぶことであつた。勇敢な闘士となつた百合子には、恋愛さえも革命的だ。それはベルリンで目にした「下水の上にわたされている一枚のふたの上に営まれて」いる「不自然」で頹廢的な恋愛ではなく、ソビエトで見た「健康」で「自然」な文字通り「咲き揃う」ことのできる革命的恋愛だ。顕治のもとへ走ろうとする自分を邪魔する芳子を、百合子は、「あなたはタヴァーリシチ(同志)ではない」という言葉で追い払つた。

つぎの文章は同年二月二十八日の芳子の日記だ。知人から「ロシアまで行つて二人がそんなことではあんまりやないかとフンガイしました」と苦言を呈されたあと、別の知人宅で脚本家の岡田積子と夕飯をごちそうになつた。岡田はしきりに女と遊びたがっている。そんな彼女を見て芳子は「すべてがバカらしい」と感じる。

女が女を相手にして遊んでさてどうなるか。

私たちが二人で暮っていた時、自分は彼女との生活を全然まちがつて解釈していたことが今解る。自分たちの生活はただ女と女が愛し合つて暮っていたのではない。とにかく、二人は互いにないものをおぎない合い、助け合い、高め合つて暮っていた。自分は日常の生活に甘え馴れて、ちがつたところに力点をおいて生活していた感じがある。しかし、今、こうなつた今、それでは又別の女が現れてそれで代りになるかと言えば、それは決してそうではない。

二一、二二、二三、二四、二五、二六、二七、二八、二九、三〇、三一、三二、三三、三四、三五、三六、三七、三八、三九、四〇、四一、四二、四三、四四、四五、四六、四七、四八、四九、五〇、五一、五二、五三、五四、五五、五六、五七、五八、五九、六〇、六一、六二、六三、六四、六五、六六、六七、六八、六九、七〇、七一、七二、七三、七四、七五、七六、七七、七八、七九、八〇、八一、八二、八三、八四、八五、八六、八七、八八、八九、九〇、九一、九二、九三、九四、九五、九六、九七、九八、九九、一〇〇、一〇一、一〇二、一〇三、一〇四、一〇五、一〇六、一〇七、一〇八、一〇九、一一〇、一一一、一一二、一一三、一一四、一一五、一一六、一一七、一一八、一一九、一二〇、一二一、一二二、一二三、一二四、一二五、一二六、一二七、一二八、一二九、一三〇、一三一、一三二、一三三、一三四、一三五、一三六、一三七、一三八、一三九、一四〇、一四一、一四二、一四三、一四四、一四五、一四六、一四七、一四八、一四九、一五〇、一五一、一五二、一五三、一五四、一五五、一五六、一五七、一五八、一五九、一六〇、一六一、一六二、一六三、一六四、一六五、一六六、一六七、一六八、一六九、一七〇、一七一、一七二、一七三、一七四、一七五、一七六、一七七、一七八、一七九、一八〇、一八一、一八二、一八三、一八四、一八五、一八六、一八七、一八八、一八九、一九〇、一九一、一九二、一九三、一九四、一九五、一九六、一九七、一九八、一九九、二〇〇、二〇一、二〇二、二〇三、二〇四、二〇五、二〇六、二〇七、二〇八、二〇九、二一〇、二一一、二一二、二一三、二一四、二一五、二一六、二一七、二一八、二一九、二二〇、二二一、二二二、二二三、二二四、二二五、二二六、二二七、二二八、二二九、二三〇、二三一、二三二、二三三、二三四、二三五、二三六、二三七、二三八、二三九、二四〇、二四一、二四二、二四三、二四四、二四五、二四六、二四七、二四八、二四九、二五〇、二五一、二五二、二五三、二五四、二五五、二五六、二五七、二五八、二五九、二六〇、二六一、二六二、二六三、二六四、二六五、二六六、二六七、二六八、二六九、二七〇、二七一、二七二、二七三、二七四、二七五、二七六、二七七、二七八、二七九、二八〇、二八一、二八二、二八三、二八四、二八五、二八六、二八七、二八八、二八九、二九〇、二九一、二九二、二九三、二九四、二九五、二九六、二九七、二九八、二九九、三〇〇、三〇一、三〇二、三〇三、三〇四、三〇五、三〇六、三〇七、三〇八、三〇九、三一〇、三一

れに敗北」した「次の世代」たる弟が、百合子に残した空洞を満たす存在となった。奇しくも頭治は死んだ弟と同じ年齢だった。もはや芳子が「男」でないことに不満を感じする必要もない。そして百合子は「この月、党の組織と結合した」のである。

軽井沢の湯浅の書斎の机の中には、一九三一年の秋に写した百合子の写真がある。彼女は目白上り屋敷の家の縁側で籐椅子に腰かけ、縞模様のマフラーを肩にかけている。しかし、その百合子は昔の百合子ではない。カメラに向かう目は、見る者の心を凍らせるほど冷たい。憎しみに満ちた目だ。半分に折り曲げられたその写真は、いつか芳子が破り捨てるのを思いとどまったものだろうか。裏面には、湯浅の字でつぎの文章が記録されている。

一九三一、十一、三〇

目白上り屋敷三五五三番地の家にて

この頃すでに宮本との間に恋愛関係を生ずと推定さる。

左翼闘士としての自覚と抱負満ちたりしころ。

その顔つきの傲慢さと皮肉さ、特に目つきのそれはこれまでの写真にかつて見ざるものなり。今日の彼女のある一面は実にこのころより生ず。

一九四九年八月十二日

軽井沢にて M・H (ロシア語で書いた湯浅芳子のイニシャル)

一九三二年(昭和七年)二月、芳子の留守中に、百合子は目白上り屋敷の家を身一つで飛び出し、頭治と結婚した。その夜、芳子は京都の漢方薬店で、百合子の体に効く薬を買い求めて帰宅した。百合子が左翼闘士として歴史の大いなる流れの中に身を投じることとは、同時に「女」としての

YURIKO, DA SVIDANYA

Hitomi Sawabe

Translated by Eleanor Batchelder and Fumiko Ohno

In February of 1932, while Yoshiko was out of town, Yuriko ~~was~~ away from the fine old house in Mejiro where they lived, ~~doing~~ nothing with her, and married Kenji. That night, Yoshiko ~~came~~ home, bringing medicine that she had found for Yuriko in ~~a~~ herbal store in Kyoto.

During this period, when Yuriko threw herself into the wider ~~stream~~ of history as a left activist, she also abandoned the ~~woman's~~ friendship that she had shared with Yoshiko and chose ~~the~~ love of the man Kenji. It seems that even her love was to be ~~revolutionary~~. It would not be an unnatural, decadent love, ~~perched~~ on a board laid over a ditch," like [that of the cross-~~ressing~~ women] they had seen in Berlin, but a healthy, natural, ~~productive~~, revolutionary love like [that of the woman's com-~~munist~~ chairman with her family] they had seen in the Soviet ~~Union~~. Running to join Kenji, Yuriko brushed Yoshiko aside ~~with~~ the words, "You are not my *tavarisch* [Russian for 'com-~~rade~~]."

The passage below is from Yoshiko's diary of February 28. ~~From~~ a friend had come a blunt reaction: "That the two of you ~~should~~ go all the way to Russia together, only to end like this, is ~~the~~ infuriating!" Later that day, Yoshiko was invited to dinner at ~~another~~ friend's house with the playwright Teiko Okada, who ~~said~~ she was eager to seduce a woman. Hearing this, Yoshiko ~~felt~~ "Everything is absurd."

~~If~~ a woman treats another woman as a plaything, where will it ~~end~~? Now I see that, during the time we two lived together, I ~~completely~~ misinterpreted our life. It was not just two women ~~living~~ each other and making a life together. Aside from that, we ~~filled~~ each other's needs, supported each other, were good for ~~each~~ other. I have the feeling that, lulled by the comforts of our ~~daily~~ life, I attached importance to the wrong things. However, ~~now~~—the way things are—if, say, a different woman should ap-~~pear~~, and if I should think of her as a replacement, well, it's totally ~~impossible~~. . . .

During the time we two lived together, sometimes I had ~~doubts~~ about my love for her. At the time I felt that, if we should ~~separate~~, I might decide to live with another woman. But now I ~~see~~ all too clearly how wrong I was. Between us was no ordinary ~~attraction~~ of one woman to another, but a relationship that is

rare even between men and women.

Being able to support each other, to fill each other's various needs, we had it pretty good. Now I realize that she has left a hole in my life which is all but impossible to fill. . . .

For my part, I no longer think about living with a woman. That I lived with *her*, that I was able to live with her, was not because she was a woman. It was not a question of gender. That she was who she was, that's what made our life possible. I don't want to live with another woman, someone not Yuriko. I am not like Okada, who can take up with just any woman who will indulge her and treat her well. I want a relationship of mutual benefit, not simply living together. This serious mood of mine is a far cry from that other sort of frivolous, *chop-licking* attitude. . . .

Of course, in the past few weeks there have been different waves of emotion. Sexual feelings, too, that I hadn't felt before. Only as a way of taking care of these feelings, I also had thoughts of a man and woman. As something detached from my regular life.

But today, I see all too clearly that thinking like that is just as much a mistake. A life like that, after all, is not a real life. Sex is not meant to be the center of our lives. But, by the same token, we cannot banish it altogether. . . .

Return to my room after midnight. Feeling of still waiting for something or other. Laughable me, waiting for something that is never to be.

Reading this diary, we can understand the meaning of Yoshiko and Yuriko's life. "That she was who she was, that's what made our life possible" is the kernel of that meaning. This is also to say, "I was who I was." They shared their lives, "filled each other's needs, supported each other, were good for each other," without Yuriko losing her "Yuriko-ness" or Yoshiko her "Yoshiko-ness." This is easy to say, but considerably more difficult to achieve.

Yoshiko said, "That I lived with her, that I was able to live with her, was not because she was a woman." This statement does not reflect her inmost beliefs, such as her childhood intuition that male-female relationships are necessarily warped, and her recent comment to me, only half in jest: "Don't do it with men and you'll live a long life." It seems she was once again repeating Yuriko's "tired old refrain": "After all is said and done, a woman needs a man. That's the most natural way."

What if they had been able to believe more in the meaning of their love and their life? What if they had lived a half-century later, when feminism had won rights for women? What if their sexual relationship had been more successful? My "what-if's" know no limit.

That Yoshiko and Yuriko were able to build the life they did I think, because they shared the social "minus-sign" of "woman." They were not burdened with the lies involved in a relationship between a man and a woman. Between two women was the pure and simple fact of their essential interchangeability.

The most important thing that Yuriko learned from Yoshiko was independence and pride in herself as a woman. In a relationship with a man, whether she likes it or not, a woman's weakness is drawn upon, more than her strengths. One would think that, in the course of her life with Yoshiko, Yuriko might have learned how to overcome this. But Yuriko played the lovable and helpless "little woman" to perfection; only to Yoshiko did she, with unguarded candor, fire off "I love you's" in rapid succession, as she wrote when she returned from France to Moscow:

If I were killed by your hand, I would die spilling tears of ecstasy. That's how much I love you. Even if you say I am a faithless woman, no matter what you say, I love you. I love you. (November 23, 1929)

Yuriko had never before made such an outspoken and unafraid declaration of love and was never to do so again. Yoshiko's influence on her extended even to her expressive style.

What Yoshiko learned from Yuriko was ambition, persistence, and the self-confidence these brought. Yoshiko lacked tenacity; she was liable to just drift along. Had it not been for Yuriko, I think she would not have found her life's work. Like Yuriko, Yoshiko too was able for the first time to love unreservedly.

Each was to the other midwife, parent, child, lover, best friend. Shoulder to shoulder, they challenged the myriad injustices that society imposed on women and worked to reclaim their full integrity.

SMOKE

Sawnie Morris

I've got a silver plastic balloon full of helium that has risen to the ceiling of the car where it continues to rest. On the seat next to me is a white box with a cake inside. It has twenty-something candles on it and says, "Happy Birthday Louise."

Just now, I slammed my head into the side of my red Mustang. I was daydreaming as I lowered myself into the seat. I am known for being a daydreamer. I have a reputation with every boss I ever had. There have been plenty of them. This year I have a job that keeps me out of the immediate range of the bosses. I'm selling greeting cards all over the southwestern states.

When I hit my head I was looking across the street at my father's old office. I stare into its dark, ugly body and remember the world as I knew it in there. Fluorescent lights lit up its cheap paneled walls and the wooden counter behind which my absorbed, doomed mother stood. In the background secretaries sat at their big black typewriters. My father would be there also, an inconsistent figure in black pants, a tie, and white starched shirt.

Neither Louise or me ever saw too much of our father, except in the morning when he woke us abruptly to breakfast, and sometimes late at night when he came in. We ate breakfast with the radio on in the morning; he came in heavy and dark from whatever he had been doing that night. Sometimes it was poker at a friend's house; most times it was a bar. He had trouble with the lock on the front door. I'd hear it jiggling in his large, impatient hand, then I'd hear the door swing open and his thick breathing as he climbed the stairs.

If I was up, we'd sit in the kitchen together as I got older, while Louise and Mom continued to sleep. He'd pour himself a rum and coke in a tall blue plastic tumbler of ice and start telling stories about people he'd run into that night. They were often sad stories. Stories about a person down on their luck, who managed to do something small. What impressed my father as far as I could see was people who suffered. The way he told the story made the small thing the person did seem large.

My head is pulsing with pain from hitting it against the roof of the Mustang. It is 5:30 now in the dark, bare-treed winter of this part of the south. I am sitting in the Safeway parking lot across from my father's old office and waiting for Jill. Jill and I are stopping in at a place up the street.

After that I need to get on in the direction of Louise's party.

She's having a birthday party at her house. Louise and Jim, her husband, and his brother are all in the business of moving things. The brothers do the actual moving. Louise answers the phone and books the moves.

I was supposed to have met Louise at lunch time, but what the hell. Tonight it's going to be birthday cake and balloons and candles. I'm going to burst in singing and shower her with gifts. Heads will turn (I picture the house full of people) and everyone will know how special, how loved my younger sister is.

I see the lights of Jill's car in the rearview mirror. The long gold car she got from her parents pulls out and moves slowly, like an amphibian in a swamp, across the parking lot.

There is free popcorn and a candle in a red glass container in the center of each table where we are meeting. Jill sits with her arms crossed in front of her. She is short and slender with narrow hips and large breasts. She has long blonde hair to her waist, and I am wild about her.

I am wild about Jill but she will never understand how that is. She has a boyfriend, and I'm willing to bet a million bucks that they'll be married in no time. It is as inevitable as leaves in the fall. I picture sweeping the wet ones off of the sidewalk. I sit down in the empty seat next to her.

She smiles. It is probably the same smile she gives everyone, but when it happens I feel the thing that is between us, like a river in darkness that no one can see, but that flows strong.

I say to her, "Next year I'm going to write 'Happy Birthday' in the sky for Louise."

"Oh yeah?" she says, looking at me and speculating. "How do you plan to accomplish that?"

"Save up. Hire somebody."

Jill looks down at her perfectly manicured hands.

"Don't you think that'd be great?"

"Well yeah, if you can think of how to do it."

"I will. I'll find out." My hands are folded up in front of my mouth.

Jill and I have known each other since high school. We left off communicating in college; she went to school in the east. I stayed here and went to the community college, until I dropped out.

We had a good time during those years out of college. We floated up and down the west coast, waiting tables for a living, sleeping on beaches together and with the boys we picked up then discarded like fish too unfamiliar and inept to be kept.

I think she woke up one day and realized she had better get cracking or she was going to end up making a premiere slide

down into the lower middle class. On that day a split grew between us. It feels sometimes like we both have got a foot on either side of the split and are trying like hell to hold two continents together. Other times the split appears to be a superficial crack that we try not to step on for superstitious reasons we aren't sure we believe in but don't want to risk finding out.

Jill wants to know how the cake looks. I tell her I don't know because I haven't looked yet. She laughs, then gets up and says she has to go to the restroom. The waitress arrives with Jill's margarita. It's a frozen one in a tiny glass.

I check out the margarita. If I drink one margarita I am likely to want another one, and another one after that. Then I will feel good for a while and care about nothing, but later on and tomorrow I will feel like shit.

I weigh the effects of the margarita against the will to get up and go to Louise's. What I want from the margarita is something down a long dark tunnel; the chances are too good I won't return with whatever that is.

I know all about that. I did that already with men. I did it also in college, when Mom couldn't take care of Louise anymore and Dad was never around. Taking care of Louise was all right, if that's what it was, but I couldn't ever control her. I could not get her to do one thing I said.

For no reason, I start thinking about the time I got Louise to hit me. We were arguing about something. Something I cannot remember now. Not touching, but in each other's heat. There was the old worn gold shag carpet of the student apartment beneath us. The dishes piled up in the sink. Louise's green eyes glazed over and the ash blonde hair that fell down around her face. The red and blue down jacket Louise was wearing and the thickness of her cheeks. The way I knew I had her. One more word, I only had to say one more word, and she would blow.

In the moment of saying or not saying was the power. The most power in this whole hopeless thing with Louise that I'd ever had. There was the sharp sound of her flattened palm smacking hard against my face. I hardly felt it. Then quiet. The look of horror and confusion on Louise's face, before she let out a cry and stormed out.

After that I gave up and Louise ran wild. It didn't seem to make any difference. I thought maybe she'd already been through everything there was to go through anyway.

I was wrong. There was more.

I look up at the waitress without raising my head and order a beer. I consider the phrase, "everything there is to go through."

Everything there is to go through for a girl, anyway. There is probably a lot more to go through. Like murder. Murder she hadn't been through. There are probably plenty of things I never thought of, but murder is definitely out.

At the same time Jill returns from the restroom, the waitress arrives and sets down my beer. I take a long, cold drink of it. I drink it straight out of the bottle even in a restaurant because I believe it takes some of the flavor out if you drink it from a glass.

We go on and talk about other things then. Jill is finishing up graduate school in business, so we talk about that and all her prospects for employment. We talk, or I should say, Jill talks about what she calls my "aspirations." She mostly talks in vague terms about the aspirations as well as the promising future itself, as it's not something she knows much about.

I don't know too much about it either, which is why when we get on that topic I let her lead the way. We talk some about the card-selling business. I don't care for it, but this time of year it's a mean cold where I live so card-selling is a good excuse to get away.

By now I've had a few beers and she's had more than one margarita. I didn't count, but we're both feeling pretty high.

She makes some comment out of the blue about how Louise has had a really hard time of it.

"Yes," I reply, "Louise has." I keep drinking my beer and looking out the window. I hope Louise is having fun at her party. Pretty soon I'm going to have to get up and go there myself.

Right now, though, I don't really want to do that. I don't really want to go there yet at all. I want to stay here with Jill whose life is so different. When I'm with Jill I sometimes remember the part of me whose life can be different also. I remember who I always tried to imagine I was. A person who has plenty of advantages. A person who is having a magical life.

"You know I bumped my head really hard when I was getting in the car to come here and meet you. What's weird is I did it while I was staring at my father's office."

Jill looks at me out of the side of her blue eyes. She doesn't like it when I talk about my family. My family's fucked up. Even more fucked up, apparently, than Jill's. Jill doesn't like to think about it. There isn't anything she can do and any kind of talk about what went on in my and Louise's household only makes her get depressed.

"When does Louise's party start?" she asks.

"It started already. I'm going late."

"What are they doing?"

"Playing volleyball first, I think, then barbequeing something after that."

Jill looks out the window. "Volleyball in the dark?"

I look out the window also. "Well, they started before this."

We both keep looking out the window. My perspective on the party changes. It's either a more involved event than I've been thinking, or it's getting to be late.

Jill wants to know how Louise and Jim are doing. I say fine, and she says how when you have someone and they have you it's easier to deal with everything else.

I look away and lean against the table. "I've been thinking it's the other way around. If everything else around you is okay, then the relationship stands a much better chance."

"Well anyway, I'm glad she found somebody good for her."

We drink in silence. I start thinking about the boyfriend Jill left once because she said he didn't have a reliable career. I said, what about me, I don't have a reliable career either.

That's different, she said.

How is it different?

Because, and her voice was both urgent and emphatic, I'm not going to be marrying you.

"It's really important being with someone with whom you can share a vision of life together," Jill speaks out loud into the room. "Someone, you know, you can have your kids with."

"Oh." Kids, I am thinking. What was high before is starting to feel more like drunk. I look down the kid-road in the direction Jill is pointing, but I don't see anything there.

I look at Jill who is looking at her water. I open my mouth to say something but there isn't much coherent there. I could say, "Well, one kid maybe. Only when I think of having a kid, the truth is it is always myself that I see." Or, "I'm not so wild about having kids because I feel like I've already had two or three."

I finger the wet label on the beer bottle with my thumbnail. Any sense of balance I had before is feeling shot. "So I guess you two will be getting married."

Jill smooths the tablecloth around the edges of her empty glass. "It's in the works."

"Well great," I say spritely. Well great, I am thinking. So what's the big deal, I say to myself. You had already figured on that.

"That's what Louise has needed," Jill announces. "Someone to stand up to your family for her."

"What about me?"

"You're more like Mickey." Mickey is the one she's going to

~~any~~.

I am aware all of the sudden of feeling tired. We're practically ~~the~~ only ones left in the bar. "That isn't what I meant, and ~~anyway~~ I don't think so. I could probably use something else."

Jill stares at the table. "That's the one problem with living up ~~in~~ the mountains. It's hard to meet anyone where you live."

"I've met lots of people."

"You just haven't met the right person."

"I don't know. Nothing seems to work out. I am successful ~~only~~ in short spurts. Three-month encounters."

Jill tosses her hair. "I can't believe that could be true. Look at ~~me~~"

I'm looking.

"Look how long we've been best of friends. That just goes to ~~show~~ you are capable of a long-term relationship. You're so ~~incredibly~~ loyal, too."

"That's different, I'm afraid."

"It's not that different," she says softly, not looking at me but ~~at my~~ hands.

"Okay." What was plunging forward in me blindly starts ~~slowing~~ down. "It's not that different. Maybe you are right."

There is a warm feeling between us. It rises up illusive, yet ~~nearby~~. I want to hold on to that feeling. I want to stretch it out ~~and~~ make it stay. I search furtively through the jungle of my ~~drunkenness~~ for something honest and bright to fuel the ~~moment~~ between us. I snatch the closest thing to me and hold it up.

"It was really nice last night with your mother and all." I ~~picture~~ the long empty oak table and how the three of us sat at ~~one~~ end eating whitefish with lemon and wild green salad with ~~good~~ wine.

We had talked about Jill's mother's life when she was younger ~~and~~ what Jill's father is up to now. We talked about the new ~~boy~~friend, Mickey, and whether he is good enough for Jill.

I come out of remembering this to hear Jill say, "Yes, it really ~~was~~ nice."

Yes, it was.

The drunk feeling that a while ago was so pleasant begins to ~~go~~ sour and feel like dead weight. I think of Louise but cannot ~~concentrate~~ on the actual distance between us, the wet roads, the ~~Seven-Eleven~~ on Northland Drive, the railroad tracks. There is ~~only~~ the idea of Louise and me knowing that it is late now, very, ~~very~~ late, and I must go to where Louise is.

When I pull up to the front of the house, only the yellow porch ~~light~~ is on. Because the porch light is on, I don't see at first that

the rest of the house is dark. I charge up to the front door with the helium balloon in one hand and the cake balanced on the flat palm of the other; then I feel it, the silence of the house. Either the party is over and everybody's dead asleep, or nobody is home.

There is my wild heart beating and the world, dark hours ago, darker and uninhibited by anything recognizably alive. The unseen world rushes up behind me and I let go of the helium balloon that says, "Happy B-Day" in my panic, jiggling the knob in my hand at first, because it is tricky, before turning it hard.

Inside the place is dark, really dark and smells faintly of sweat and cigarette butts. I feel my way along the wall with the fingers of one hand, still holding the cardboard box with the cake in it with the other. The goddamn cake I haven't even looked at yet.

When the wall ends, there is open space and the glow of a cigarette. I say, "Louise?" before I even know if it is her because I am afraid. I know it's her, though, by the time I've spoken; I can just make out the wide, heavy shadow that is her body sitting up, waiting, on the couch.

"Louise, are you all right?"

"I'm all right." She answers slowly, taking her time.

"What about Jim? Where is he?"

"Sleepin'."

I make my way over next to her and set the cake down.

"So where you been?" The glow of the cigarette rises up to her mouth.

I take a deep breath. "Say Louise, I'm sorry." I mean it, too. I sit down and put my head in my hands. Sometimes I wonder if maybe I have a problem. "I was with Jill. Time got away. I fucked up."

She's quiet. Then, "How's Jill?"

"Fine. She's getting married."

"Oh yeah?" Interest from the far side of silence. "Who to?"

"Some guy she met in grad school."

There is the sound of smoke being blown out from between my sister's lips. I can see a little better now. The way her hair that won't stay down is sticking out in curls all over her head.

"Must not make you feel too good."

My sister knows me, but I go on and say, "Oh, I don't know," then can't finish. I think for a few moments, looking past Louise and out the sliding glass doors.

She's right. I don't feel too good; but I don't know what to do about it. I don't know how to change the way things are. Still, it's a relief to hear somebody else say it. It's a weird kind of relief to hear those words, "Must not make you feel too good," out loud.

I say, "It's just that once somebody is married, it isn't the same."

"You can say that again. Look at Mom and Dad." Her voice gets loud, like this is something she's been thinking for a while and only just now has the chance to blurt it out. "I'll bet they were different people before they got married."

"How did the party go?"

"It went all right," she tosses her head, then says with conviction. "It went really well. You should have been here."

She's frowning and looking right at me, then looks away. She takes a long drag on her cigarette. "It seems like whenever I need something from my family there's nobody there."

I say yeah, I can see how it seems like that. I guess we all have our own lives to live.

I feel raunchy, horrible. It's the same old stuff and I don't know how it happens. Apologies are worthless but I go ahead and offer one up. I say it with all of myself I can possibly muster. "I'm sorry, Louise. I'm sorry for me and I'm sorry because it was for you."

She must have heard something in my voice because I can feel her settling huffy, but somewhat appeased, in the dark. "It's all right. Maybe next year you'll get another chance."

I am hit with how much I love my sister. I move over closer and put my arms around her large body and give her a hug. She nods her head. That's her way of saying that she's with me. We sit like that until I remember the cake and sit back up.

"Got a light?"

She fumbles around with her hand on the side of the table, then hands me a Bic.

I open the box and make a flame with the lighter. One by one I light up the candles of the cake.

Louise is leaning over the top of the box and looking. She looks happy. Not everlasting happy and at the center of peace; but for now, just in this moment, she feels okay.

"Make a wish," I tell her.

She looks at me, then looks beyond me, before she takes a deep breath, leans over, and blows.

That night I dream I'm sitting in the beat-up red Mustang, drinking a beer, when a plane appears in the sky. Smoke pours out of the engine. Black smoke. The way smoke can look if something is really on fire. For one split second I worry about the environment. I wonder what this thing I have done is really worth. Somewhere on Burnet Road, the road that runs alongside

my old high school and Dunkin' Donuts, Louise is standing outside the place where she works. She watches the sky also. I told her, twelve noon, go outside and look up.

As for me, my eyes are glued to the sky. I can't help myself. I am smiling. It's broad daylight and I am parked along an oversized median somebody had the gall to officially declare a park. I'm watching my birthday present to my sister happen. The silver plane turns as it moves through the sky. Its body glimmers; for a moment it's nothing but light.

I wish I could see Louise's face now. Fleshy, red-cheeked because the wind is blowing. Brittle blonde hair lifting away from her face. But this is an old image from a picture I took one of the times she lived with me when she was younger. I was already out of the house. I don't know why eleven years later that's the picture of her that comes to mind. She had braces and didn't have that sullen glazed-over look yet across her eyes.

I have my arms wrapped around me, hugging my body, while I stare up at the letters of smoke. I want to know how Louise feels this minute. She must know what is happening by now. They finished the "Happy" part and are into the middle of "B-Day." I know "B-Day" is kind of crumby. But it cost less and I decided that just doing the thing gets the point across.

Not being able to see Louise's face was a mistake in my planning. I've been saving for this ever since we were young. On the other hand, I didn't really plan it. Saving up and skywriting were two separate things going along in my mind. Last night the tracks ran into one another. Two thoughts ended up in the same place at the same time.

I could have watched from the parking lot where she is working, but I figure the shock effect wouldn't be the same. The other thing is that maybe I am just an alone kind of person. I keep an eye out on people from a distance and every now and then I throw somebody a line.

I try to imagine myself in the place of the pilot, strapped into a seat in the cockpit and leaving a black trail of letters in the sky. A message to someone far below me, so far I couldn't see them even if I knew where to look. It occurs to me there is a reason they call it a cockpit. I'm amazed by how obvious they are. It's the same reason I'm uncomfortable with airplanes in general. I'll still get on one, but consider it risky. You never know what the guy in front was up to last night. Louise won't get in a plane if her life depends on it. She says it's because of wind sheers, but I know there is more to it than that.

Around me are the neighborhoods. Wood houses painted

white with cyclone fences defining the back yards. The back yards are small with black dirt and not much grass growing. Big pecan trees keep the back yards dark. From where I stand I could see an old boyfriend's house if I wanted. I know all of this without even looking around.

After all the years I lived here, who'd have thought I'd someday have somebody write "Happy B-Day Louise" over the whole town. I laugh out loud at the brazenness of it. I hug myself again and twist my body back and forth. I haul myself up on the roof of the Mustang and holler, "Happy Birthday, Louise" into this neighborhood with its ironing boards set up in corners and its television sets.

In the middle of the pale blue Texas sky at midday I grab on to the descender of a smoky black letter. I know from recent experience that to the distant observer the letters appear to be all of a piece. But up close I discover them to be blown apart on the insides. They are nothing but clear sky sailing through boiling black air. It's like the old religions say, and nowadays the scientists: up close things lose their definition. If you get close enough to the thing, the thing itself will go away.

I hold my hand up to my face and look right through it. That's when I know I'm dreaming. This isn't waking life.

A ESTE CUERPO ENAMORADO

Doris Moromisato

Amo este cuerpo que me ata
El pezón erguido sobre el pecho triste
La breve amargura de su boca
El tierno desamparo de sus pies.
Amo este cuerpo que me atrapa y el espejo
Donde ese cuerpo se refleja y se hace uno
El bello abismo de su sexo
Su dulce continencia
Su fondo azul
El clítoris mojado que medita.
Amo este cuerpo que me ata y me condena
Ser de esta simple simetría
Hembra que se habita solitaria
Amando aquel otro cuerpo que refleja
Desesperada
Dentro de un espejo
Que ya no existe.

TO THIS BODY IN LOVE

Doris Moromisato

Translated by Mariana Romo-Carmona

~~Love~~ this body that binds me
~~The~~ nipple erect upon the saddened breast
~~The~~ brief acridness of its mouth
~~The~~ tender homelessness of its feet.
~~Love~~ this body that traps me the mirror reflecting
~~This~~ body becoming one
~~The~~ beautiful abyss of its sex
~~Its~~ sweet continence
~~Its~~ blue background
~~The~~ moist clitoris in meditation
~~Love~~ this body that binds me and condemns me
~~To~~ be part of this simple symmetry
~~Solitary~~ female who inhabits herself
~~Living~~ that other body she reflects
~~Desperately~~
~~Inside~~ a vanishing mirror.

MORADA DONDE LA LUNA PERDIO SU PALIDEZ

Doris Moromisato

Como aquella vez en que iba hacia tu encuentro
deseando enfrentarme a tus dientes
al hueso profundo de tu cara de nieve
rozando tu pena
haciéndola mía
he puesto una silla mirando el camino
por donde ha de morirse la luna
en el portal de mi casa
donde ha de llegarme tu sombra
silbando una triste tonada,
como aquella vez en que nunca supe
si eras breve o lejana.

**DWELLING WHERE THE MOON
LOST ITS PALE GLOW**

Doris Moromisato

Translated by Mariana Romo-Carmona

~~Like~~ that time when I went to find you
~~walking~~ to confront your teeth
~~the~~ deep bone of your snowy face
~~looking~~ your sadness
~~making~~ it mine
~~I've~~ placed a chair facing the road
~~where~~ the moon must die
~~at the~~ entrance of my house
~~where~~ your shadow must reach me
~~whispering~~ a sad tune
~~Like~~ that time when I never knew
~~if you~~ were brief or simply distant.

LA INMACULADA HISTORIA
DE MNASIDIKA, MI AMIGA
Doris Moromisato

Atardece y todo se borra.
Me miro mirando mi silencio.
Nada salvará esta burla, y yo emboscada
inenarrablemente respiro y soy de humo.
Ya no me pesan las arañas ni tengo espasmos.
Soy feliz y estoy perdida
me he borrado de esta historia, y soy la paz
que se escondía detrás de mi hecatombe.
Se ha apagado toda luz
y estoy tan llena de mi ausencia.
Husmeo las ventanas, talo los deseos.
Soy de humo, ninguna piel roza la mía.
Me parapeto entre palabras que no logran alcanzarme.
Soy el Dios desafortado, ahora
en que mi sexo polimorfo se dilata
entre vagidos apretados de vírgenes agazapadas
a la suerte de mi furia,
copulando brevemente mientras yerro;
y entre pubis y senos salvajes, huyo
hacia el destierro . . .
Pero despierto, yo soy mía
otras agonías me padecen.
Mi pezón se deshilacha
y es de día.

**THE IMMACULATE STORY OF
MNASIDIKA, MY FRIEND**
Doris Moromisato

Translated by Mariana Romo-Carmona

~~T~~onight, and everything blurs.
~~I~~ see myself watching my silence.
~~N~~othing can save this mockery, in my ambush
~~I~~mpressibly I breathe and I become smoke.
~~S~~piders no longer weigh me down nor do I tremble.
~~I~~ am happy and I am lost
~~I~~ have erased myself from this story, and I am peace
~~l~~iving behind my sacrifice.
~~A~~ll lights have gone out
~~a~~nd I am so full of my absence.
~~I~~ search around the windows, I stem the desires.
~~I~~ am made of smoke, no skin grazes mine.
~~I~~ wait between words that fail to reach me.
~~I~~ am the wild deity, now
~~i~~n my many-shaped sex dilated
~~b~~etween muffled moans of virgins
~~l~~iving from my fury,
~~c~~oupling briefly while I fumble;
~~a~~nd between pubis and savage breasts I flee
~~t~~owards exile . . .
~~B~~ut I awaken, I am mine
~~a~~nother agony makes me suffer.
~~M~~y riddle unravels
~~a~~nd it is daylight.

IDELLA'S CHILD, TYLER

Jacqueline Woodson

Did I tell you about Idella's daughter? Well, how could you not know she had a child? Idella walked around here pregnant for what seem like a year or more before she had that baby girl. Oh, it must have been back in '64 or '65. Somewhere around that time. I never told you about that? Well, I guess the mention of her didn't matter much 'fore now. You was probably being born around the same time. But how could you not hear about what that poor girl did to her mama? You stay stuck up in this house mostly every day, don't know what's going on or where it's happening. You a pretty girl too. If you'd a just get out into the streets more some man might see you and snatch you right up for his own. Be the best thing he could do for himself and you wouldn't be getting off bad either. Oh yeah, the daughter. Well, now you know Idella is older than Sunday and must have lost half her mind getting pregnant and the other half having that girl. Daughter done grown up to be a pretty girl too. Had hair as long as a yardstick before she cut it all off. Why that child wanted to do something that crazy is beyond me and my god. But young kids are like that now, aren't they? Don't seem to like hair very much. Has smoke-black eyes you could just snatch up out of her face and make a wish on. Got a laugh like sugar cubes. Born with all ten fingers and toes. You'd be surprised to see the girl 'cause Idella, well, you know her. She's not the most pleasant-looking woman to ever walk the streets. That child's father must have been something to look at.

Why you looking at me like that? Oh, you know I don't give a hoot nor holler about how people look. Shoot, look at me. I'm nothing to shake a stick at. These big legs. Head half-bald. Missing fingers on my hands. It was some drug doctor gave my mother. Said it would stop her pains from coming. Didn't stop anything but these fingers from growing. Hold onto your hands, girl. A woman needs her hands. . . . How come that little smile always plays across your face when I talk about hands? You're a strange something. Don't know why you want to sit up in this old dark house with me. Should be out with some peoples your own age, having a good time.

So anyway, Idella . . . Look! There she go with her shopping cart. Don't know why she walking by this way. But that's how Idella is—always looking for new ways to get to the same old place. Don't be afraid to lean over me. Come look out this

window. These big legs can handle the weight of someone small as you! Don't she look like a broken something. It's a shame what that girl done gone and done. When Idella came by here with that big ridiculous stomach some twenty odd years ago, I told her. I said Idella, now you know old ladies like you and me—I was just talking about her but I figured if I included myself it wouldn't seem insulting—I said "Idella, we're too old to be trying to raise children. We should be thinking about grandkids and the like. Now you're all big-bellied at thirty-nine, what kind of child you thinking about having? She won't be bright. We need more smart children in this world, not no half-brained child."

"No, no," she says to me. "You getting it all wrong. You have a child later on in life, that child is gonna do something. Shoot, my child might go to the moon."

"Or come from it," I mumbled.

She named that girl Tyler, you know and I think that's where the problem started. You don't go naming no girl-child Tyler. Tyler! Now that's a strong boy name. You name a girl Cindy or Ruby. Amethyst? Where you get a word like that from? No, you must have learned that at college. No stone I know. Amethyst. Amethyst. That how you pronounce it? I kind of do like the way it rolls off the tongue. Amethyst. Does sound purple. Sounds smooth too. But I don't think I'd name a child after it.

Oh, that girl caused her mother so much pain. Broke her up inside. You can see it in Idella's eyes. Hold her neck like she carry the world on it these days. Eyes all cold and closed. She came over here last week sometime. Guess it was Saturday or Sunday. You were out having lunch with one of those friends I never get to meet. I says, "Idella, sit down. You look like something the kittens wouldn't eat. Why, your hair's gray as ashes these days. You sick?" I ask her.

Idella just shook her head. Shook it slow like she'd seen the dead rise. Gave me the heeby-jeebies. Got a chill right to the meaty part of my bones.

"Who broke you like this, Idella?" I whispered.

"Tyler," she said. "Tyler broke me."

Now your mama way over there in Colorado on the other side of the earth. Why you moved so far away from her I'll never understand but I'm glad to have you here as a tenant. Shoot. I might as well call you a friend. You more of a kin than those no-good children I have. They only visit me on Christmas and Mother's Day. Live right in this city and can barely pick up a phone to say, "Hi Mama, how are you?" You sit here and let me talk you to death then sit here some more. Okay, I'm getting on

with it. I know what you mean. Deliver me from someone who make a short story long.

"Idella," I says, "Tyler's your baby. What could that girl do to break you up so?"

"She says she not planning on having children," Idella says.

"Is that all? Not having any children never stop the world from turning. That's the way these kids are today. Everything is work, buy those cooperatives, work, make some more money, buy those places on the beach, work, make some more money. Not having kids. Shoot. You'd a thought she had gone and cut off her fingers the way you moping."

"She said she never getting married either," Idella says real low.

"Idella, you better lift your head up high right this minute. You better open up those big eyes and see all these women and men out there not getting married. You boo-hooing over nothing at all."

Then you know what that poor shell of a woman says to me? You know what that no-good Tyler had the nerve to say to her mama? Well, I was sitting in this chair just as I am. Idella was sitting where you're at. She looked me full in the eye and says, "Tyler says she likes women!" There! That's it. In a nutshell and hung-out to dry. Couldn't you just roll over, play dead, and let the good lord take you on up to his heavens?!

Well, what do you mean, is that it? You acting like someone tell their mama they like other women every single day! I told Idella she was having a moon-child! I told her those late-in-life babies are more trouble than they're worth. And look at you, sitting there like all I just told you was it was Tuesday or something. My heart broke into a million pieces for that woman, it's just a curse that god would give Tyler all ten fingers and she turn around and do something like that to her mother. No wonder Idella's soul is broken all up. I tell you, it's the worst thing anybody could do. Tyler could have just kept what she does to herself but no, she have to spread the word. Like she found something so good the whole world has to know about it or something. It's a shame.

Yeah, I'll get it. I guess after a long story like that, I'd have to go to the bathroom too. Hope you haven't been sitting here holding it all that time. Hello? Well, my goodness! Tyler. Well, we were just talking about you. Your ears must have been on fire. No, no. I'm not the kind of old lady to talk bad about anybody. You know that. How's your mama? I guess she needs her rest. You get tired when you get to be our age. Yeah, she's here. She's

~~I~~ the bathroom. I didn't know you two knew each other. Yeah, I guess the world is small. Uh huh. I guess I got that. Well, I'll tell ~~her~~. Say hi to Idella. Bye.

That was fast. You must really had to go. Oh. That was Tyler ~~on~~ the phone. She said tell you it's in the open now. She said tell ~~you~~ the good thing about coming out—I think those the words ~~she~~ used—she said the good thing about coming out is you only ~~have~~ to do it once. Now come sit on back down and tell me what ~~you~~ think that girl mean by that.

HEROINES

Paula Martinac

Carrie Dodge discovered that morning that she had gone through her backlog of books and didn't have anything to read. She called upstairs to Pat, who worked out of her apartment as a freelance writer and had shelves of books Carrie hadn't read. But she only got Pat's answering machine, so she was either out or working and not picking up.

Wandering to her own bookshelves, Carrie's eyes roamed the familiar titles. She could read something she hadn't read in years. Something by Isak Dinesen maybe, or Charlotte Brontë. But she was not in the mood for a classic. Pat had introduced her to some contemporary writers she liked quite a lot. Margaret Atwood, Alice Walker. That's what she wanted, something new, something from the one-week shelf at the library, the sort of big, thoughtful book it made her nervous to borrow—afraid she couldn't finish in one week or even two. There was always a risk, an element of excitement, when she rushed the book back just before closing time on the due date. A book she'd stayed up nights to finish, that's what she wanted now.

But did she really want to take that long walk, over to Grand Army Plaza and back? It always wore her out. She could rest at the library, maybe even start the book there. Maybe splurge on a taxi ride home. Or she could forget the library, wait and try to call Pat again. Attempt to write something of her own—that's why she got the fancy electronic typewriter, wasn't it? But as the morning wore on, it became clearer and clearer that only a trip to the library was going to suffice. She'd gotten it into her head and that was that.

It was cooler outside than she'd bargained on, and she found herself wishing she'd brought gloves. April already, but still more like March. She walked along the building side of Prospect Park West, as she always did, not on the park side. The park should be safe in the daylight, but she wouldn't take the chance. Even Pat, a strong young woman who knew karate, had gotten mugged there once, though that had been at night. Carrie was certain she was too old to defend herself if anyone attacked her, and she wasn't interested in dying that way, even if she was seventy-nine and had lived what she considered a full life. She could live to be a hundred. Maybe still become a writer, the way she'd dreamed when she was a girl. Instead, she had made a bad

marriage and stayed in it for five long years, hoping Henry would change. Taken up bookkeeping, had a career at it for over fifty years, and in a way almost liked it. Liked the accomplishment of getting things to add up. Liked having what they called now "a marketable skill." A life of numbers. And in her spare time, her own time, she'd read, thought about words, looked things up in the dictionary, told stories, played crossword puzzles. Too bad she hadn't found a way to make a living with words, as she had with figures. Now Pat encouraged her to pick up where she left off years before, before Henry, before business school, writing stories in her parents' home in Flatbush, stories that eventually got left or thrown away when the house was sold, she wasn't sure which.

She was thinking about writing something as she started out onto Prospect Park West, her bag tucked firmly under one arm, her plexiglas cane over the other, just in case. She didn't use the cane that often, only on long walks, and it was fairly new. It made her feel like an old lady. Pat had advised plexiglas, saying it was lighter and more resilient than wood, and more "futuristic-looking." Plexiglas—that was a funny word. Not glass at all, stronger, so it wouldn't shatter. Who named these things anyway?

She was walking along, thinking how good her name would look on the cover of a book—Carrie Dodge. A novel by Carrie Dodge. She had a good name, was glad she'd forsaken the "Gumbles" when she left Henry. Carrie Gumbles didn't have the same zing. Pat had a good writer's name, too. Patricia Devane. They were lucky they didn't have to make up a *nom-de-plume*. The French had such a way with words. "Pen name" just didn't have any flair.

What would she write about? Pat said you should write about what you know, but what did she know? Brooklyn? Not even Manhattan, she'd only been there half a dozen times since she'd retired. Did anyone want to read about a short old lady from Brooklyn? She could write her main characters younger, try to remember what it was like to be thirty—more a heroine's age, she thought. Maybe a historical piece, then, something about the war. Historical. That was funny, but true. Her youth and middle-age now belonged to history.

It was through these thoughts that she heard a shrill call, maybe a bird caught by a cat, maybe squealing brakes in distant Grand Army Plaza. She couldn't tell but it sliced through her daydream and made her stand there, motionless, on the building side of the street, staring across to the sunshine on the park

side. It looked so much warmer over there. She decided to ~~take~~ the risk and cross. When she did, she heard the call again, ~~only~~ this time it was unmistakably a cry of the single word "help."

Then it was gone. Had she really heard it? New Yorkers ~~were~~ always imagining the worst. And if she had heard it, what ~~could~~ she do? She'd heard lots of cries in the night that she'd ~~done~~ nothing about, didn't want to get involved in, felt helpless ~~about~~. She could go back to her apartment, call the police, and hope ~~they~~ came in time to stop whatever was going on. She could go to ~~Pat's~~ apartment and see if she was working at home and try to drag ~~her~~ out to take a look. She could find another passer-by, but ~~there~~ was no one else in the street, except somewhere in the distance, maybe as far as Fifteenth Street, if her eyes weren't deceiving ~~her~~. She could investigate for herself.

She couldn't tell why she chose the last option, the least ~~ap~~ pealing and sensible of all. Maybe all of a sudden it seemed ~~like~~ more of an adventure than picking up a one-week book at ~~the~~ library. Maybe she was remembering Henry, who hit her one ~~too~~ many times. Or maybe she had to prove something to herself. ~~It~~ could have been any of those things. Suddenly, she was there, ~~in~~ the park, heading toward a clump of bushes that was shimm~~ing~~ and rustling ominously, not from the wind.

A man had a woman down on the grass, the spring grass ~~that~~ was just coming up, just turning green. He was straddling ~~her~~ that much she could see, pushing her hard into the ground ~~that~~ was still cold from winter. It was difficult to make out what ~~was~~ happening, but from behind them Carrie could tell that his ~~belt~~ was unbuckled and hanging loosely at his side. He must ~~have~~ put something in the woman's mouth, to stop her calling ~~out~~ because his hands were busy pinning down her arms. ~~The~~ woman was trying to kick, but he was sitting on her thighs ~~and~~ was much bigger than she. At least he looked big from behind, with a broad back that was heaving with effort. Either he ~~was~~ already raping the woman or was just about to, and there was ~~no~~ time to look for a phone or go back to the apartment house ~~for~~ help.

Carrie wasn't used to the cane, but at that moment it felt ~~like~~ part of her hand. The plexiglas was smooth and cool against ~~her~~ palm. She could strike him, but first she realized she had to ~~get~~ him off the woman, or he would fall and crush her. Taking a ~~deep~~ breath, Carrie opened her mouth and screamed from the ~~bottom~~ of her lungs.

"Help!" she cried, in a voice that sounded in her ears ~~like~~ someone else's. It echoed in the stillness. "Help, oh, help!"

He did the trick. Startled, the man looked over his shoulder at Carrie with an ugly, reddened face. His hands came up from the woman's arms, and just as they did, he fell back and to the side, sprawling, so the woman was able to free her legs. Must have kicked him in the groin, Carrie thought, that's the only thing that would make him double over like that. She'd done that once to a man, once near the end, kneed him good when he staggered toward her clumsily, saying, "I'm your husband, I got rights." What made men think they had rights like that?

Whatever the woman had done, she got up, zipped her jeans, and stood staring down at her attacker with a tear-streaked and bloody face. Carrie walked up beside her, clutching her cane. The woman was small, just about Carrie's height, but her upper body looked strong, and her hands were clenched into tight fists. Carrie reached for one of them gently.

"Got him where it hurts?" Carrie asked in a low voice, but the man looked too stunned and scared to answer.

He started to revive almost immediately and began to stand up. The young woman gasped. Carrie raised her cane with both hands as high as she could and brought it down hard and fast on his head. She felt a rush of strength to her thin arms. He yelped, and she hit him again, how many times she wasn't sure, till he lay flat. She was sweating and her heart was pounding out of her chest, but he wouldn't be getting up for a while.

The young woman said finally, in a thin voice, "You think he's

It was hard to tell. Carrie looked slowly from the assailant to the woman and back again. "I don't know." And, she thought, I don't really care. "You all right?" is what she said instead.

The woman nodded once, then twice more quickly, as if reassuring herself. Then Carrie, without even thinking about it, offered her the cane. The woman took it reluctantly, almost hesitated for a second like she would refuse. But then she grasped it as firmly as Carrie had done and brought it down on the motionless figure on the grass, more times than Carrie could keep track of. Each blow of the cane cracked through the air and landed with a thud. Finally, the cane in mid-air, she stopped, brought it to her side slowly, and handed it back to Carrie.

"Done," she said simply, her voice shaking.

"Good," Carrie replied. She put an arm around the woman's shoulders and squeezed gently.

When it was over, Carrie rifled through her bag for a clean kerchief. The woman was bleeding from the temple where she had pushed her down and her head had struck something

sharp. Some of the blood had dripped down her face and speckled her sweatshirt.

"What do we do with him now?" the woman asked, sitting down on the grass. She must have felt faint from the blow to her head.

"We call the police, I guess." Carrie said calmly, still feeling a tingling all through her. What was it? She didn't know, couldn't name it, but the heat of it warmed her whole body, leaving her flushed and out of breath. "You stay here with the cane, in case he comes to. I live a block away. I'll phone for help."

Carrie started out of the bushes and looked back over her shoulder with a broad grin. "I'm Carrie Dodge," she said.

"Mitch Coley," Mitch said, grinning a little too, though Carrie could tell she was still in pain and shock.

"Mitch—that's a good name," Carrie said. That's a heroine's name for sure, she added to herself.

Carrie made it across the street and up her apartment stairs more quickly than she had in years. As she dialed "911" she thought she had to tell Pat she was right about the plexiglas. Even if it had a funny name, it sure was strong.

UNDERWATER

Leslie Lopez

your leg touches mine
underwater, seaweed intertwines
with hair
becoming strands of purple
brilliance, salt water green.
one uncalculated breath.
can you imagine drowning,
lungs convulsive
like pit vipers striking
beneath water, breath
of woman lost, her voice
molded into deep orange ferns
floating past electric spines
of black fish
wanting her body before
final breath is lost.

your bone no longer touches
my arm, my rib.
everything is possible.
swimming these waters, purple
light touches skin.
we separate at elbows, our
thighs tearing apart.
what final choice?
we dance our bodies loose,
escaping like fish into sea.

ACROSS LANDSCAPE

Leslie Lopez

from the wooden house,
you remain perfect in the distance
unknown to wildlife
wandering behind forest's thick doors,
vines of your fingers rushing
to join natural green vines.

quarter of a mile,
sun narrows licking horizon.
you become a multi-colored lake,
eyes opening to salt's rush,
a fish, tomorrow you may not live,
the green earth trickles down
your smoother side.

a flare of sun blinding,
you are an instant
as i call for your voice
across midland.
you are years of wanting, surviving,
some past beginnings, decayed,

a natural exchange causing
avalanches of vines and berries
traveling steepest side
of forest's undergrowth,
we have walked identical
lands, my hand, the soil red
path curving
your face.

THE 8:48

Maureen Seaton

ed late beneath the Tappan Zee
ss from verdant Jersey, that swamp
f original sin. Seatons,
y father claims and documents in
houses and cemeteries throughout
Garden State, fought in the Civil,
Revolutionary; died famous
the wars they waged: fireman, butcher, slave
er from Carolina—and *there's*
blood my family calls patrician. There's
ineluctable Black, I've known it—
ner in my belly like a hymn of fear—
at ageless rape of a woman, her rage
deep it ignites the fire in me.

ESTAMPA PUERTORRIQUEÑA EN FILADELFIA

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

mi abismo se componía
de la fragilidad de una piragua
en el corazón de una ciudad extraña
con inviernos moderados
y melao importado
pero
aún en la abundancia
del azúcar y el calor
piragua también era
lamer con el lomo
de mi mano tu rastro sobre la nieve
la punta de tu lengua sabiendo a salitre
cuando aquí llovía río
y se llaraba mar

por eso te pedí algunos recuerdos
que afirmaran el jamás
el basta
el para siempre
para poder siempre decirte

dame esa boca
cómemme toda
y vomítame entera
para lamernos
otra vez

PUERTORICAN SKETCH IN PHILADELPHIA

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Translated by Frances Negrón-Muntaner

my abyss was made up
of the fragility of a piragua
in the heart of a strange city
with moderate winters
and imported melao

but even in the abundance
of sugar and heat
piragua was also
to lick with the side of my hand
your shape on the snow
the tip of your tongue tasting like salpetre
when it rains rivers here
after we cry seawater

that's why i asked you for some memories
affirming the never enough the forever
so i could always tell you

give me that mouth
eat me alive
and vomit me whole
so we can start again
all over

SORPRESA

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

penetré con la humedad undulante de mi lengua
un cerco impenetrable de confusión y engaño
me perdí en la arenosidad que le ofreció cálida
una bienvenida
a mi espanto
salivé tu empozada miel riendo a borbotones
por casi ahogarme en el tornado
de tus más anchos labios
sobreviviente fui
aprendiendo
por qué la miel a nuestros amos
le sabe a hiel a veces

SURPRISE

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Translated by Frances Negrón-Muntaner

with the undulating humidity of my tongue
i penetrated
a circle of betrayal and
confusion
impenetrable
i got lost in the sand who offered
my terror
a warm welcome
i salivated your honey pond bubbling laughter
having almost drowned in the depths
of your most ample lips' tornadoes
survivor i became
understanding
why honey to our masters sometimes
tastes
like venom

PENELOPE

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

descosiendo las puntas públicas de las heridas ajenas
que por haber sido cosidas por las misma agujas
son las mías
(nuevo código de justicia)

descosiendo de prisa porque se acaba el tiempo
y antes de caminar ensombrecida
prefiero besarte el pecho
aunque corra el riesgo
que me devore el tiempo

PENELOPE

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Translated by Kurt Fend Eisen

taking out the public stitches of those other wounds
that these same needles stitched in place
and therefore are
my own
(a new code of justice)

unraveling fast because time is short
and rather than walking the sad darkness
i prefer to kiss your breast
even though I run the risk
of being devoured
by time

HABLA CUERPO

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

oscilo: y
pendular rozo
la vida
no penetro: no
existe el ojo
que seduzca mi deseo
no me quejo:
no tengo errores
que lamentar
sólo el aborrecido
tiempo
para lamentarlos

oscilo: y rozo
la superficie
terrestre
no se quema
resiste con
substancias
lubricantes
no se agrieta
es Ella
humana
mortal
mujer
que
hiere
y duele
solamente
ante el hambre
de las rocas . . .
por eso
si de mi pecho
cuelgo
un afilado
péndulo
no me estrello
deslizo
mi boca

THE BODY SPEAKS

Frances Negrón-Muntaner

Translated by Kurt Fendeisen and Frances Negrón-Muntaner

back and forth
as a pendulum swings
i brush against life
without piercing:
no living eye
could seduce my desire
i miss nothing:
there are no mistakes
for me to regret
just the dreadful time
to regret them

back and forth: I scrape
the earthy surface
does not catch fire
my chaste
motion
is resisted with
slippery
wounded
substances
the earth
neither cracks
nor smiles:
quite serious
she is human
mortal
woman
that wounds and
is wounded
only
before the hunger
of the rocks
so
if from my chest
i hang
the sharpest
pendulum

sin peso
espero . . .
resisto
tu carmín veneno
no me muero
pido perdón a tus agujeros
y prometo un desarmado regreso

i don't collide
my mouth
slides without weight
i wait
resisting
your rose venom
i don't die from tasting you
i ask from your pores
a sincere pardon
promising to come back

without weapons

FEBRUARY ICE YEARS

Melinda Goodman

Walking south down Broadway
she wiped her nose
and smelled a woman still
on her knuckles
stiff from the cold
reminding her of eighth grade February ice—
years back. That
big woman on top of her
smelling like spit, cum, sweat,
and Nivea lotion
that narcotic blue
jar filled with white cream
so peaked
she was afraid to touch it
so wide and wet
she could hear it speak
Easy to see a baby's head ready to crown
watch its gum cut a tooth
Easy to lose a hand
inside the soft large butter
rum thighs

There was the smell of paint,
dope, incense and sandwiches
there was the scent
of the Electrophonic stereo
glowing eight-track quadraphonic blue
like low flames under pots
on the chipped enamel stove

It was warm in that stolen king-sized bed
blinds down and bath towel hung
like moss on the iron tall
four foot high radiator
standing guard against
the steam-heat pipe-banging night
it was warm under that woman
whose reefer tongue moved inside her mouth
like it was her own

whose weight held her fast
to the sheet
whose hand pulled her hand down
to musky soft liquid
hair between her legs
then back to lips

Head buried between that woman's breasts
she didn't have to think
just bite the gold
charm of her necklace
just suck
those nipples like the child she was—
knowing she would soon switch
to something more grown
like fucking
that woman
with most of her fist
cause two or three fingers
were lost children in the wilderness
pennies in the drum

With her face pushed in the pulsing wet
she could not hear
Marvin on the radio
or the wind blow
the sign on the check-cashing place
back and forth on rusted hinges
yelping like a puppy with a broken foot
Just those thighs like shells
clapped over her ears
Just the ocean inside her head
Just in the morning that woman's voice
telling her

get up, sugar
it's time
to go to school.

[17 YEARS OLD]
Deb Parks-Satterfield

17 years old
slow draggin' on the floor
with a woman twice my age
the music slides up our thighs
flames
cause deep circular movement
i bury my face in her hair
cigarettes and perfume collide
brush my lips across her ear
whisper
she throws her head back laughing
her gold teeth catch the glittery light
laughter bounces off the cut glass ball above our heads
splits into a thousand zillion pieces and
covers us like diamonds on black velvet

your face is the blue black of a starless sky
our lovemaking liquid
we are tigers in vaseline
pouncing, gliding, tumbling
i run my tongue along the inside of your thigh
and think the night will never end

it comes down to this.
i see you on the street
i cross to the other side
you change your locks
i change my phone number
you return every single thing i've given you
i lie in bed till my body
turns
to
stone.

PACKING

Carolyn Gammon

I'm packing my bags
for travel

I've got one long slim pink cotton tote bag
for one long lavender
1 1/4 inch on one end, 1 3/8 inch on the other
Double Venus Rising

I've packed a couple of flexible
silicone rubber dildoes
for the red leather harness
with additional opening

The Eager Beaver with vibrating tongue
and pearl-size beads to rotate the shaft,
I've slid into a side pocket
next the G-spotter
and the a.p.d.

I won't forget my Ben Wa Balls
14-karat gold—they pack small

Let's see
multi-colored condoms
water-soluble lube
a couple of lube inserts
just in case

Clove soap in my cosmetics bag
almond oil, rosewater
and a lickable amaretto cream

I've got *Gaia's Guide*
to find my way around
and *Sapphisty* for those spare moments

I'm a touch worried
about crossing the border

but I'm ready
to go!

CHANGING THE OIL

Eloise Klein Healy

I get her up on the curb, two wheels off the street
and dive under with my tools—my favorite blue-handled
wrench and a drop forged hammer with a no-slip grip.

Her, her, her—always the female car. And now I'm under,
lying on the news of the day before yesterday, slowly turning
the warm nut. She's above me like a womb or heaven
about to rain. I'm slowly turning my way into her
black blood, slipping on the wet bolt, diving into
the underworld we women crawl into with our new pride
fresh from the parts store. Turning the beautiful
implements over in my hands, tenderly
the oil spurts free—and *I* have done it.

ORANGE POEM

Anne Haines

Delicate as the bulbs
in the pulp of an orange,
bright juice filling
thin transparent walls,
I feel sweet light
about to burst
from me, at the smallest
pressure
a cool globe
exploding
on your tongue.

SWEET POTATO PIE
Stephanie Byrd

dipping and dodging
rain flows like sugar
hat in hand
sweets hidden
in the crook of an arm
so careful
not to crack
the custard

LIBIDO

Stephanie Byrd

am I only the kid
or the ever-randy mountain goat
grazing among your stones?
are my hooves the only footsteps
would they be the only footsteps
up and down your summit?

TOUCH #2
Margaret Randall



OUR GIFT OF TOUCH

Joan Nestle

My life has taught me that touch is never to be taken for granted, that a woman reaching for my breasts or parting my legs is never a common thing, that her fingers finding me or her tongue taking me are not mysterious acts to be hidden away but all of it, the embraces, the holdings on, the moans, the words of want, are acts of sunlight. I still watch with amazement your head between my legs, seeing the length of you, all the years of you, reaching for my pleasure. How in such a world as this, where guns and government crush tenderness every day, can you find your way to that small hidden woman's place? But you do, intent and knowing, you make the huge need come.

How can I ever grow accustomed to the beauty of your cheek against my breast, or the protective strength with which you turn me over? How can I ever think it ordinary, your desire to caress the tighter places, to take the time to calm me and then to help me want what I cannot see? Or how you reach for me after I have pleased you, pulling me up along your body, your fingers gently cleaning my lips that glisten with your taste. Or how you make a pillow of your shoulder, to comfort me after the coming.

Never will I take for granted in this world your generosity of exploration, how you have listened to my body and found what you could do, and the way you surprise me with it when I come to bed and reach for you and feel the leather straps around your waist. You never announce, you simply smile and do.

Never will I take for granted the miracle of your desire to comfort me, the trips you have taken to reach me, late at night, appearing at my door in your jeans and t-shirt, coming like the morning. Or when you stand before me, bare breasted, clothed only in your leather jacket and white socks, your small belly pushing forward, your eyes glinting with the depth of my response. How all stands still at that moment, and all the losses of time and all the fears of night, fall at your feet. Or the flowers that arrive in the hands of a blushing stranger because you asked her to surprise me with your caring. Or the times you have held me against your heart, telling me it was all right to cry for everything.

My life has taught me that touch is never to be taken for granted, that a woman reaching for my breast or parting my legs is never a common thing.

EXCERPTS FROM DYKETIONARY

Joni Van Dyke

Why have a DYKETIONARY?

The motivation for this dyketionary comes from the awareness that one of the boy's strategies in keeping womyn apart and oppressed is their control of language.

As long as dykes have no access to words that we need to communicate and express our selves in another language, as long as the boys keep words and concepts like clitoris, compulsory heterosexuality, coming-out... out of their dictionaries, we have difficulty speaking to each other about important areas in our lives.

SO, here's an attempt to help bridge the communication gap, to fight the patriarchal strategies for blocking **DYKE ENERGY!**

Personally I was inspired to do this project because I think we NEED a dyketionary. Also, Virgo that I am, I love projects with such tangible outcomes.



Joni Van Dyke


H

hag	obaba	おばあ	
happiness	kōfuku shiwase	{ こうふく { しあわせ	{ 幸福 { 幸せ
happy	ureshii	うれしい	嬉しい
"harder"	motto tsuyoku	もっとよく	もっと強く
hate	daikirai	だいきらい	大嫌い
hatred	nikushimi	にくしみ	憎しみ
healing	iyasu koto	いやすこと	癒す事
health	kenkō	けんこう	健康
herbs	yakusō	やくそう	薬草
Herstory	onna no rekishi	おんなのれきし	女の歴史
heterosexism	shijo shugi	いせいあい しじょうしゆぎ	異性愛 至上主義
heterosexist	(n) shijo shugi sha (adj) shijo shugi no	いせいあい しじょうしゆぎしゃ しじょうしゆぎの	異性愛 至上主義者 ~ 至上主義の
hetero- sexual (adj)	iseiai no	いせいあいの	異性愛の
hetero- sexuality	isei ai	いせいあい	異性愛

high consciousness	ishiki ga takai	いしきがたかい	意識が高い
homogeneity	kinshitsu tanitsu	きんしつ たんいつ	均質 単一
homophobia	dōsei ai kyōfushō	どうせいあい きょうふしやう	同性愛恐怖
homophobic	dōsei ai kyōfu shō no	どうせいあい きょうふしやうの	同性愛恐怖症 の
homosexual	(adj) dōsei ai no	どうせいあいの	同性愛の
homo- sexuality	dōsei ai	どうせいあい	同性愛
hopelessness	nozomi no nai koto Zotsubō	のぞみのないこと ぜっぽう	望みの無い事 絶望
horny	yaritai	やりたい	やりたい
hug (v)	dakishimeru	だきしめる	抱き締める
human being	ningen	にんげん	人間
human rights	jinken	じんけん	人権
hunger (n)	ue	うえ	飢え
hurt (n)	kizu	きず	傷
hurt (v)	kizu tsukeru	きずつける	傷付ける

L

labia	inshin hanabira	いんしん はなびら	陰唇 花びら
labrys 	sō tō onō	そうとうおの	双頭斧
leader	shidōsha	しどうしゃ	指導者
leather ^(N) _(sexual)	kawa bishi-bashi	かわ びしばし	皮 ビシバシ
leather & lace	rezā to rēs u	れざあ と れーす	レザー&レース
legal ^(adj)	hōritsuteki gōhō	ほうりつてき ごうほう	法津的 合法
LESBIAN	REZUBIAN 	れずびあん	レスビアン
lesbianism	rezubianizumu	れずびあにずむ	レスビニズム
lesbophobia	rezubian- kyōfushō	れずびあん きょうふしょう	レスビア: 恐レビ
lesbophobic	rezubian- kyōfushō no	れずびあん きょうふしょうの	レスビア: 恐レビ
lesbian theory	rezubian riron	れずびあんの りろん	レスビア: 理論
lesbian ethics	rezubian rinri	れずびあん りんり	レスビア: 倫理
liberate ^(v)	kaihō suru	かいほうする	解放する

VERBAL SELF DEFE NCE 

Fuck off! Piss off! You Bastard! Prick!	HIKKOME USERO BAKAYARŌ YOSE YO	ひっ込め うせろ は"かやろう よせよ	引込め 失せろ
THIEF!	DOROBŌ	どろぼう	泥棒
PERVERT! (TRAIN, BUS, ETC)	CHIKAN	ちかん	痴漢
"Let's FUCK" <small>WORDS SAID BY CHIKAN</small> *****	SEX O SHIYOKA? ISSHO NI NEYŌKA?	SEXをしようか。 いっしょにねようか。	
Pervert <small>Serious: pederast, necrophiliac, etc. *</small>	*HENTAI	へんたい	変態
I don't like Perverts!!	HENTAI GA KIRAI	へんたいが きらい。	変態が嫌い
Fool! Stupid!	BAKA	は"か	
You must be a... Fool / Idiot!	AHO KA?	あほ	
This is NO JOKE! (Bullshit! Fool!)	JODAN JA NAI YO	じょうたんじゃ ないよ	
RAPE · RAPIST!	GŌKAN · GŌKANSHA *	ごかん · ごかんしゃ	強姦 強姦者
Whose hand is this?	DARE NO TE?	た"れの手?	誰の手
What are you doing??	NANI O SURU NO	なにを するの。	
Don't touch! (HER, ME)	SAWARANAI DE	さわらないで。	
Stop it!	YAMETE iikayennishin	やめて。 いいからやめ	
Leave me alone! *****	HOTTOITE YO HOTTOITEKURE	ほっといてよ ほっといてくれ	
I don't want to talk to you!	(AN TA TO) HANA SHI TAKUNAI YO	(あんたと)はなし たくないよ。	(あんたと)話したくないよ。
Go away!	ATCHIE IKE	あちへいけ	

WZ5J-SI	Wommin want control over their own bodies
日本語	女達は自分の体を自分でコントロールしたい。
ROICHH	Onnatachi wa jibun no karada o jibun kontororu shitai.
WZ5J-SI	Would you like to spend the night with me?
日本語	今晚 一緒に過ごしませんか?
ROICHH	Konban issho ni sugoshimase
WZ5J-SI	To work within the system
日本語	現在の社会でも女性の立場が進歩するよう働きよう!
ROICHH	Genzai no shakai demo josei no tachi ga shinpo suru yoo ni hatanakoo.

Wommin united will never be divided.

女性同志 協力し合えば、決して分断(お)い。

Joseidōshi kyōryoku shiaeba keshite bundan sa-renai.

Butch on the streets Fem between the sheets

歩く姿はタチ、横になるとネコ。

(ネネコ、ネタチ、ガチネコ)

Aruku sagatawa tachi, yokoninaruto neko.

(Put simply. neneko = usually butch appearance but sexually a fem. Nedachi: is the opposite)

Can I Kiss you?

キスしていい？

Kiss shitemo ii?

ENGLISH	Your place or mine?
日本語	ほくの所かきみの所か どちらがいい?
ROMAJI	Boku no tokoro ka kimi no tokoro ka dotchi ga ii?
ENGLISH	Love is blind.
日本語	恋は盲目
ROMAJI	Koi wa momoku

お

おこすム

ōgazumu

orgasm

おさま

okama

fag

おこが

okoge

fag hag

おこしている

怒っている

okotte iru

be very angry

おこせん

お米専

okome-sen

Japanese-lover

おこされた

抑えられた

osaerareta

oppressed

おこ入れ

押し入れ

oshiire

closet

おこしめ

教えこみ

oshiekomi

brainwashing

おこす

oshikko suru

pee, piss

お尻

お尻

(o)shiri

ass

おこれる

恐れる

osoreru

fear (v)

おこむ

落ち込む

ochikomuu

depressed

おこちん

ochinchin

penis

おっぱい

oppai

breasts
boobs/tits

おこぼ

お転婆

otemba

tomboy

おこ(おす)

男(雄)

otoko(osu)

man

おこたらし

男たらし

otokotarashi

vamp

レ

(おんなの) れきし	(女の) 歴史	onna no rekishi	herstor
れずびあ にずむ	レズビアンイズム	rezubian- izumu	lesbi
れずびあん	レズビアン	rezubian	lesb
れずびあん きょうふしょう	レズビアン 恐怖症	rezubian kyōfushō	lesbo
れずびあん せんげん	レズビアン 宣言	rezubian sengen	comira proc
れずびあん たんじょう ものがたり	レズビアン 誕生物語	rezubian tanjō monogatari	lesbian "born
れずびあん ひょうめい	レズビアン 表明	rezubian hyōmei	comira stage
れずりろん	レズ理論	lezuriron	lesbian
れんらくする	連絡する	renraku suru	comri

Mariana Romo-Carmona

When I managed to slide closed the plexigate, I was gasping for breath. For the moment I wanted to keep out the bloated, ~~stereous~~ limbs of the *touched ones*. I was depleted and shocked. ~~Back~~ in Venezuela City, none of us ever guessed it would be so ~~and~~ here. Naturally, my people and I are not naive enough to ~~think~~ of the northern continent as that glowing, polished "land of opportunity," as it was known in the twentieth century. Still, ~~we~~ somehow imagined their Elder government would have ~~dealt~~ more sensibly with the Disease.

Below the cell I occupy, the touched ones still crawl around in ~~the~~ semi-darkness, trying to climb up the side of the cellblocks ~~and~~ gain access to open cellgates that might provide a safe place ~~for~~ sleep. When I arrived today, the cellblock keeper warned me ~~not~~ to open the plexigate unless I wanted to step out onto the ~~walkway~~, but I disregarded the warning. I wanted to breathe ~~some~~ air, even though the air in the whole city feels used up, ~~used~~. Instead, I was surrounded by three touched ones wrapped ~~in~~ rags, horribly deformed and malodorous. I tried my chants ~~and~~ reached for their auras, but these humans barely had a thin ~~layer~~ of grayish light around their physical bodies. There was ~~hardly~~ any psychic energy for me to contact, and their brains ~~were~~ completely atrophied by malnutrition and the ravages of ~~the~~ Disease. We could not communicate.

I failed to help them. They retreated onto the electronic ~~walkway~~ that connects my cell to the others, perhaps physically ~~exhausted~~ and shocked by my vital energy. I shut the plexigate ~~and~~ leaned against it, feeling suddenly as exhausted as they, ~~whispering~~ some Blessingway mantras to myself. I am ~~sad-~~ ~~dened~~ after feeling the depleted auras of those touched ones.

It's very windy out there, and there is a red glow in the sky. At ~~first~~ I thought this was the urban village called Chicago in the ~~1990s~~, but it isn't. It's one that was thought to be uninhabited by ~~mid-~~ ~~twentieth-~~ ~~first~~ century; this is old New York town.

Though I was never very interested in ancient world history, ~~I~~ needed to learn quickly about this continent that looms almost ~~forbidden~~ in the dark North Sea. I am a *curandesa* in my native ~~land~~, a profession that evolved rapidly since the first decades of ~~the~~ Disease, particularly in what used to be called Third World ~~zones~~. Curandesas are a combination of old world doctors, ~~healers~~, counselors, acupuncturists, and medicine women,

though there are some men curandesas. We practice hypnosis through rituals we learned from the western Indians who first came to the northern continent in 2005. It is the only way we can control the deadliest side effect of the Disease: Fear. Yet, living in our sheltered healing community, I had no conception of the ravaged condition of human beings in this place, ever since the northern continent had cut off itself from the rest of the globe.

It was surprising, then, when we heard talk of a vaccine being developed in the northern continent. I was sent from Venezuela City to investigate.

Many times before, members of the Global Association of Curandesas had sent emissaries to different parts of the globe after rumors sprang up of a new cure being developed. The rumors spread just after a new strain of the virus had decimated another community. Some of us suspected unethical experimentation, and were opposed to sending emissaries. Because emissaries were unfamiliar with local history, they were manipulated by political factions and rarely learned anything of value. In 2273 it was rumored that two Palestinian emissaries had been diverted to the northern continent and never returned to their zone.

I was advised to learn as much as I could first about the history of the northern continent I would be visiting. I started by researching the bibliofiles, but ended up having to pay memory donors to talk to me, or just borrowing memory chips from my association contacts. Since the Computer Down-age of the 2200s, not only did all space travel cease forever, but the global system of information and communication broke down. Apparently, this was done intentionally through the introduction of a virus that, ironically, duplicated in computers the effect of the Disease on human beings. From that time on, bibliofiles contain everything ever written, but unclassified.

There is no way of knowing what is fact, fiction, reenactment, documentary broadcasts, hologram transmissions, simulated news events—human history is complete chaos.

In the past forty years, while technicians all over the globe have strived to reorganize information systems, it has become apparent that human populations have very short memories. Some educationists attribute this to our shorter life spans since the Disease, our greater degree of specialization in tasks, our lowered resistance to stress. But whatever the reason, the facts we have forgotten. My generation knows nothing that is not transmitted through our specific tasks, our view of human history is not linked, and neither are our global data banks.

The red glow in the sky seems to be dimmer. I hear it is never dark in this village, that the mercury illuminators glow perpetually because it is never really light. Through the plexiglass I can still distinguish some of the shapes of the eroded architecture of the twentieth century. I have no access to any history before that. There is a great iron structure that extends across a foul gorge they call the East River. It carries no current, but it isn't exactly empty. It seems to be a repository for centuries of refuse. The enormous crane dangles an iron cage from what used to be a track, perhaps. It carried people from one side to the other of this fetid river.

On the other side I see the only remaining building to tower above the myraid concrete cellblocks with plexigates and narrow access to the electronic walkways that connect the maze of rounded structures. That building is rectangular. The top if it seems to have been sliced off at a forty-five degree angle. It is covered by pleximirror and a greenish light emanates from it into the humid twilight. Some historical accounts indicate that this building was originally the Bank of the City, and that it was built to look like a big box with the top chopped off. But most historians think this is popular lore making a legend out of some disaster, possibly the earthquakes of the 2010s.

Of course, if we really look at ourselves, we are all *touched ones*, because every human being on the globe has carried the antibody for the Disease since the year 2015. In fact, I have learned from my recent historical research that the Great Infection of those early times began in the northern continent. It was the first time that history recorded an Elder government, which were originally benevolent popular councils, that actually turned against their own people. More radical voices have claimed that it wasn't the first time it was done, merely the first time recorded.

It was a strange period of sleep that lasted about six hours. In these cells, I realized, were not really made of cement, but rather a mixture of granite, molten metal, cement, organic material, wood, and thousands of other particles processed and shaped after several nuclear meltdowns, earthquakes, laser bombings, and many other urban catastrophes. In my sleep I absorbed much information from these rounded walls, and the latent energy left behind by sickly humans who have preceded

As I descended to the lower level to find the main electronic walkway, the cellkeeper seemed surprised to see me about at that hour. She offered me some ration for breakfast that was

included in the price of the cell, but the food she held toward me in a gray plastic tray was dead. Certainly the ration had caloric value, but nothing emanated from it. It might as well have been the same gross putty used to build the cellblocks. The stranger thing, though, was that she refused my offer of live food to her. The seeds and fruit I held in my hands glowed with energy. I looked at the woman's frail form, her barely yellow aura, and wondered how she managed to move as quickly as she did when she seemed so taxed.

Skating off on the walkway, I resolved to offer the cellblock keeper my services for a healing. I had been warned not to reveal my craft on my travels, but it seemed ugly not to share what I could.

In order to find the cure, or at least, to obtain information about the latest developments, I needed to make contact with the northern continent physicians. Upon my arrival, I had been told they would be meeting today in a medical college. As I neared the large complex of rounded cellblocks, the electronic emissions forming the walkway suddenly weakened and broke off, and several dazed people plummeted to their deaths. I had just then come hovering over a window ledge and I grabbed onto it while the rays of the walkway dissipated into the constant rain.

Frozen to the side of the building I waited to feel the spirits rising from the bodies below. Slowly, a gray veil of delicate shadow floated by me. Most human beings in this village seem on the verge of death. There isn't much energy left even to die. I slid down to the street level and talked with survivors and touched ones who stood about. It was common, they said. At that hour of the morning the power often gave way, when only transients, touched ones, and thieves would be traveling anyway. I looked at the reddish sky through the misty rain, and sensed the brightening of the sky by degrees. Perhaps this was daylight. I got my bearings and headed to the entrance of the college. Behind me, the bodies of the dead remained untouched.

The Chief Physician at the Medical College appeared to me like no curandesa I had ever seen. As I approached the domed structure, her large face loomed suddenly above me. Her bulging eyes scrutinized me, and I sensed her identity and questions before she spoke. I jumped with surprise before I realized that it was her image projected into a hologram that I had seen, several times her size, hovering over the entrance and peering into everybody's face as they arrived. We stood transfixed, new-people, researchers, and physicians from other zones, in a semi-

circle until the real Chief Physician walked in through a round door to our right.

She was a very light-skinned, stocky human, quite short in stature, wearing a gray suit with the letters "CP" on her lapel. Her aura was the yellowish gray I had become accustomed to seeing, but she glowed with a thin blue luminescence all around. Attended by solemn-faced male humans dressed in blue uniforms, the CP directed us through the laboratories. The attendants glowed with the same two-toned aura. She spoke in a nasal, metallic voice, and displayed for us the experiments and their results. The attendants, who appeared to be both researchers and guards, insisted that we look at the slides under powerful electron microscopes and compare previously diseased tissue with completely healthy samples. Documentation for the data was presented in hologram displays of stunning quality, with images so sharp they appeared practically solid. Suddenly, I detected a rise in my temperature, and a tingling sensation in my spine. I attempted to leave the main area where the holograms were projected, but I was prevented by the CP herself.

"You can only get the full effect by standing here, Curandesa," her thin hands kept me from moving, her arms extended, as though she did not wish to get too close to me.

I studied the faces of the other guests. They seemed intent in the explanations, the newspeople with their headsets busily recording into holocorders, the researchers and physicians whispering comments into their memory chips. I found the experiments inconclusive, merely replicating old methods of isolating viral strains. I began to suspect a ruse, another reason for wanting this specific group of humans in this location.

As soon as I felt everyone's attention to be concentrated on the next set of holograms, I retreated through the corridors until I came to the main plexigate. Feeling overheated still, I headed towards a public liquid dispenser and reached for a bottle of water. Then, thinking of the proximity of this dispenser to the college, I reached instead into my satchel and popped a few water capsules in my mouth. I was beginning to feel intensely distrustful of all services for humans on this continent. With these doubts and some nebulous theories going around in my head, I wanted to search for answers rather than this elusive "cure."

Traveling swiftly again on the walkways, I learned to discern the possible breaks in current that had caused the fatal accident earlier that day. Near the "edges" of the sheet of electronic emissions that formed the walkways, there were almost imper-

ceptible blue sparks. If one sensed these short circuits or saw them, the way I could, one could stop in plenty of time or take an alternate route. No longer in danger of falling, I went to the central bibliofiles where medical data banks could be found.

A domed structure received me, and I quickly found the sonic lift that would take me to the appropriate data banks. I adjusted my memory chip to receive even my most subtle telepathic messages. In this manner I could think and research at the same time. My notes would be edited later, when I returned home.

The CP continued to intrigue me and make me extremely uneasy. As I searched through the disks, my temperature continued to rise. None of the representatives I had seen were curanderos. This fact in itself was not surprising. Many researchers from europa, and certainly from this continent, were devoted solely to cures by chemical means and had not yet learned to heal themselves by other disciplines such as ours. What was unusual was the complete absence of healers of any type in the files I was reviewing, and yet I had not sensed the progress of the disease in the CP or her attendant researchers. In fact, I had sensed nothing familiar, just that thin blue luminescence.

The news files had no data on northern continent medical cures or advances for years. I sifted through commercial news. Nothing. I switched to historical files and tried to avoid the novelizations. This zone had copious records of that type, and I synthesized the basic facts into my chip.

"At the beginning of the twenty-first century it was difficult to know which was the greater threat to humankind—poverty, hunger, war, or the Disease. Third world zones were denied access to clean blood and immunization. This was long before humans could mutate to adapt to certain aspects of the Disease, and having the virus meant almost certain death. A peculiar migration had begun at the end of the twentieth century. Humans from Latin America, Africa, and certain parts of Asia strove in great numbers to reach the northern continent and europa. Editorialized versions maintain that this was due to the systematic plunder of the Third world by the First, and people simply went to reclaim the resources they had lost. In europa, the middle east, and the soviet zones, a wave of unprecedented political freedom gave birth to the first Elder governments, a council of benevolent humans who answered only to their own people . . ."

Files on the great infectation were seriously jumbled. I did find valuable records that confirmed the annihilation of all neighboring zones by the northern continent. The files traced the

Human migration of 2005 to that time, when all the northern nations migrated to the zone then known as Macchu and its surroundings. "The first known cures for the Disease were created in these new villages. There were Asian laser technology, Navajo hypnosis, Mapuche chants, yoga, and zen cleansings of all negative energy. Telepathy and biofeedback made giant leaps forward. Meanwhile, the northern continent medical establishment swarmed the south-zone trying to lay claim to knowledge that was given freely to everyone who needed it.

In 2010, many earthquakes decimated areas of the globe. Parts of the northern continent were washed to sea, and the crisis brought repression and hoarding of resources. Brown-skinned human beings were persecuted, many were exiled, and massive migration took place: to India, to Nigeria, Venezuela, and Central China. Earthquakes continued to plunge islands and parts of continents into the ocean until 2015, when there was a temporary calm, but it was also discovered that reactionary factions across the globe had begun the great infection in an effort to control the remaining resources. The new regime of the northern continent preached abstention from sexual contact, pointing to the great numbers of brown-skinned human beings as evidence that the globe's resources were unfairly taxed by those who bred so quickly and too plentifully. Brown-skinned women were believed to be parthenogenic. Autosexual practice was the only form of activity legally permitted. The Brown-skinned were blamed for the transmission of the Disease and the now clearly apocalyptic regime sought to control its spread by testing every brown being with brown skin for the antibody. The cruelly ironic result was that, as the Disease and famine spread through the globe, no human being ever willingly desired to have sex any longer. Experiments were conducted on human beings who were used to incubate serum after serum, while ignoring the progress healers were making in other parts of the globe. "As the decades passed, there seemed no way to stem the disease, but eventually the population reached a stabilization point in 2210. Small mutations had started to appear. Most human beings have few teeth as adults, little hair, four digits on each foot, and those females who are fertile have multiple births. We are not subject to many infections, but we can smell only pungent odors, and we are very near sighted. We don't need as much food, but then we can only taste ten percent of what we consume, and finally, our life span is only 50.3 years."

History. This collection of pathetic facts that make up current reality. I am glad I am not a historian, or even a teacher. Healing is good work, effective, and it keeps one very busy. My lower back was aching terribly, so I loaded the last disk into my chip and closed down the main computer.

It was night again. The sky glowed a dark red and the air became more dense. Exiting the domed archives, I traveled south to my cell. Avoiding several power breaks, I noticed other people sensed them as well. I sped along on narrower walkways on the west side of the village. Approaching a large open plaza I joined some younger humans who carried ancient instruments for musical entertainment. Electronic saxophones and keyboards bounced with clearly detectible energy. While the music played, I touched their auras from a safe distance and taught them telepathically to reconstruct their body cells. They would be mostly healed in the morning and would surely live a long time. Two women danced, embracing each other tenderly. On the ground, attracted by the intense energy, touched ones who were beyond any healing crawled. Those who could still walk kicked the others along the ground, forcing them away from the circle of light and music that had been created. I felt more troubled and consumed by worry; still I perceived the glowing of blue, purple, and green auras. There was red iridescence, and orange bursts of human sensuality.

Immersed in the music, I gazed for a time at the faintly discernible full moon, until feeling unbearably feverish, I dumped my small satchel on the ground and distributed the dried fruit and seeds I carried, eating little, delighting in the appetite of these northern humans. I passed around the small flask of ginseng liqueur and watched their faces glow. Outside the circle the touched ones moaned hopelessly.

The music continued, and I remained on the ground, tired but able now to review the last of the information. Some children attempted to rob me, but finding nothing of worth in my pockets they sat quietly, holding my arms, my legs, my feet.

Though I read quickly through the information on the miniature screen of my memory chip, I felt, with a tightening of my stomach, that I already knew what I would learn: Murder. Wholesale genocide accomplished through simple means. Through fingerprint verifiers. Inoculations. Mass blood tests. Poisoned water. Nerve gas at demonstrations, outdoor concerts. Hologram transmissions. The cruelty was staggering. Now I knew what attacked the blood in my veins at that very moment. My bone marrow duplicated mutant cells and shot my body

with pain. This was no longer the Disease alone, but massive immunodeficiency from many viral combinations.

Realizing I had already discharged much of my energy, I knew I had little time to concentrate on saving myself. Moving slowly and carefully I left the park and tried to find the walkway that would lead me back to my cellblock. I had been irradiated through the holograms at the medical college. The macabre procedure was undetectable and was probably an effective way to kill within days. At least, I was protected. Slowly, I drew in my breath and directed it outward, rhythmically as I skated. My strong body might survive this onslaught, not so the others who had undoubtedly been irradiated. Why? To neutralize any efforts to spread the information on the cure research? No. There was no research on the cure, only experimentation on new methods of death. The college was the link to the Elder government and its complicated network of population control. Information on ongoing research was released periodically to obscure the systematic destruction of unwanted humans, and when curious researchers arrived from other zones, they would be killed.

Arriving at the cellblock, I quickly loaded all my data into the laptop connector I had brought, a sort of "hard" disk which could store five hundred millibytes of information. A cold sensation settled into my chest, and I hoped I had not contracted pneumonia, which would certainly slow my recovery. But the coldness was different. Closing my eyes, I located the source. In the cell below, the cellkeeper lay dead. I boarded the sonic lift with caution, but it was no longer necessary. When I entered her cell, she was alone, although someone had obviously been there before, and shot her in the chest with a laser. Placing her arms over her chest, closing her lids, I tried to understand the cause of her death, angrily realizing it was my own presence. The college or the elders, perhaps the CP herself, must have sent someone in search of me and killed this woman in the process. With my eyes closed again, I could summon vague images of her attacker, which revealed it had been a man in a blue suit, unmistakably one of the CP's attendants. Opening my eyes I whispered my apology to her spirit for causing her death and swore to avenge her. Knowing these were strange emotions for a healer, I fought within myself to will the destruction of the disease within me through my own powers. At the same time, I nurtured an extreme hatred for the CP, her minions, and all of the governing body that ruled this sad land.

I probably did not have much time left, because they must

have known I would not stop until I answered my own questions. Sobering myself, controlling my emotions in the midst of increasing fever was impossible. I also knew I could not leave until I destroyed the CP and her death machine.

Before setting off again on the now deserted walkways, I ingested all my supply of herbal immune-balancer, feeling an immediate boost of energy to my system. As I skated back towards the college, I gazed at the blue sparks as I avoided them and was suddenly seized with an idea more chilling than anything I had encountered: The blue of the sparks, the thin blue luminescence around the aura of the CP and the guards. No other humans glowed with such a strange aura. It could only be artificially created by constant electronic recharging. If they had managed to bombard their own system with radiation to kill all traces of the disease, they must have weakened themselves to the verge of death. But with a network of electrodes attached to their skulls sending electronic impulses coursing through their bodies, it is possible they could maintain themselves indefinitely. There had to be a remote source of energy somewhere within the complex.

I entered the college through a plexigate intended for the discharge of refuse. Closing my eyes, I guided myself to the sublevels of the complex until I found a labyrinth of corridors leading to an obvious end. Finding the ports that connected my rudimentary hardware with the laboratories within the complex was amazingly simple. The hologram transmitters, the microscopes, the hydrocarbon freezers—one by one they tied in with my string command to disengage. Attempting to concentrate and avoid errors, I thought lightly about my future actions. It would be easy to commandeer a sky car in the city at this hour. In fact, I could probably find one from the medical college fleet right outside the north wall. Engaging the automatic pilot due south would have me home shortly after dawn.

Finally, with a deep, resonant hum, only the set of electronic generators vibrated in unison. Attaching a connector from my memory chip to the final port, I programmed a shutdown series. As my fever began to recede, my carefully guarded hatred of the CP, the guards, the elders began to dissipate. In some part of my psyche I could feel them approaching, alerted by the sudden drop in power, advancing like glowing ghosts through the darkened corridors. They all seemed inconsequential then, so unreal and feeble, because at the end of the sequence on my screen their power source would shut off without a sound, and they would all be most certainly dead.

have known I would not stop until I answered my own questions. Sobering myself, controlling my emotions in the increasing fever was impossible. I also knew I could not stop until I destroyed the CP and her death machine.

Before setting off again on the now deserted walkway, I ingested all my supply of herbal immune-balancer, feeling an immediate boost of energy to my system. As I skated back toward the college, I gazed at the blue sparks as I avoided them and suddenly seized with an idea more chilling than anything I had encountered: The blue of the sparks, the thin blue luminescence around the aura of the CP and the guards. No other lights glowed with such a strange aura. It could only be artificially created by constant electronic recharging. If they had planned to bombard their own system with radiation to kill all the disease, they must have weakened themselves to the point of death. But with a network of electrodes attached to their bodies, sending electronic impulses coursing through their bodies, it was possible they could maintain themselves indefinitely. There had to be a remote source of energy somewhere within the complex.

I entered the college through a plexigate intended for the purpose of refuse. Closing my eyes, I guided myself to the center levels of the complex until I found a labyrinth of corridors leading to an obvious end. Finding the ports that connected my supplementary hardware with the laboratories within the complex was amazingly simple. The hologram transmitters, the microprocessors, the hydrocarbon freezers—one by one they tied in with a single string command to disengage. Attempting to concentrate and avoid errors, I thought lightly about my future actions. It would be easy to commandeer a sky car in the city at this hour. I could probably find one from the medical college floating outside the north wall. Engaging the automatic pilot device would have me home shortly after dawn.

Finally, with a deep, resonant hum, only the set of electronic generators vibrated in unison. Attaching a connector from my memory chip to the final port, I programmed a shutdown sequence. As my fever began to recede, my carefully guarded hatred for the CP, the guards, the elders began to dissipate. In some part of my psyche I could feel them approaching, alerted by the sudden drop in power, advancing like glowing ghosts through the darkened corridors. They all seemed inconsequential and unreal and feeble, because at the end of the sequence and the screen their power source would shut off without a sound and they would all be most certainly dead.

LETTERS FROM MONTREAL

Carolyn Gammon

January 20, 1990

Cheryl,

How are you? How did the news of the Montreal massacre hit you in New Jersey? We all lived on the edge of rage and tears for weeks here, wondering why the assassin had not been more "obvious" feminists like at our Lesbian Studies meetings. Over the holidays I attended a self-defense workshop where the questions focused on what do we do if a man with an automatic rifle comes into this room, *now*. Until we had gone through, step by step, what we might do, I don't think I had any control over my fear.

And that was just the personal fallout. The political fallout—the backlash against women and feminists in the media, and the divisions within feminist ranks over how to respond to the massacre—was even more devastating than the personal. It was as if the massacre was planned specifically to divide and conquer and we took out our labryses, sharpened them, and asked what we could help. Men fought women for megaphones at the vigil for the slain; anglophone feminists split off from francophone feminist feminists in organizing an all-women rally; detrimental comments were made to, or reinterpreted by, the media linking the women's rally to a threat to kill male babies in hospitals that lasted a week after the massacre. I could go on. It all clearly showed me that we, supposedly up-on-analysis, organized, feminists, are not ready for war. I realize now, most of us were in a huddle and not making the best possible decisions, but now the scars are there between feminist groups in the city.

Only a few, mostly student papers, managed to catch the racist and classist connections of how the massacre was dealt with—calling the all white victims the "country's elite," performing a nearly all-male directed state funeral, focusing on the daughter of a cop and another daughter of a city councillor, etc. And it was interesting, too, to see the difference in treatment between English and French media. At least the French papers gave profiles of the slain women and often listed their names. I could hardly find their names in the English papers; after all, they were "Quebec daughters," so they focused on the killer's profile instead.

I better not go on. I realize when I begin to write about this again how much numbness and bitterness and anger I have to deal with. Especially since I fear that this is only the beginning of such obvious anti-feminist, anti-women, anti-lesbian attacks that we are likely to see.

March 20, 1992

Dear Cheryl,

Reading back on that letter I could not have guessed that the same pattern of self-destruction within the feminist community could continue, but it has; we just can't seem to get together around anything after this one. You probably did not receive the news in the United States about all the gory post-massacre copycat events. A male employee on the University of Toronto campus brought on arms and a knife and made statements favorable to the killer at the Université de Montréal. He was given therapy and a leave of absence. Frat boys on the same campus lit firecrackers under the women's dorm windows as a "prank." A man pulled out a gun in the middle of CEJE (college) classroom with twenty women and one man and made threatening statements—even the media had to make a comparison to the massacre on that one. The prof talked him out of it and it turned out to be a starter's pistol. I saw it in a tenth-page small column. If a woman had done that . . . Then, last week, two women working in a lingerie boutique on a busy Montreal street were found in the basement, choked, stabbed to death, and raped. It happened almost a year to the day that a gay activist with pink hair was kicked and stabbed to death at a downtown Metro station. *And they ask us if these are isolated incidents!*

We held a vigil. It had turned cold again and windy. We walked for two hours in a circle in front of the store (cops said we couldn't stand still, told us we didn't even know what it was like they after all had found the bodies, why didn't we go home and quit exploiting the situation for our own ends). We protected our flames from the wind and walked in silence. Many of us had not seen one another since the vigil for the fourteen slain women. I gave a statement to the press: "We should do this for every woman raped and slain—we'd be out every night, but we'd get our point across." At least the silence at the vigil united us. I've not seen others from the various warring feminist groups since, but it feels to me that we've finally realized that we must move on. The killers are not going to wait politely for our squabbles to end.

MAY DAY, 1985
Yasmin Tambiah

feeding

workers

Capital's four-wheeled resources

an effort to stop a war

with pamphlets

spilling a woman's story—

unchroniced everyday courage

in time-space

mutilated body-counts

raped daughters/butchered sons

make history—

i distributed

(paper-stacking-machine-in-reverse)

to hands

raw

scarred

with fingernails like splintered coconut wood

and

reading in my soft palms the chasm uncrossed

i wept

THE CIVIL WAR

Yasmin Tambiah

September, 1984: Three months since I returned to Sri Lanka with an American college degree. The civil war has spilled beyond the Northern Province. Metal gates to my parents' house still bear the dents of rock-throwing mobs. There are axe marks on the wooden doors. New plaster hides a ceiling charred by a burning tire. Embattled elsewhere I re-live the horror of July, 1983, through my siblings' eyes. It is difficult to articulate the deep loss within, the negation of familiar fictions, the awareness that exile in one's own country is even less bearable than at a distance. It is a loss compounded by my family's fear.

February, 1985: Carrying the National I.D. Card is mandatory. It will protect me from arbitrary arrest, they say. But the civil war has spilled beyond the Northern Province. The authorities have collapsed multiple identities into a Tamil last name. The card does not attest that I am half Sinhalese, speak no Tamil, and dream in English. It is silent on conflicting loyalties and the struggle to recover myself from colonialisms. I am reduced to someone else's definition, terrorized into keeping boundaries I neither constructed nor consented to.

December, 1985: Exile. Four months in North America. White graduate classmates are puzzled that a twentieth-century South Asian might share the experiences of a Medieval Jew. Their imagination stops at my brown skin. There has always been a civil war beyond the Northern Province. Those at risk cannot afford ignorance. I have learnt to recognize the languages of domination. I gather a community of resistance for a dangerous, yet necessary, journey toward radical transformations.

SANDALWOOD (FOR A.)

Yasmin Tambiah

As i step through the door your scent meets me, mingling intimately with incense burnt for Devis. Enclosed by your strong brown arms, bangles tinkling their welcome, i taste melted jaggery on your lips, sea salt within. In your eyes i forget time, collapse space. Your well-ordered apartment outside washington d.c. transforms into dense lush jungle heady with araliya, jasmine, magnolia, sandalwood. My fingers sink into moist soil rich with life. Rounded, like the ganeshi-yogini we celebrate, you claim me. Familiar endearments roll off your tongue teasing nipples dark as your own. Fierce, passionate, protective, reflections dancing where our Kalis meet, you bring me home.

I am no longer cracked earth hidden between asphalt sidewalks in north america waiting for the monsoon which comes only in my dreams to drench, heal, close fissures through which i bleed. Your firm, knowing touch re-members sensations grown distant . . . tired limbs massaged, face caressed, head stroked to lessen pain, to calm a restless spirit. That touch you cook with, food we both know, grew up on, still eat making do with american substitutes and precious imports. Tastes of jeera, koththamalli, pepper, star anise, blend easily on your fingers. You name us "rasam-and-rice sisters," "ovaltine dykes," laughing, claim concepts made alien here. Dravidian warrior, friend, lover, you bring me home.

THE ART OF TALKING INDIAN ART SHOWS

Annharte

for Richard Danay-Glazer

A few years of going through the papers, he found enough Dear Ann- Dear Abby letters. The toughest question ever put to them "Is it true Indians are better lovers?" was answered by readers. He had already shown us how he fixed up a Cherokee Prince with a Barbie Doll but they had not much in common. Each of these letters was painted white with the edges illustrating the text. He had a slide of his Nuclear Appaloosa which was right on. The letters had kept coming. "Indians are my favorite hobby" he read. Another letter stated "Indians have secrets passed down from fathers to sons." He had taken a picture of Lincoln, put a rack on him, called him Honest Moose, we laughed. Alluring behind the Pin-up Pinto of porno prancing fetlocks his moose would do no harm. Preso even sent a pressure cooker for his designs. A letter continued: "Even a part Kickapoo had no complaints from his wife" but the remedy for a wife fighting her husband was to take up a hobby with her hubby. Russell Means got to the point: "Indians are better lovers, I have 12 kids to prove it." At the time of writing, the green corn ceremony went on. Corncobs bear a surprising number of offspring: you need only one, like the woman who asked if someone had been put on earth to devote herself to and she wondered "maybe I can make Burt Reynolds happy?" Tourist season being slow meant that plastic Indians cost \$13 on the reservation. Still hard to find one. As to the answer on feminists who have Indian men all wrong, I agree just didn't see enough stuff to put on top of a Turtle Clan Hard Hat model I wanted to make the next day. Indian men inspire.

UPBRAID

Annharte

Some New York whiteguy cops a free admission to an Indian museum on account he's married to an Indian wife. I look on their map worried my tribe is not official & find the Saulteaux stretch well marked even to the tundra. I thought we hung around cities. I sign in even though Bungi is also a recognized tribe. There is a special Bungi card which I've picked out to send to a friend who knows there's no such thing. "We can always be Bungis if our reserves won't have us" is my cheery note for the lost years. She will laugh just as if I said "rabbit choker." I would need patience before saying "dogeater" to anyone but in time I would. Wannabees take a lot of time to joke. We buffalo all their attempts to be our nichimooses.* Maybe in my last years I will even defy this black neighborhood which houses our heritage. I'll put on my beaded barrette grasping the gray hairs, hike into the big city with my flappy housedress. I will be taken for an old white lady on a vacation, having proven my blood by climbing to Machu Picchu for the view.

*Cree for sweetheart

CLASSIFIED

A.J. Verdelle

Bob and Janet Marshall lived alone at 65 Seaview Avenue, in Marlboro. They spent their days regularly: work Monday through Friday, dinner, and reading or television in the evenings, carefully selected entertainment on the weekends.

Occasionally, Bob attended church on Sunday. Janet didn't go with him because he left it up to her, and she chose not to go. Her preference, on the Sunday mornings he walked down to St. John's Episcopal Church, was to take the newspapers from where they were stacked in the kitchen by the wastebasket, sort out the classifieds, and sit down to hours of reading people's messages to each other:

You: the blond at the laundromat on Ragdale Ave with all the sexy underwear. Me: the redhead who helped you retrieve what you lost. I was stunned, that's why you got away. Write me please. Courier Box # 4298.

In her fantasies, Janet imagined she was called by a coded classified. And sometimes, she planned messages that she'd like to place. She hardly considered actually placing one, because her father thought they were sinister. He said they were exchanges between underworldly people.

So on Sunday mornings, Janet spent her time, privately, with the underworld, while her dad sang hymns with the parishioners, and held his hymn book straight.

"Daddy, aren't you lonely?" Janet asked, putting on her makeup. She leaned close to the mirror, over one sink in the bathroom.

Bob was shaving at the adjacent sink; he answered, "Why should I be lonely, honey? I have my baby, and my coworkers and the church members. No, I'm not lonely, sweetheart. Are you?"

"I just wish we had some friends. Some people to call, or go out with. Some people we knew to talk to, more than in passing." Finished with her face, she half-turned to look at him.

"Janny, you know we've always been quiet people, we've kept to ourselves, entertained ourselves. Even when you were younger and your mother was alive, we didn't have friends, we didn't have people over. Remember?"

"I did have friends, Daddy." She put her things in the medi-

one chest, and walked out of the bathroom; she left him looking in the mirror at where she had been. He had little nips of shaving cream all over his face.

Bob stood in the door of the bedroom. He looked like he was sinking: shoulders drooping down and forward, stomach settling around his belt, his chest hung like breasts started and dead too quick, and his hair sparse, aging him.

"Honey," he said, "we're not arguing about this again, are we?"

She smiled apologetically. "No, Daddy." She walked over to his open arms, and rubbed her face against his shoulder. He stroked her hair, which made her happy; after a moment, she turned fully away, for him to zip her dress. He did, looking at her firm back, pronounced shoulder blades, and the pretty little pink brassiere she wore.

They walked down to the train together, as they did every weekday morning, and they spoke vaguely to their neighbors.

One morning, Elizabeth Shea, who had gone to school with Janet, walked with them from where she lived on Chestnut. Janet and Bob stopped their conversation about the family of lions they had watched on TV the night before, and Janet asked Elizabeth about college.

"I like it a lot," Elizabeth told her. "The workload is really heavy, and I haven't gotten really adjusted to that yet. Most of my professors are OK, and the social atmosphere is terrific!"

Elizabeth bounced along, answering Janet's continuing questions. Bob dropped a pace behind.

Janet went to the *Courier* office on her lunch hour. She asked the Black security guard where she should go to place a paid personal ad.

"Fourth floor, turn right out of the elevator," he told her, barely looking up.

Janet removed the blue index card from her purse, and reread her ad. "Father/Daughter living together, having advanced and mutually agreeable relationship; mother deceased ten years; looking for people living similar lives. Please write, Courier Box # ———." While the clerk wrote the receipt for nine dollars, a one-month run, Sundays only, Janet mulled over the phrase "mother deceased ten years." Would it give them away? She didn't know anyone else whose mother had been dead for ten years, but then she didn't really know anyone else.

After the clerk handed her the receipt, she asked for the card back, and with her pen, blotted out the "ten years." Convinced that the words were sufficiently darkened, she handed the card back to the clerk and left the building.

Once back at her desk, Janet typed envelopes to the classified departments of the *New York Times* and the *Westport Sentinel*. For these, she left out the "ten years" and added a short sentence: "Travel no problem." She was sure she could convince her dad to go away with her if it was to meet people who would not disrupt their lives.

She mailed these ads the same day. On her way home on the train, she stood near the door and occasionally looked at herself in the window's dark reflection. She looked satisfied and animated.

That night, she made chicken and green beans for dinner. At the table, Bob asked her about her day, as he did every night at dinner. She told him it was an ordinary Tuesday.

Normally, she would discuss her boss, a young lawyer. She usually commented on how it felt to sit in an office all day with lightweight wires in your ears, listening to and rewinding and rewinding again the voice of a man who labored over his words who changed words and then whole sentences, and then sometimes retalked full paragraphs. She sometimes warned her father that she wasn't sure being a legal secretary was the answer for her, for life.

Bob usually reminded her that she shouldn't make hasty decisions, and then he would begin to tell her stories about when he and her mother, Marie, started out. Janet generally liked these stories, since she loved hearing about her mother. Talking about Marie Smith Marshall made the two of them feel very close.

This Tuesday night was not a night for closeness or storytelling. Janet had a secret—and it wasn't that she had no secrets—but it was a new one. She was full of anticipation about who might answer her ads, and she was already planning how she would discuss this with her father.

She excused herself from the table, without hearing her father's remark that Elizabeth seemed happy in school.

"Janny, did you hear me?" Bob asked.

"No, what did you say?" Janet came to the door of the kitchen and looked out at her father, who still sat at the table.

"I said there's a special on Virginia Woolf on TV tonight."

"Oh, will you tape it for me?" Janet asked. She walked over to him, picked up his plate, and gave him a peck on the front of his

balding head. He placed his knife, fork, and soiled napkin on the plate she held extended over the table; he was careful not to let them rattle.

"I'm kind of tired," Janet continued, on her way back into the kitchen, "so I'm going to wash my hair and then go to sleep."

"I'll tape it for you," Bob answered.

Janet heard the television click on in the living room.

Climbing into bed after she dried her hair, Janet flipped through *Newsweek* magazine. In only a few minutes, she considered, again, who might write to her, and how they might be living.

Janet was asleep when her father came to bed. He closed the magazine and put it back on her nightstand, turned off the light. After he brushed his teeth and donned his pajamas, he walked to his side of the bed without a light, and crawled in beside her.

Janet got two responses from the *Courier* ad in the first week. She was fidgety from the time she called the paper until lunch time when she went out and walked the five blocks to the newspaper office. The sun was shining and the air was brisk; she slung her bag casually across her shoulder, looked both ways before she crossed the streets against the lights, and felt her heavy, long ponytail bouncing against her back.

She looked around at the stores and the people; passers-by walked around her, since her path was unpredictable. Her mind was wild with fantasy. Who might have understood? Where would they live? Would she finally have someone to talk to of whom Bob would approve?

One letter was very thin, just a small piece of paper in a small envelope, white. The other letter was thick, off-white, professional-looking.

Back at her office, Janet read the thin one first. The handwriting was beautiful, neat, printed, tight. "Dear Seeking: If what you are saying is that you live with your father like his wife, I am sorry for you and for what he has done. I can't imagine how long you have lived like this but I guess it is a long time for him to have convinced you so completely. **FIND A WAY TO GET OUT, AND DON'T TELL HIM YOUR PLANS.** You won't have to lose him, but you will have to do this if you want any life for yourself. Be strong and **DO IT.** You can tell me if you need help. I've been there. Caroline. 576-4335 (I hope you will call.)"

Janet held the letter a moment and then stuffed it in her bag when her boss's voice started over the speakerphone.

"Janet, do you have the documents on the Jaycorp accident?"

She pulled the file from beside her typewriter and carried it into his office. He sat surrounded by papers, holding his dictaphone. "Thanks," he said, probably into the machine. She put the file on his desk and went back out the door.

In one motion, she picked up her handbag and the second letter from under the blotter. Taking the key to the women's room, she went down the hall, unlocked the door, and walked into a stall. Janet hung her handbag and the key up on the coat hook; she took out the short letter and read it again. It made her feel hot, and naked.

Janet turned the other envelope in her hand two or three times. It was typed, impersonal, anonymous. "Dear S.:" it read, "I hardly look at classified ads, but I try to stay on top of what influences my daughter, and so I read the ads she reads, after the pages end up in the garbage. She folds the papers very neatly, into page size, and she separates the pages she reads, so her tracks are easy to follow. It is almost as if she asks that I do this.

"My daughter and I understand each other; our life is pleasant and agreeable. My wife has been gone for almost eleven years and what has transpired between my daughter and me seemed natural after we were alone.

"I know my daughter has read your ad, and I am pretty sure she will answer you because you are talking about meeting people like you and that is exactly what my daughter wants us to do.

"She hasn't learned enough about the world yet to understand that privacy—and yes, silence—is often the best safety. I am still trying to teach her.

"I have had to consider carefully why I am responding to this ad. I realize that if you live a life like ours, you may feel lonely and isolated (as my daughter feels) but you also probably face the need to protect your happiness (as I do). I want to live as I live with my daughter—she is a miraculous extension of me, and of her mother and me—without interruption, without interference, indeed without eyes. And so if she answers you, that will be the last you hear from us. I cannot agree, and will not agree, to expose our lives, and consequently risk our safety.

"I do wish you the best in finding the company you seek, but I also caution you. Sometimes the best company is none. Sincerely, A Loving Father."

Janet knew her father's words, even before he described her habits. She had no idea he had been tracking her this way. She felt queasy, ill. She wanted to keep the letters and read them again, especially her father's. She knew that there was no safe place to keep them. She looked at her watch: one forty-eight. She needed to get back to work.

Her mouth was drawn up at the corners as she hastily tore both the letters into small pieces. She let the shards fall into the toilet bowl and noticed the purple ink from the handwritten letter melt into the water.

WEATHER REPORT

M. Corbin Gould

For Novotny

rain is not falling
it is being sucked from the sky
by night trains whose
long blown notes
shape dream and
cultivate the music of black
city streets
it trickles from the corners
of my closed eyes
is seeping from the mouth
you don't know
where fresh and salt
waters join
rain is not falling
it is building up the sea
between us
beyond the rows and rows
of watery lights
the skyscrapers' dark
perpendicular hold
there is the promise
of wet earth
the urgent horizontal
song of trains
anyone who sleeps here
can testify
to the waves
relentless hymn
lean toward me now
listen at my throat

LIVE GIRLS

Nikki Herbst

BC Street, Koza, Okinawa, 1971

She was always Okinawan
no matter the signs out front:
SEE LIVE GERMAN GIRLS!
TOPLESS GIRLS FROM PARIS!
"Shoda-shoda-shoda!" cried the cousins
working the door. No cover. "No cover!"

Inside, American Top 40,
swollen flight jackets, the yellow
thighs of waitresses, one-dollar
drinks and every half hour with no fanfare
a girl walking to the designated place
to begin her dance.

Her clothes were sparkly, feathered,
creased with use and sweat. No one
cried for her to throw them his way
when she removed them matter-of-factly.

Her breasts were like nickels in small leather bags
—she didn't seem to prize them.
Her movements had to do with memorization.
Sometimes she sat on the damp lap
of a blushing boy on R & R
her G-string fringed
with folded dollars.

When her song was over she picked up
her small stack of clothes and walked
out of the room, the click of her high heels
out of rhythm on the scarred linoleum.

CIRCULO PERFECTO

Yolanda Ingianna M.

Entré. Había muchas mujeres. De negro. Como rezando. Estaban sentadas. Mirándose. Las manos extrañamente puestas sobre las rodillas. No hablaban. Sin embargo, hacían algo. En círculo perfecto, detrás de paredes vacías. Todo había sido encalado como si fuera el verano y se viviese en una isla. No había olas, ni molinos, ni barcos. Más bien, parecía un entierro: el luto era rígido, la tristeza profunda, el silencio . . . Esperaban algo. ¡Cuánto habían esperado! Ahora, no quedaba sino rogar, implorar que se hiciese presente. Una gran ausencia llenaba todos los espacios vacíos.

Dos mujeres se inclinaron hacia sus tobillos. Se encontraron en un gesto común y comenzaron a hablar. Sus años no eran muchos; sus temores y arrugas se habían adelantado al tiempo. No quisieron levantarse. Parecían cosechar de sus propios humos los frutos de sus vidas. Ahora estaban paralizadas. Sólo el pensamiento divagaba como si fuese un fantasma. ¡Por qué no moverse! ¡Danzar!

“Que no lo hagas. Adivina en mi mirada de macho-cabrón lo que yo quiero que hagas. Interroga a la sin-respuesta de mi gesto estúpido. ¡NO TE MUEVAS! Nunca lo has podido hacer. Yo te compré en tu propia subasta cuando echabas al viento tus vuelos de joven discreta. “Me esclavizaste.” “Imperaste” sobre mi cada vez que sentí tu cuerpo debajo del mío. No pude sentirte de otra manera. Y, de tanto “sentirte,” me convertí en tu amo. No te dejaste nada. Sólo tu silencio. Tu mudo lenguaje de seguirme con la mirada, esperando símbolos de pitonisa. Procreamos desde el fondo de tu humedad. Insensible. Ritual en todos tus actos: habías aprendido bien mi propio breviario. Y ya no tenías nada que fuera tuyo. Inefablemente desapareciste de tu propia faz. Como un cuervo negro en la oscuridad de mi propia pequeñez. Ahora ya no me importa y, bien sabes, que no soy el que habla. Alguna vez pensaste escucharme. Pero había olvidado palabras y actos. Dominaba. Delirante, disfruté de la cólera del tirano.”

“Yo te veo. SE LO QUE ERES. Pero, yo me siento y no sé lo que soy. Puedo levantar mi cuerpo, palparlo como mío, mirarte en la tierra, allá abajo.”

Corriente subterránea de aguas profundas: emerjo. Siento el agua. Me inunda sin ahogarme. Surjo. Fluyo. Agito mis brazos. Extraña, melodiosa, la luz anima mi danza. Movimiento perpetuo junto a otros cuerpos eternos. Danzamos todas . . . Tiradas

CIRCULO PERFECTO

Yolanda Ingianna M.

Translated by Mariana Romo-Carmona

I went in. There were many women. In black. Like praying. They were seated. Looking at each other. Their hands strangely placed above their knees. They didn't speak. Nevertheless, they were doing something. In a perfect circle, behind empty walls. Everything had been whitewashed as though it were summer and they lived on an island. There weren't any waves, or windmills, or ships. What's more, it seemed like a funeral: the black was strict, the sadness deep, the silence . . . They were waiting for something. They had waited for so long! Now there was nothing left but to pray, beg for a presence. A great absence filled all the empty spaces.

Two women bent down toward their ankles. They met each other in a common gesture and began to speak. They weren't old in years; their fears and wrinkles had gotten ahead of them. They didn't want to rise. They seemed to harvest from their own humus the fruits of their lives. Now they were paralyzed. Only thoughts wander in as though they were ghosts. Why not move! Why not dance!

"Don't do it. Guess what I want you to do in my macho-cabron look. Question the lack of answers in my stupid gesture. DON'T MOVE! You've never been able to do it. I bought you in your own sale when you threw caution to the winds. You made me into a slave. You 'ruled' over me each time I felt your body below mine. I couldn't feel you any other way. And from so much 'feeling' you I became your master. You didn't keep anything. Only your silence. Your mute language of following me with your gaze, waiting for symbols like an oracle. We procreated from the depth of your acts: you had learned well my own epitome. And you had nothing left that was yours. Ineffably you disappeared from your own face. Like a black crow in the darkness of my own smallness. Now it doesn't matter, and you well know that I'm not the one who speaks. Once you thought about listening to me. But I had forgotten words and acts. I dominated. Delirious, I enjoyed the rage of the tyrant."

I see you. I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE. But I feel myself and do not know what I am. I can raise my body, touch it as mine, watch you in the earth, there below.

Underground current of deep waters: I emerge. Feel the water. It floods me without drowning me. I surge. I flow. I flail

en el suelo. Nuestros pies se tocan. Flexión hacia adelante. Nos miramos. Caminamos, arqueando las rodillas. Bramamos. Nuestras voces retumban como una avalancha. Hacia adelante, un gesto de nuestros brazos en alto, perfila nuestras siluetas. Para luego recogernos en tierra en el dulce rincón redondo de nuestro habitáculo. Se respira un buen aire. Conocido. A tientas, nuestras manos se han juntado, dejando rostros al descubierto. Nos reconocemos. No nos hemos perdido. Somos cada una. Puedo ver tu rostro, palpar tus párpados. Puedo nombrarte con tu boca, sin tragarte. Clara, clarísima en tu desnudez. Clarividente, puedo mirarte. Saber tu pasado. Predecir tu futuro, sin saberlo. Estar aquí como para que duermas todas tus noches insomnes. He cerrado las cortinas y arropado tu cuerpo. No puedo entrar. Recorro nuestras propias profundidades. Salir tampoco, pues no hay muros. Y, sin embargo, afuera quedaron los trajes negros. Nadie espera ni llora. Ya no hay círculo perfecto. Sólo redondez. Plenitud. Surjo. Fluyo. Emerjo. Descubro eternamente que soy mujer.”

my arms. Strange, melodious, the light animates my dance. Perpetual movement next to other eternal bodies. All of us dance . . . Lying on the floor. Our feet touch. We flex forward. We look at each other. We walk, bending our knees. We roar. Our voices resound like an avalanche. Our silhouettes stand out in profile by the gesture of our arms held high.

Later we gather on the ground in the sweet round crevice of our rooms. One can breathe a good air. Familiar. By touch, our hands have met uncovering our faces. We recognize each other. We haven't lost ourselves. We are each one. I can see your face, touch your eyelids. I can name you with your mouth without swallowing you. Clear, most clear in your nakedness. Clairvoyant, I can look at you. Know your past. Predict your future without knowing it. I can be here so that you can sleep every night of your insomnia. I've closed the curtains and covered your body. I cannot enter. I survey our own depths. Nor can I exit because there are no walls. And yet the black dresses stayed outside. No one waits or cries. There is no longer a perfect circle, only roundness. Plenitude. I surge. Flow. Emerge. Discover eternally that I am a woman.

FAMILY JEWEL HERETICS

Terri L. Jewell

Aunt Cat wore a jungle green fedora low on the brow,
a mother-of-pearl-handled pistol down in her bra.
Her painted portrait showed clear disposition
regarded hoodoo until she died at age 34.
Her sister Teresa wore glasses and a cross,
preached in the alley between Walnut and Oak
behind the same woman's house for 18 years.
Neither had ever been seen entertaining a man.
Her sister Annie warred considerably
best known for fist-fights with husbands and winning,
shot one son of a snake over her niece,
stabbed a prison guard because she felt like it that day.
Her sister Rosie disappeared from Louisville
last seen with a shaved head, a fob and chain,
blue sequined skirt and gloves, dancing
the hully gully where everybody could see her
looking hard at Peaches Sarina Johnson in 1923.

SLEEP IN UNFAMILIAR ARMS

Terri L. Jewell

I used red plaid for a pillow,
wrote this poem in the dark
 with my glasses off
 while noises dripped between the walls
 somewhere off to the left
and the floor felt hard
despite all he said
 and all I thought about it.
The pills that let me live with cats
churned in my belly,
 made me imagine phone cords slithering
 across hot, naked plains
 to strangle me from visions
 of long Mexican bones, yellow eyes
 deep as midwife hands in Donna, Texas.
I drew in cold air,
hoped for vacant rooms downstairs
to swallow up ghosts before they found
 I was thirty-five, in need of a night
 that hummed without stillborn babies crying
as I plait my hair,
as Alberto smoked to remember old women
skilled in augury for his white skin.
 All the angels have fled
 from arms folded on the floor.

WITH JADA
Karen E. Outen

You have a new watch, he says.

Yes. And you are not wearing your ring, I say.

My new lover, Clay, looks down at his finger—third one, left hand—as if seeing it for the first time. It is bare and flat brown.

It got heavy, he says.

This statement I won't even acknowledge.

It's the heat. My fingers are swelling, he says, and also my weight has changed so this ring doesn't fit so well.

I say: Yeah. I understand. My fingers swell in summer.

Besides, it's my ring, he says and pulls his hand back from the table roughly. I don't have to wear it.

He forgets I need no excuses. I am not his wife. He wrinkles his face and looks stern.

Clay is ruddy brown with muscular height, has a quivering fat bottom lip soft as a baby's. His hair is all black fuzzy curls. His nose was broken and healed straight, thin as the scar that crosses his eyebrow like a "T."

Clay is another woman's husband, a fact he told me immediately when we met two weeks ago. It does not matter. I want little from him. Want only to be here now on his boat, in the middle of both the bay and a bottle of Cruzan rum, golden clear like the color of his shirt.

I have told her about you, he says, leaning close. The choppy reflection of the water dances in his eyes. I ride his waves. He continues: I told Jada I met a writer who will inspire me. It's cool.

Who is she, this Jada? She is a woman who must know she has something, or that she has nothing to lose. So I lean back and drink him in: the gold of his shirt playing against the rich brown of his skin, the glow of the boat orange in the moonlight. The bay rocks us slowly. I fantasize I am in the womb.

I am not the marrying kind, he says. This is why I don't always wear my ring.

Why did you marry?

I always try to do what is expected, he says. I have practiced since I was a child. It's one of my better skills.

I nod: I used to practice deprivation. I thought it was a skill I'd need, knowing how to make sacrifices. In my house it was an admirable thing. My parents aspired to be like Christ.

Oh yes, yes, he says.

I started with small things, I tell him, like depriving myself of dessert, but as I became an adult I got better. I can hold my breath for almost ten minutes.

He does not know whether to laugh, curls his bottom lip down to keep it from sliding up into a grin. I laugh, say I was teasing.

No, it's probably true, he says. You're probably excellent at deprivation and that's why you went for a year and a half without a lover.

No. It wasn't that.

What, then? he nuzzles close to me. There was someone? What was his name?

There was no lover for me, I say.

Immediately I think of Sarah, who fixed me Jamaican blue mountain coffee and cheese eggs, bought me fresh bagels for breakfast. I would get the *Sunday Times* and we would spend the day curled up with it, plotting our futures from the smudgy black print, reading the want ads careful like a palm. Sarah, with her yellow-brown skin and reddish hair, settled for the ads for fur coats, and we dreamt of how one day I would wrap her in furs as easily as she wrapped me in quilts each night.

How lucky to have met Sarah, who spied on those who read her posted ad for a roommate. In the crowded market, she watched my slow, careful reading of the ad, as if I searched for her fingerprints on the torn slip of paper. From the day we met we were enthralled: I, by the performance of Sarah's life, a rising whirlwind whose trail I followed; and Sarah, by how I carried myself like a stranger.

Before Sarah, I knew little of women except for the bits and pieces of myself I discovered, came across slyly as if they were dark threads on a marble floor.

You think deeply, he says. You are like Jada.

What is Jada like?

She is all colors, he sighs. She wears purple, red, blue that dance across her brown skin. And silk scarves across her hips, her waist.

Here, he says. He shows me a picture from his wallet that is all shadows and I cannot see Jada's face. She is tall and thin, with the long legs I have always wanted, rather than my short legs and rounded hips. I am potato-bag plain and often feel just as dusty dry.

In the picture of Jada, even in the shadows, there are flecks of light on her skin, as if she wore jewelled limbs. Jada is brilliance. I stare at her a long time, can make out the strong lines of her

broad shoulders, the upward tilt of her head. I read her picture like a novel, read the chapters hidden there in her shadows. I trace her form with my finger.

Tell me about her, I ask as he takes off my shoes, massages my toes. Tell me some small thing she is to you.

He looks out at the lights reflecting on the bay, then stares at the city's lights.

He smiles slightly: when she laughs, it is sweeping. It stirs me. Yes, yes, I say.

I have felt that in a woman's laugh.

When he undresses me I am shy. He teases.

You are beautiful, he whispers, beauty hiding beneath that pale dress. You should burn it, wear orange like fire next to your butter-brown skin.

I blush in his arms, like the beautiful baby he says I am, wrap myself in him.

Writer-woman is shy, he teases. Yes, yes, I say.

When I am alone I picture Jada, think of buying clothes that are fire, dressing myself like a queen, like Sarah did. At night Sarah and I curled up, our heads at either end of the bed, rubbing each other's stomachs with our toes. I could not sleep without her tight against me, her toes against my navel, her small slender feet smooth as pearls.

Only Sarah saw me, as if she cut through my scabby, scaly layers to find my lava core. Most people see only that beauty has left me like a page unwritten.

You hide it, Gypsy, Sarah told me. You must think of yourself like a meteor in this world. Too many think they are only candles.

Sometimes I believed her, sometimes felt myself glow, cradled against her. Before Sarah there was no one to speak to me of beauty: my father and brother, my only ones, saw me as I saw myself. In school I was invisible, looking always down, peeking at the cliques of women like beautiful butterflies in spring hovering near each other. I remember their laughter. I listened for it alone at night as they passed our house always in groups, listened till their voices were low and sweet, their cadence lilting and dreamy on the air.

She knows about you, he tells me the next time we are together. He rubs my naked belly.

So you said.

No, no. She knows we make love. She doesn't know your name but she knows all about you.

About me? All?

She says that I come home from you needy. Like whatever I give to you she must replace in me.

A shiver passes down my spine. I am transparent and deep as a pitcher.

She thinks you must be alone in life.

She must hate me. For borrowing you.

No, he says. Why should she care so much? I am still there for her. When she wants. Besides she is never alone. She has people to hold her. And when she doesn't she holds herself. He snuggles close. You need me, he mumbles.

I turn my face away from him.

Basically, I'm a free spirit, Clay says. I want to write poems and live in the mountains. But my wife doesn't understand. He inches close, nuzzles his soft hair against me for sympathy.

I am not cut out to be a mistress. I cannot seem to side against Jada, although clearly this is my cue.

He sighs: She has her world, has five sisters and when I am gone they are all together, piled up in my bed like sardines, laughing, touching, sharing secrets.

I am stirred, can hear their laughter. Jada, Jada, I smile to myself. I long for the cradle of her and her sisters.

He says: They raise each other's children, cook each other's meals. I keep forgetting I don't have any kids, there are so many there who look alike. My wife has no sense of my needs.

What are your needs? I ask dutifully.

Just... well... this was our life when we were younger, when it was all new: we lived on the top floor in this old building squeezed between two stores and at night we ran to the roof, took our chairs and watched the lights on the hills like television, watched them one by one go out until Jada was all that shone. I rubbed her shoulders, powdered her neck, bought rosy perfume to dress her in. She let me take care of her then, not now. Now she is herself. She was once mine.

It's evolution, I say.

It's sad, he says and curls into me. You are so easy, so safe.

We make love and then sleep hard against each other. I dream my covers are the arms of a woman, my pillow her lap. When I awake my arms are folded tight against me. I imagine light playing against my arms as if against jewels.

When I am alone now I shop for brilliance, try on clothes with fire, buy cobalt blue, consider royal red.

For your honey? the saleswoman asks. She points swollen

pink fingers at me, and I blush. I remember watching Sarah shop for clothes, free-flowing Indian cotton and kente cloth. When she moved away last January—changed jobs, cities, lives—there was no warmth in that fifth-floor walk up, the closeness of Sarah gone.

I would come home and lie on my bed for warmth, shield myself with the sweaters piled there like feathers. I pulled the sweaters tight to me, leaving no airholes, pulled them to my chest, then my stomach, balled up like a high, firm belly. I stroked this belly and imagined movement when I tensed my stomach muscles, a life stirring within myself. I could have climbed the bare walls with loneliness and labor pains, trying to give birth to myself, wanting to recreate me full and strong.

I do not see Clay for weeks and I do not wonder, barely think of him, and when I do it is never in words. I see his face flash by when I am on the bus to work, flash by quickly like a sign on the highway. But I do think of Jada. I imagine seeing her everywhere. I watch women, guessing which ones are worthy of her: the way they hold their heads; the colors that burn against their skin; and their arms, strong arms, lithe and limber, that can hold or be held. I practice holding myself, first softly, lightly touching me as if a stranger. Then more strongly, remembering the feel of a woman's arms.

When Clay calls I hesitate, wonder if it is worth it to go meet him. He brings me azaleas so bright the colors hurt my eyes. Perhaps this is the kiss-off.

I wrote you a letter, he says. About this—us—how I feel about it. I didn't mail it.

I sigh. He has decided to be faithful to Jada. He will say he cannot do this to her. I have been with other married men, but all were married to faceless women. I saw them all as myself. Only Jada has been real to me.

So tell me, I say, what was in the letter?

Well, it's just that I feel really good about us. You bring me life as easily as if it were water from a tap. You listen, you understand. You have such a sense of my needs.

I look away from him, away from his ashy hands reaching out to me, away from the jagged scar across his eyebrow.

It is good you feel so good, I say.

It is good to be needed.

When does Jada need you? I ask, whispering her name, which sparks and spins on the air.

When she does not know it. He kisses my wrists, then smiles.

She says after you now I am less empty. She says I must be good for you.

Oh, I laugh, excited and warm. Good for me?

Yes. She says I should wonder if you have another lover.

I laugh again.

Do you? Is there someone for you?

No, I smile, and pull him to me.

I dream of Jada, her arms outstretched around me like wings. I feel expectant and full. Her laughter sweeps over me heady and sweet as lilac. I open my eyes and search hard for her. But she is gone. The laughter is my own.

I meet him next time in daylight on a crowded street. My hair is full and soft against my neck. When he comes he whisks me away to a hotel room, close and dark.

How are you, he asks. You are different, Gypsy.

Am I? I look at him blankly, stare into him like he was hollow wood. He burns quickly, pulls me to him, and makes love as I count the faint, dark brown freckles on his cheek.

Do you enjoy me, he asks later, as much as I enjoy you?

Yes, I say, as he holds me lightly, my back cradled against him.

I cannot always tell lately, cannot find your passion. I do try though, he insists. You must tell me, tell me how to soothe you.

Yes, yes, I say and close my eyes to sleep.

It's important, he whispers warm, wet in my ear like a puppy, important. You give me—

Life? I say. Isn't that what you said?

Life, life, he mumbles. There is life in my house. In Jada. I've been watching her balloon up, wondering when she will tell me. It's been months and she says nothing.

She's pregnant? I ask, feel a tremor in me.

Yes. Jada will have a baby, he says. At home. In her bed with all the quilts. And her sisters will surround her. Come closer, he whines and takes me in like an octopus. You give me life, he repeats.

But it is Jada he feels, Jada who gives life. She will bring a healthy girl-child into her circle, a child who could as easily be me, as if mine were the life carried to her by Clay, mine to be recreated and born. I once thought life to be straight, parallel lines. But we are all intertwined, all circles without ends. I am absorbed, pulled into the circle, the life I carry now my own.

He touches me, moans against me, and cries out.

But I am with Jada now.

MICKEY MOUSE WAS A SCORPIO

Sapphire

the night was no light,
black.
he came in
light cracking the night
stuck in the doorway
of dark
deep hard.
my father,
lean in blue & white pajamas,
wild ignorant farm boy
throws my pajama bottoms
to the pigs,
grabs me by my little skinny knees
& drives his dick in.
i scream
i scream
no one hears except my sister who becomes no one cause
 she didnt hear
years later i become no one cause it didnt happen
but it's night now & it's happening
a train with razor blades for wheels is riding thru
 my asshole
iron hands saw at my knees
i'm gonna die
i'm gonna die
blood, semen & shit gush from my cracked ass
my mother comes in when it's over to wash me
glad not to be the one,
she is glad glad
satanic glad.
she brings her hand up from between my legs & smears
 shit, semen & blood over my mouth, "Now she'll
 know what it's like to have a baby," she says.
drugged night so black
you could paint with it,
no moon no stars no god.
the night stick smashes my spinal cord
my legs,
bleeding bandages of light,

fall off,
let me go
let me go
dont tell me about god & good little girls
i want to live
i want to live
my cells crack open like glass
the bells are tolling for me
my name disintegrates in the night
God's a lie
this cant be true
M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E
mother is house (we have a nice house, California ranch style)
brother is the nail we drive thru your heart
do it
do it to her brother
M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-EEE
mouse is in the house
running thru
my vagina
& out my nose.
saucer eyed buck tooth child
Betsy Wetsy
brown bones
electrocuted.
Tiny Tears
that never dry
hop scotch
hickory dock
the mouse fell off
the clock,
the farmer takes Jill down the well
& all the king's horses
& all the king's men
cant put that little girl together again.
crooked man
crooked man
pumpkin eater
childhood stealer.

HIV INFECTION: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DISEASE IN WOMEN

Diane Palladino

AIDS/HIV and the Global Community

It is important to understand the impact of the AIDS/HIV epidemic on women in its global context in order to appreciate the extent to which women have been simultaneously ignored as victims of the virus and punished as transmitters of it to those members of society whose lives are more valued. As of March 1989, AIDS surveillance data collected by the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Program on AIDS indicate that AIDS has been reported as occurring in all countries and territories worldwide. The total cases in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania are estimated at 450,000. This figure represents only the number of reported AIDS cases and does not include the numbers of HIV-infected people. To understand the magnitude of the HIV epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States suggests that the number of AIDS cases be multiplied by fifteen; while this formula produces a very conservative estimate of HIV infection, the projection would still be a total of 7,750,000 HIV-infected people in the world. That these data are incomplete because of general underrecognition and underreporting of AIDS/HIV, and that a significant increasing trend is seen in all regions, indicate that the AIDS/HIV epidemic has long-term and catastrophic implications on a global level.

Since the inception and identification of the disease in 1981, the health and social service infrastructures of every region of the world have been significantly altered. Additionally, the number of deaths occurring in women of reproductive age, of children, and of people who are in the most productive years of their lives (ages 24–40) will have great impact on the economic futures of both developed and developing countries. One would expect that the global nature of this disease, with its far-reaching

This paper is based on a presentation made in September 1989 at "Confronting the Crisis," the first conference on women and AIDS in New Jersey, sponsored by the New Jersey Women and AIDS Network. The text is presented as a spoken document.

impact on an interdependent world, would call forth an immediate and emergency response. Clearly, this has not been the case. Instead, we see the countries of the Americas, Europe, the Soviet Union, Asia, and the Pacific Rim attempting to place the "blame" for the epidemic on Africa and the Caribbean. Also, each area has sought to point the finger at specific sub-groups of people within its own area as carriers of the infection. Because HIV was initially manifested as a disease of certain social sub-populations, AIDS and HIV infection have taken on the social responses directed toward these specific groups. The result has been a morass of accusations, punitive public policy, and criminalization directed at the most marginalized groups within nations.

As the disease became evident in groups such as intravenous drug users (IVDUs), prostitutes, and poor and already disenfranchised minority populations, the second-class status already accorded to these groups was extended to include the public response to the presence of AIDS and HIV infection within them. In the United States, for example, the inherent heterosexism of that society first defined the disease as Gay Related Immune Disease (GRID), and it became associated with the gay male "lifestyle." This preoccupation with gay men led to three wasted years of research on the "gay lifestyle" and to the denial of the existence of the disease in children, women, and other people.

AIDS/HIV and Women

Women, who comprise the fastest growing group of individuals now being infected with HIV both in the United States and internationally, have long been ignored as victims of the virus. Instead, they have been universally targeted as being responsible for the transmission of HIV infection to the larger population of men and infants. The sex, race, and class biases already present in society have come together in a complex interaction with HIV disease to produce a punitive response to women who become infected. The results of misdefining the problem as AIDS/HIV *and* women, whereby women become projected as transmitters of the disease, rather than as AIDS/HIV *in* women, whereby women are perceived as individuals who experience the disease *in* their bodies, are illustrated by the existing realities that pertain to infected women and the public response that seeks only to penalize women.

We know that because of the lack of research on women and female-specific symptoms of HIV, women are twice as likely to

be misdiagnosed for HIV as men, and that in the United States *women die three times faster than men after an AIDS diagnosis*. We also know that on a global level, women with HIV infection have experienced invisibility. The World Health Organization estimates the following:

By the end of the 1980s, close to two million women were HIV-infected. Over eighty percent of these women were in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 1989, up to forty percent of women between the ages of thirty and thirty-four in key central African cities were found to be HIV-infected.

In the 1990s, an additional two million women worldwide will be HIV infected.

By the end of the 1980s, AIDS had killed over 200,000 women and children *whose conditions were largely undetected*.

Given these numbers, we are still expected to accept the conventional view put forth by the AIDS community—that is, the researchers, the government officials, and those in charge of defining this catastrophe—that AIDS has had little impact on women's bodies. They would have us believe that the only way to put an end to this epidemic is to control women's bodies especially those functions that have to do with reproduction and sex. And they have gone much further than simply putting forth propaganda. They have sought to pass laws that criminalize the transmission of HIV from mother to fetus, criminalize the behavior of and enforce HIV testing on female prostitutes but not their male customers, and allow the quarantine of women who are HIV positive and still want to have sex, even when that sex is safe; and they have sought to pass laws requiring the testing of all pregnant women. Many of these attempts at control have been successful; there are such laws in several regions and countries.

New Jersey as a Microcosm of the Condition of HIV-Infected Women

The AIDS/HIV epidemic in New Jersey has been unique from its inception. While in other states gay males have been the largest group infected with and affected by AIDS/HIV, this was never the case in New Jersey. Intravenous drug users initially comprised the largest group of HIV-infected people, and women made up twenty-one percent of the diagnosed AIDS cases in the state, giving New Jersey the largest percentage of women with AIDS cases in the country. These women were either IVDU's

themselves or the sex partners of IVDU males. I believe that what happens to and for HIV-infected women in New Jersey can be used as a barometer for the future of women throughout the country. I believe that what we do for and what we allow to happen to HIV-infected women in New Jersey will be the future for all women in the country.

In case I have not made it clear so far, this analysis is based on the primary assumption that in the United States there have evolved particular relationships between HIV infection and women, and these relationships have resulted in the paradoxical situation for women of being both invisible and publicly persecuted. On one hand, women are invisible as people at risk for infection with the virus and deserving the medical, psychosocial, and legal interventions required by any at-risk group. On the other hand, women are persecuted because they are perceived as a threat to the public health by their ability to transmit the virus to newborn children through pregnancy, and to mainstream heterosexual society as prostitutes and purveyors of sex. I hope to illustrate this paradox in both the neglect of HIV-positive women by medical and social institutions and the penalties outlined in pending legislation in New Jersey.

The Invisibility of Women

The epidemiology of AIDS, and thus HIV infection, has had disastrous implications for addressing the disease in women. The United States was the first country to identify the heterosexual transmission of AIDS. This occurred in the Bronx, New York in 1982. Heterosexual transmission of AIDS among large numbers of people in Africa was identified later. Even when we had the proof of heterosexual transmission at home, and confirmation from African countries, the data used by the CDC to construct a working definition of AIDS continued to be based primarily on symptoms presented by gay men, who constituted one segment of those infected in the initial stages of the epidemic; by definition this cohort was male. It was also primarily white and from the middle and upper socioeconomic classes. Using this group as a database immediately introduced sex, race, and class biases into the definition of AIDS. As a result of this limited epidemiological reporting, women's symptoms and physiological responses to the disease were excluded from the initial definition of AIDS and associated opportunistic infections. Since an individual has to present at least one opportunistic infection to be diagnosed with AIDS, this exclusion has had the effect of under-

reporting the number of women infected.

Even when we examine the revised 1987 definition, we discover that the opportunistic infections included are either found primarily in men or in individuals regardless of biological sex, but none of the conditions or complexes is specific to women. The exclusion of female-associated symptoms continues even though there is clinical evidence that HIV does present itself in symptoms specific to women. As recently as June 1988, underreporting of AIDS deaths in women has been attributed to the fact that many women do not live long enough, once infected, to develop full-blown AIDS; their first symptoms are often gynecological problems "that are not included in the CDC definition of AIDS, and that many physicians do not link to AIDS" (*Insider*, 1988).

The conclusions of a six-year study of women with AIDS at Brown University suggest that there may be gender-related likelihood of acquiring certain opportunistic infections with AIDS. Doctors concluded that "since women account for more than ten percent of North Americans with HIV infection, it is no longer reasonable to assume that therapeutic approaches derived from observing men should be applied without modification to HIV-infected women" (*Insider*, 1988). It took 9,800 women with AIDS and another 147,000 women infected with HIV to convince some medical researchers that women needed to be included in AIDS research.

It is interesting to note that while women with AIDS (female IV drug users and sex partners of IVDUs) were included in the official counts of AIDS cases as early as 1983, the social concern centered around prostitutes who were seen as spreading the disease to white heterosexual men. The obsession with prostitutes continues to the present, *even though there has not been one documented case in the United States of HIV transmission from a female prostitute to her client* (Alexander, 1987). The effect of AIDS on at-risk women was never seriously discussed in either the medical or social context of the epidemic.

Infection in women became an issue only when it was discovered that newborn babies exhibited symptoms of HIV infection at birth. This led researchers to look to the mothers of these babies as the *source of transmission of the infection*. Thus, attention was paid to women as individuals who had the reproductive ability to produce infected infants. A common attitude toward at-risk women is illustrated by Guinan and Hardy (1987) in the following:

. . . the occurrence of AIDS in women is of special interest for several reasons. Women with AIDS or with . . . [HIV] infection are the major sources of infection of infants with AIDS, and the second most common route of transmission of AIDS to women is through heterosexual intercourse. Trends in AIDS in women may help to determine future trends for pediatric cases and may be a good surrogate for monitoring heterosexual transmission of infection.

When this statement was made in 1986, there were 729 women diagnosed with AIDS in the United States alone and, by extrapolation, approximately 25,500 HIV-infected women. According to Guinan and Hardy, however, these women are noteworthy only insofar as they are vectors of infection for pediatric AIDS or as a barometer for the heterosexual transmission of the infection.

The fact that the majority of women diagnosed with AIDS and HIV infection are poor women and women of color increases their invisibility. The complex interrelations of racism, classism, and sexism have led to suggestions for dehumanizing responses to women with HIV infection. A recent article in the *New York Times* raised the consideration of sterilization for noncompliant addictive women to prevent them from bearing "sick" infants.

*Legislative Penalties in the State of New Jersey:
Regulation, Criminalization, and Routine Testing**

In New Jersey, intravenous drug users and their sex partners have been at the highest risk for HIV infection, and for this reason New Jersey has had *the highest percentage of women with AIDS in the country (twenty-one percent compared to nine percent nationally)*. As a result of the level of HIV infection among women, New Jersey also ranks second in the country in the number of pediatric AIDS cases. This has led to a focus on HIV infection in infants and, by extension, on the sexual and reproductive rights of women. I will examine some of the legislative responses of the state of New Jersey to the issue of women with HIV/AIDS in order to illustrate how this epidemic has provided another route, in the guise of protecting the public health, to constrict and to control women's sexuality and women's reproductive power.

The AIDS/HIV epidemic underscores the fragility and inade-

*Unfortunately, all of these bills have been reintroduced in the New Jersey Legislature for the 1990 session. The bills have been assigned new numbers, and in some cases, have new legislative sponsors.

quacy of the health care and social service systems. These systems, long overburdened and underfunded, are now unable to bear the additional stress placed on them by the AIDS/HIV epidemic. Rather than address these long-standing issues, the state and federal governments are attempting to find quick fix solutions that do not require additional funding. Cause and effect have been turned upside down, with the result that the HIV epidemic, and those people infected with HIV, *are perceived as the cause of the system's breakdown.*

There are approximately forty-four bills concerned in some way with AIDS/HIV pending in the New Jersey legislature. I will consider three categories within this mass of legislation: regulation of prostitution; criminalization of transmission of HIV infection; and, a new trend in HIV monitoring, routine nonanonymous testing of all pregnant women and newborns. The bills contained under these categories all affect women, whether that intention is openly or covertly acknowledged.

Regulation of Prostitution. While the numbers of women who contracted AIDS/HIV heterosexually were downplayed since the inception of the epidemic, prostitutes have been targeted as a "window of transmission" into the heterosexual community. There has been little proof to support the allegations of transmission through prostitutes, but the myth of women as infectors and the portrayal of prostitutes as diseased women persists, even though it has been reported that, "AIDS testing of female prostitutes and their customers indicated . . . scant evidence of female prostitutes passing the AIDS virus to their customers" (*New York Times*, Sep. 20, 1988). As Priscilla Alexander has succinctly pointed out, "If prostitutes were effectively transmitting the AIDS virus to their customers, there would be far more cases of white, heterosexual males diagnosed with AIDS than are reflected in the current statistics" (Alexander, 1987). Despite the evidence, the movement to indict prostitutes in the AIDS/HIV epidemic continues.

Three bills were introduced in the New Jersey legislature as of January 1988. Two do not mention AIDS/HIV but call for the upgrading of the offense of prostitution from petty disorderly to disorderly person. These bills were combined and passed in the New Jersey Assembly on May 16, 1988 by a vote of seventy-three to one. Most prostitutes affected by this upgrade are street prostitutes, who comprise approximately twelve percent of the population of prostitutes. Many of them will not have the one thousand dollars to pay the fine, so they will end up with jail

time. Most street prostitutes are poor, and many are women of color.

Senate bill 1963 goes further than the assembly bills. According to the language in the bill,

Prostitution is a crime of the fourth degree. At the *discretion of the court* . . . a person convicted of prostitution may be required to submit to an approved serological test for antibodies to . . . [AIDS] [*my italics*].

This response harks back to the earlier epidemics of syphilis and gonorrhea in the United States, when prostitutes were also targeted as "pools of infection." During the course of World War I, 20,000 female prostitutes were quarantined in camps in the United States because they were suspected of spreading venereal disease (Brandt, 1988). This quarantine did not curtail the spread of venereal disease, and cases increased exponentially despite the incarceration of the women.

Criminalization of Transmission of HIV Infection. Assembly bill A.966 is an amendment to an existing and unenforceable public law that makes committing an act of sexual penetration while knowingly infected with a venereal disease as third-degree crime. One goal of the bill is to add AIDS to the category of venereal diseases so covered. However, there is a section contained in the bill that is much more subtle and affects women directly. It reads: "Any person who knowingly transmits . . . [HIV] . . . is guilty of a crime of the third degree." There is no mention of penetration or, for that matter, of sexual intercourse, which is already covered by the first section of the bill.

I argue that this section is directed at women who know they are HIV positive and who may elect to become pregnant. If an infected woman decides to become pregnant, and her baby is born infected, she may be charged, under the provisions of this bill, with criminal transmission of HIV. Since there is no test for HIV infection *in utero*, the baby would have to be born and be proven infected prior to charges being pressed. The intimidation inherent in this may well be enough to discourage infected women from becoming pregnant, a stated goal of most federal and state programs directed to women and HIV infection.

Routine Nonanonymous Testing of All Pregnant Women and Newborns. Since New Jersey is now second in the country in number of pediatric AIDS cases, the issue of HIV infection in newborns has been raised to crisis proportions. In order to deal with this

crisis, a bill for the routine and nonanonymous testing of all pregnant women and newborns in the state of New Jersey was introduced into the state assembly.

In effect, this bill mandates that all pregnant women and newborns in the state be tested for the presence of the HIV virus unless the individual objects in writing. However, there is no provision for mandatory informed consent before the test takes place. The lack of mandated informed consent by all physicians insures that the majority of women will not be aware that routine testing for her and her infant now includes HIV testing. Indeed, she may not be aware of this until the results are known and all identifying information is delivered to the State Department of Health.

We must question the purpose of this legislation. Clearly it is not to provide either the pregnant woman or the newborn with medical intervention. As of now, there is no medically sanctioned treatment for pregnant women. Drugs such as aerosolized pentamidine and AZT are contraindicated for pregnant women and asymptomatic newborns. There is no provision in the legislation for social support or medical follow-up for either the women or newborns found to be HIV positive.

It is essential to ask who benefits by the testing of all childbearing women. We have already seen that it is not the pregnant women or the newborns. The state would benefit if testing of all women who bear children is the ultimate goal of the government. The state would benefit if, by knowing their serostatus, it chose to enforce sterilization or abortion in cases of HIV-positive women. If the state makes this choice, it would benefit by limiting the number of sick women and children for whom it had to provide care. The state and the federal governments would balance the budget by cutting medical and social programs for poor women and children. The forced sterilization of women, especially poor women and women of color, has occurred in this country before and can easily occur again in the guise of protecting the public health.

Summary

In the case of HIV infection, there is a perceived threat to the larger society by women and their unborn children. This threat is coupled with society's fear of women's sexuality and ability to reproduce—both areas that have been under attack especially within the last nine years. Society's dual response to this threat has been to make women invisible as recipients of the disease, resulting in lack of services for them, and, at the same time, to

make them responsible for transmission of the disease and punish them as a threat to the public health. The critical issues of women's human rights and women's position during and after this medical crisis must be responded to by all of us now.

Sources

Alexander, Priscilla. *Summary of Data on Prostitutes and AIDS*. National Task Force on Prostitution, August 1987.

Brandt, Allan M. "AIDS in Historical Perspective: Four Lessons from the History of Sexually Transmitted Diseases." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 78, no. 4 (April 1988).

Centers for Disease Control. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, March 1989: 1-16.

Chin, James. *Current Dimensions of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Women and Children*. Prepared for the International Conference on the Implications of AIDS for Mothers and Children, Paris, France, November 27-30, 1989.

Guinan, Mary E. and Ann Hardy. "Epidemiology of AIDS in Women in the United States." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 257, no. 15 (April 1987): 2039-2042.

Global Program on AIDS. *Progress Report*, no. 5 (May 1989): 2.

Insider (newspaper of Planned Parenthood Federation of America), August 1988.

New York Times, Sep. 20, 1988.

THE BONDS OF SISTERHOOD

Kathryn Daniels

The One You Call Sister: New Women's Fiction, edited by Paula Martinac, Cleis Press, Pittsburgh and San Francisco, 1989, 216 pp, \$9.95 paper, \$24.95 cloth

The One You Call Sister, a recently published anthology of lively feminist fiction, explores and celebrates the sister bond in all its rich complexity and diversity. "Sisters," writes editor Paula Martinac, "are our first female friends and allies." Growing up in the same household, sisters share not only a family, a cultural milieu, and a unique set of experiences and memories, they also share second-class status as members of at least one oppressed group. How all these factors converge and get played out in the sister relationship forms the basis for many of the fifteen stories included in this collection.

To the editor's credit, a wide variety of sisters are portrayed, ranging in age, class, sexual preference, and ethnicity. Sisters of Chinese, Mexican, Jewish, and Jamaican ancestry (to name just a few) are represented. Cultural heritage and class background particular to each story lend special ambiance, and the significance of sharing these with a sister often emerges as an underlying theme.

When the sisters in Fae Myenne Ng's powerful "A Red Sweater" decide on a restaurant for their annual birthday dinner together, they choose a trendy place with a view where

Everything seems foreign. It feels like we should be different people. But each time I look up, she's the same. I know this person. She's my sister. We sat together with chopsticks, mismatched bowls, braids, and braces, across the formica tabletop. (p. 28)

Lisa, the eldest sister, still lives at home with her parents, immigrants whose unhappy marriage was arranged for them in their homeland, China. For the youngest sister (the narrator), Lisa is her last link to the parents who rejected her, which results in an uneasy alliance. Each sister envies the other's choices.

Once a year, I come in, asking questions. She's got the answers, but she hates them. For me, I think she's got the peace of heart, knowing that she's done her share for Mah and Deh. She thinks I have the peace, not caring. Her life is full of questions, but I have no answers. (p. 28)

The absence of the middle sister, "Number Two, . . . who jumped off the M floor three years ago" (p. 26), is conspicuous. One can almost feel her ghost hovering over the table.

When our middle sister jumped, she kind of closed the world. The family just fell apart. I left. (p. 27)

The difficulty of immigrant life and the high price of assimilation are just two of the themes Ng weaves into this lyrical piece, in which echoes of the Chinese language's rhythms can be heard. The sisters' parents came to America expecting "gold and good fortune" (p. 27) but found hardship instead, which only served to exacerbate their marital problems. Their pent-up frustrations were often vented on each other, and their daughters were called upon to play the role of rescuers:

How many times did my sister and I have to hold them apart? The flat *ting!* sound as the blade slapped onto the linoleum floor, the wooden handle of the knife slamming into the corner. Was it she or I who screamed, repeating all of their ugliest words? Who shook them? Who made them stop? (p. 34)

The legacy of the past still exerts its painful grasp on the present, leaving the sisters estranged, it seems, from each other and possibly even themselves. The love, however, remains. In an extravagant gesture, the narrator buys her sister a beautiful red sweater costing two weeks' pay:

Red. For Good Luck. Of course. This fire-red sweater is swollen with good cheer. Wear it, I will tell her. You'll look lucky. (p. 26)

The "dark secret at the heart" of the Jewish family in Jean Roberta's "Secrets of an Unkosher Home" is that

Debbie and I, the grown children, have a long history of shocking, addictive, incestuous violence. She has threatened me with knives; I've thrown her on the floor and kicked her. (p. 36)

Though both sisters consider themselves feminists,

Ours was not the sisterhood of modern feminism. Ours was the tribal sisterhood of Leah and Rachel. (p. 36)

Debbie and Miriam are, like many sisters, expert at knowing which buttons to push to infuriate the other. Even the fact that Debbie has been abroad for a few years doesn't save them from fighting on their first visit.

"Do you ever think about anyone but yourself?" I interrupted.
"Have you wondered how I feel? All your life you've had an

audience." My voice was rising. . . .

My sister was wreathed in agitated smoke. "I've never asked you for anything!" she shrieked. "You're the reason I had to get the hell out of here!"

Debbie, just returned from a stint on a kibbutz in Israel, plays the role of worldly-wise bohemian while her sister Miriam leads a more settled—but no less adventurous—existence, living as she does with her woman lover and raising their child conceived by artificial insemination. After their fight, Miriam writes Debbie a courageously honest letter in an effort to begin bridging the distance:

We both call ourselves feminists (yes I know you don't believe I fit that label) but what does that mean if we hate the only woman we can call "sister" in the most literal sense? (p. 44)

Thankfully, the stories in this collection don't offer easy answers to complicated problems. In fact, this story stands alone in the way its characters confront conflict head-on and make an active effort to reconcile differences and release long-standing anger. It ends on a hopeful—and challenging—note.

Paula Martinac's skillful "Kay, Grown Up" nicely illuminates the way parental expectations can affect the directions sisters take. When Robbie, teen-age Kay's little sister, asks her mother what Kay spends so much time writing about, she is told, "Kay writes silly stories with sad endings," and, her mother predicts,

"Pretty soon Kay'll forget all about writing stories. She's so pretty, the boys have always paid her so much attention. She'll get married young, just like I did." (p. 19)

After graduating high school, Kay is sent to business school because

It was understood that she'd get married soon and that four years of college would be a waste. My parents had to have money for Bub (*the middle daughter—Reviewer's note*), the brain, to go to college. (p. 22)

Robbie, originally inspired by her sister, eventually takes up writing stories, but her mother receives her efforts quite differently than Kay's: "She a little brain, isn't she, just like Bub,' she'd say to my father" (p. 23).

When Kay's unplanned pregnancy propels her to an early marriage, it seems inevitable, the fulfillment of destiny—which it is, of course, according to her mother's master plan. The reader

is left to consider the extent to which parents influence—and limit—their daughters' capabilities, and unknowingly foster competition.

The story concludes with Kay's boxed writing being discovered by her mother who is busily converting Kay's former bedroom into a den. Asked if she wants the stories, Kay can barely recall writing them and refuses to take them, offering them to Robbie who accepts. The forgotten box under the bed serves as an apt metaphor for the creative side of Kay which she has apparently relegated to the realm of childhood in exchange for the traditional feminine role. Robbie, who first learned from her sister that writing can be work, assumes the responsibility for her sister's stories and will safeguard the memory of her far-reaching imagination.

The women in Shay Youngbloods' "Funny Women" extend the definition of sisterhood beyond all conventional boundaries. Told in exquisite southern Black dialect, "Funny Women" is largely the story of Miss Tom, who is "tall and handsome like a man" but has "a woman's eyes, dark, black eyes that held woman secrets, eyes that had seen miracles and reflected love like only a woman can" (p. 146). Miss Tom lives with another woman, Miss Lily, in a big white house with a wrap-around porch. The townsfolk refer to them as "funny women," the old euphemism for lesbians. Commenting on this, the narrator reveals her youth and naivete: ". . . I never noticed anything funny about either one of them. They were serious women." She asks her aunt if the two women are sisters, since "it was the only reasoning I could make out, them living together like that." Her aunt responds cryptically, "They sisters all right, but it ain't by blood." "I didn't know what she meant," the narrator continues, "so I left it alone then" (p. 148).

One spring afternoon on the riverbank, Tom pours her heart out to her young fishing companion, the unnamed narrator. Overcome with grief at the prospect of losing her ailing companion, Miss Tom is reminded of her half-sister, Juliette, who shared her childhood bed for sixteen years. Through Miss Tom's compelling soliloquy, the reader discovers that the sisters' love for each other took a physical form. Given cultural taboos against incest, this is no easy subject matter. But in Youngblood's masterful hands, little room is left for sensationalism or simple judgment. The reader can't help viewing the affection these sisters shared as anything but sacred and sensuous, a natural outcome of their deep feelings for each other.

So how does this all relate to Miss Lily, Miss Tom's present

love? Read it and found out for yourself. No doubt you'll be perched on the edge of your chair, hanging raptly on Miss Tom's every word. Shay Youngblood is a gifted storyteller, in the best traditional sense.

The four stories mentioned above are not the only fine ones in the book, but they did catch my attention most strikingly. With anger, humor, tenderness, despair, and spunk, all the stories shed new light on what it means to have and be a sister. Dawn Raffel's "Design" poignantly captures a young girl's effort to make sense of her older sister's psychiatric hospitalization following an assault. In "Once a Friend" by Terri de la Peña, the young Chicana narrator witnesses her older sister's distress at "losing" a promising college friend to marriage with "a Mexican gardener who can't even speak English" (p. 52). The story "Waiting" by Budge Wilson is told in the voice of a cocky girl who dominates her less aggressive twin sister and suddenly finds the status quo threatened when puberty hits.

Some other stories didn't quite manage, despite interesting subject matter, to fulfill their potential. Wendy Ryden's "A Family Game," the tale of two elderly Black sisters who scrimp so they can splurge on box seats at Mets games, seemed in need of substantial editing, and the dialogue just didn't strike me as authentic. The narrator of "My Sister, My Eye" was the only one in the book who did not clearly have a blood sister, so I was especially curious to see what Linda Ostreicher would do. The story started out exploring the sisterly relationship the protagonist had with her female cousin/roommate but took a bizarre twist that didn't work for me. I found myself wishing Ostreicher had developed her original subject matter further.

In her introduction, Martinac expresses the hope that these stories will inspire us to "want to pick up the phone and call our sisters"—"no matter how long it's been or how great the distance." Not only did I call my sister after reading the book, I sent her a copy. The book just begs to be shared.

The One You Call Sister breaks new feminist and literary ground, opening the window wide on sister relationships and paving the way for a much-needed dialogue. While it provides an entertaining, educational read, it can also serve as a rousing call to action.

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

Meena Alexander was born in India in 1951 and raised there and in North Africa. The mother of two children, she teaches at Hunter College. Her poetry includes *House of a Thousand Doors* (1988) and *The Storm* (1989). Her novel, *Nampally Road*, will be published by Mercury House in January 1991.

Annharte, born 1942, Winnipeg, Canada. Dueling heritages, Saulteaux and Irish, make her a tough old breed. *Too Tough*, a film-poem, and *Being on the Moon*, her first poetry book, are politico-spiritual communications balanced with fits of embroidery and unemployment.

Eleanor Batchelder (born Pittsburgh, 1940) has been a mother, a bookseller, an activist, and a traveler, and is now (again) a computer programmer, (newly) a graduate student in linguistics, and (still) seeking an ever-illusive fluency in Japanese.

Stephanie Byrd was born in Richmond, Indiana during the summer of 1950. She lives in Ithaca, New York where is attending Cornell and writing her master's thesis on Bessie Head. She credits her partner, Terri Jewell, for resurrecting her interest in poetry.

Pat Califia is a lesbian writer who lives in Los Angeles. Her publishing credits include *Sapphisty* (Naiad Press), *Macho Sluts* (Alyson Publications), and her biweekly Advisor column in *The Advocate*. Her first novel, *Doc and Fluff*, was released by Alyson in summer of 1990.

Kathryn Daniels was born in Boston in 1955. A New York City writer, her initial inspiration was her own writer-mother. She has had poetry published in numerous small magazines. Her first published story recently appeared in *If I Had a Hammer: Women's Work in Poetry and Prose* (Papier-Maché Press, 1990).

Carolyn Gammon: Dyke-born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, 1959. Mistress of Arts in Creative Writing pending from Concordia University, Montreal. Founder and organizer of the Lesbian Studies Coalition of Concordia, which has initiated the first ongoing series of Lesbian Studies in Canada. Poetry/prose/

essays published in *By Word of Mouth: Lesbians Write the Erotic* (Gynergy, 1989); *Lesbians in Canada* (Between the Lines, Toronto, 1990); *Wanting Women* (Sidewalk Revolution Press, forthcoming); *off our backs*; *Rites* (Toronto); and *Diversity* (Vancouver).

M. Corbin Gould, born 1956 in Cincinnati, Ohio, has returned to the Bay Area after an absence of seven years. She has lived many places, including Santa Fe, Taos, Seattle, Vermont, Portland, San Francisco, San Antonio, and England. She is a peripatetic poet, philosopher, and feminist therapist. She now devotes her time entirely to writing, psychotherapy, seasoned friends, sunsets, and certain trees. She is ecstatically married to a lesbian poet and restaurateur.

Anne Haines, born 1961 in Kansas. Member of Source: Women Writers, a writing and performance group in Bloomington, Indiana. Poems published in *Sojourner*, *Sing Heavenly Muse!*, *Midland Review*, among others. Anne lives with three cats who would be very upset if she didn't mention them.

Eloise Klein Healy was born in El Paso, Texas, 1943. Her books of poetry include *Building Some Changes* (1976), *A Packet Beating Like a Heart* (1980), *Ordinary Wisdom* (1981), and *Artemis in Echo Park* (forthcoming from Firebrand Books, Spring, 1991). *Some from Ten: Poems 1975-1985* was produced on audio-tape.

Nikki Herbst lives in a rural area of northern California, where she writes, edits textbooks, and is active as a freelance musician. She was born in 1951 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her poems have appeared in *Writ*, *Kalliope*, *Axe Factory Review*, and elsewhere. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Yolanda Ingianna M.: Costa Rican. Lives in San José, Costa Rica. She is a professor at the University of Costa Rica, where she teaches philosophy and feminist theory. She also conducts research on women, health, and development.

Terri L. Jewell, born 1954 in Louisville, Kentucky. Nappy-headed, fat dyke who loves to write, take pictures of inanimate objects close up, and imagine that things are better than they really are. Her work has appeared in *The Bloomsbury Review*, *The American Voice*, *The Black American Literature Forum*, *off our backs*, and *Hag Rag*, to name a few.

Leslie Lopez, born 1956, Tyler, Texas. Raised in Southern Louisiana, she has lived in Houston since 1980. She is a fine arts painter and received a 1988 grant from the Cultural Arts Council of Houston for poetry. Her work has been published in *Focus*, *Common Woman*, *Eye Prayers*, and Houston's *Innerview*.

Doris Moromisato was born in Chambala (Lima), Peru, in 1962. She graduated from the Universidad Mayor of San Marcos. She is a Japanese Peruvian poet, member of GALF (Grupo de Autoconciencia Lesbica Feminista) in Lima. She published a book of her poetry in 1988 with Cuarto Lima Editores, a small Peruvian press, entitled *Morada Donde la Luna Perdió Su Palidez* (*Dwelling Where the Moon Lost Its Pale Glow*).

Sawnie Morris was born in 1955 in Austin, Texas. She has previously published in *Sinister Wisdom*, *The Taos Review*, and *Sing Heavenly Muse!* She was awarded first prize in a non-fiction writing contest conducted by the ACLU for an essay which appeared in *Out/Look*, Spring 1990.

Cherry Muhanji was born in the Motor City in 1939. By 1985 she made her break to school in Iowa City. The result: *Tight Spaces*, an American Book Award winner in 1988. Next up: an MFA program in Spokane and a solo flight entitled *Her*, to be published in September 1990 by Spinsters/Aunt Lute.

Frances Negrón-Muntaner, born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, 1966. She is a Philadelphia-based Puerto Rican poet and filmmaker. A founding member and board president of *Desde este lado/From This Side's Writers Collective/Journal of Philadelphia*, she has published her work in many journals and newspapers in Puerto Rico and the United States. She will be publishing her first book of poetry, *Anatomía de una sonrisa/Anatomy of a Smile* in a bilingual edition at the end of the year.

Joan Nestle is cofounder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, author of *A Restricted Country*, and at fifty is even more amazed at the power of lesbian touch.

Fukimo Ohno (born Tokyo, Japan, 1948): "I left Japan eight years ago. Travel in Mexico, Guatemala, and New York has changed me completely. I feel like a lost lamb, but I'm too old for that; more like a ghost."

Karen E. Outen is a short story writer who lives in the Washington, DC area. She has been writing since she was seven, and her first story was published in *Essence* magazine. She is presently working on a collection of stories based on the many women she is discovering within herself.

Diane Palladino was born in 1945 in the Bronx, New York. She is a psychotherapist in private practice and coordinator of the New Jersey Women and AIDS Network. She has been "doing" AIDS work since 1985 and is grateful to all of the women in the Network. They have helped her to understand the meaning of this epidemic for all of us.

Deb Parks-Satterfield, born 1951 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She lives in Seattle, Washington, and has been writing, teaching, and acting for 20 years. She dedicates her poem to the strippers and drag queens she dated as a teenager.

Margaret Randall, born 1936 in New York City. With the help of many sisters and brothers, she won her immigration case in August, 1989. A new book of essays, *Walking to the Edge: Essays of Resistance*, will be out soon from South End Press. She will be a visiting professor in Women's Studies at the University of Delaware during spring semester, 1991.

Sapphire is the author of a book of poetry, *Meditations on the Rainbow* (distributed by Inland Book Company, P.O. Box 120261, East Haven, CT 06512).

Hitomi Sawabe majored in literature in college and has taught in middle school and college entrance school in Japan. She has published essays on women's identity. *Yuriko, Da Svidanya* is her first book.

Maureen Seaton was born in 1947 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, has lived most of her life in New York, and the last twenty years close to the Hudson River. She recently won the Eighth Mountain Press Poetry Prize for her manuscript, *Fear of Subways*, due in Spring, 1991.

Robyn Selman, born in 1959, is a poet living and working in New York City. Her poems have appeared in *Ploughshares* and are forthcoming in *Puerto del Sol*. Her criticism has appeared in the *Village Voice*.

Yasmin Tambiah, born 1961 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Taurus/water buffalo. Relentlessly south asian feminist radical, who claims both my heritages, sinhalese and tamil. Love v.k.a., sensual writing, passionate politics, and am working on a collection of prose poetry, *Trekking: From Exile to Return*.

Joni Van Dyke, Tokyo-born Virgo in 1961. She is fascinated by how lesbians express themselves through language and otherwise and is seriously committed to the international lesbian conspiracy.

A.J. Verdelle currently writes from the New Mexico sky. Born 1960 in Washington, DC, she was delivered smack into the middle of the Movement. In the tradition of progress, she is now following her pen to the MFA Program at Bard College. Her first novel writes itself.

At twenty-six, **Jacqueline Woodson** is the author of four children's books including *Last Summer with Maizon* and *The Dear One*. Her short story, "Causes," was anthologized in *Women on Women* edited by Naomi Holoch and Joan Nestle. Other works have appeared in *Essence*, *American Poetry Review*, *Out/Look*, and *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*.

COLLECTIVE NOTES

Cheryl Clarke (born 1947, Washington, DC) thanks Elly, Jan, Rima, and Irena, the original editors of *Conditions*, for their vision. She thanks Mariana, Paula, Melinda, and Pauline for theirs. Finally, she thanks *Conditions*' readers for supporting that vision since 1977. She is privileged to have been a *Conditions* editor since 1981. Her most recent book of poetry is *Humid Pitch*, published by Firebrand Books.

Melinda Goodman is a poet who teaches poetry and literature at Hunter College in New York City and teaches in a literacy program in the Bronx. She is the author of a collection of poems entitled *Middle Sister* (available from Inland Book Company, P.O. Box 120261, East Haven, CT 06512).

Paula Martinac (born Pittsburgh, 1954) has been writing fiction since she was seven. Her first novel, *Out of Time*, was recently published by Seal Press. She is co-author of the short fiction collection, *Voyages Out 1* (Seal Press, 1989) and editor of the anthology *The One You Call Sister* (Cleis, 1989).

Mariana Roma-Carmona, born 1952, Santiago, Chile, Virgo, water Dragon, activist, mother of a teenage son. Worked on/ contributed to *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence* (Cleis, 1981), *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (Kitchen Table Press, 1983), and *Compañeras, Latina Lesbians* (LLHP, 1987). She is an editor with the Latina Lesbian History Project and is working on the dream of a growing international lesbian feminist network of writers and activists.

P. Mikie Sugino: expatriate Pacific Islander of Asian descent, art specialist and traveler.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Anthology of creative/personal writing by partners/spouses and relatives of survivors of childhood sexual abuse seeks submissions. Send poems, stories, journal entries, letters, b/w photos/drawings to Susan Cygnet, 1614 Harmon Place, Minneapolis, MN 55403. Deadline: December 1, 1990.

Lesbian Ethics is seeking submissions for a special issue called "Our Mothers: A Readers' Forum." For many of us our relationship with our mother was our first intimate relationship with a woman. How has this relationship affected your life as a lesbian? Your politics? Your vision? Your relationships with lovers and friends? Did/does your mother befriend you? Betray you? Understand you? Do you befriend her, betray her? Understand her? Are you and your mother the same class? The same race? Deadline: December 31, 1990. *Lesbian Ethics*, P.O. Box 4723, Albuquerque, NM 87196.

The Asian Women's Guest Collective of *Fireweed*, a feminist quarterly, is happy to announce the publication of "Awakening Thunder," an anthology of creative work by Asian Canadian women. "Awakening Thunder" is the first published anthology by Asian Canadian women. Eleven Asian lesbians have contributed writing and art to this groundbreaking collection. Included is poetry by Nila Gupta, Tamai Kobayashi, and Noriko Oka; prose by C. Allyson Lee, Mona Oikawa, and Milagros Paredes; and visual art by Sharon Fernandez and Gita Saxena. Copies of this special issue of *Fireweed* can be ordered from: *Fireweed*, P.O. Box 279, Station B, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2W2, Canada. "Awakening Thunder" is *Fireweed* no. 30. Cost: in Canada, \$4.00; outside Canada, \$5.00.

New York University Press is proud to announce that it will publish "The Cutting Edge: Twentieth-Century Lesbian Studies," edited by Karla Jay. This is the first and only university press series devoted entirely to lesbian literary concerns. The editor is currently seeking full-length manuscripts in the following areas: lesbian theory; biographies and/or literary studies of lesbian writers; and translations of lesbian classics. Please send abstracts and inquiries to Karla Jay, P.O. Box 1235, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008-1235.

Recent and forthcoming from

Belles Lettres A REVIEW OF BOOKS BY WOMEN

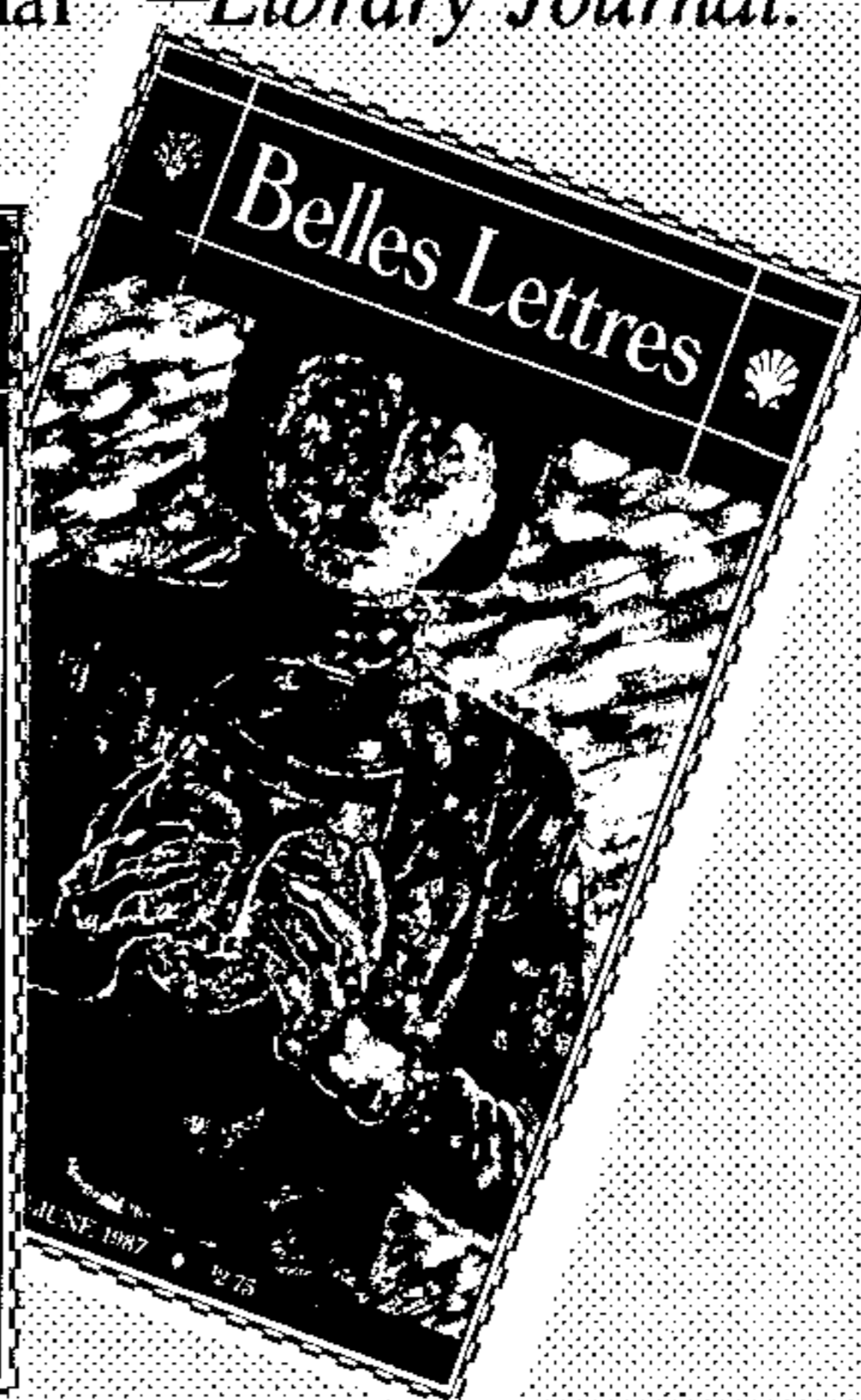
Spring 1990 (Vol. 5, No. 3): Irish women writers, rediscovery of Vina Delmar, interview with Merrill Joan Gerber (and an unpublished story), children's books, African and Middle Eastern writers, feature on women book review editors.

Summer 1990 (Vol. 5, No. 4): Interview with Jeannette Winterson, Rediscovery of Louise Colet, books on women artists, Jane Bakerman on Paretsky, James, & Grafton, short fiction by Carolyn Banks, reprints column ("the working woman"), East and West German authors.

Fall 1990 (Vol. 6, No. 1): Interview with Marilynne Robinson, the literature of disability, Jewish novels, essays, and memoirs, Asian and diaspora writers, Barbara Christian on Frances E.W. Harper, and Penelope Lively retrospective.

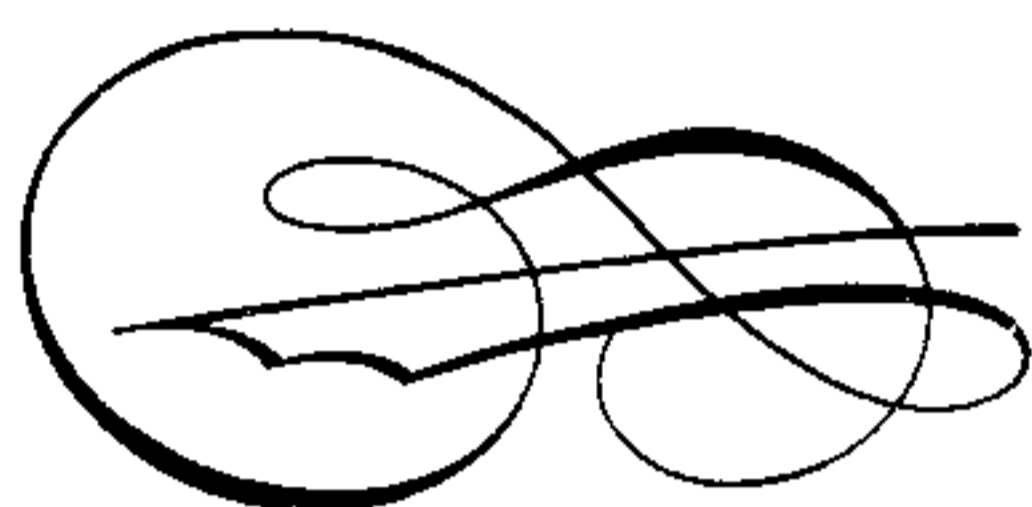
In every issue: mysteries, publishing, and reprints columns, the "Southern Hemisphere" section, and scores of reviews (fiction, essays, biographies, poetry).

◆ The quarterly book magazine of choice for the well-rounded individual. "Tantalizing ... discerningly passionate" —*East West*; "An enticing and important journal" —*Library Journal*.



SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$20/year for four issues; sample, \$3.
785 Verbenia Drive, Satellite Beach FL 32937.

The American Voice



A feminist journal
for
men and women

Poems • Stories • Essays • Photographs

Recent and forthcoming contributors:

Olga Broumas Isabel Allende Kay Boyle Chaim Potok
Margaret Randall Doris Grumbach Brenda Marie Osbey
Louise Erdrich Marjorie Agosin Carolyne Wright Dennis Silk
Calvin Hernton Linda Hogan Brian Swann Michelle Cliff
Marge Piercy Natasha Saje Michael Dorris Fae Myenne Ng
Beth Brant Eduardo Galeano Ruth Whitman

Available at bookstores or by subscription (\$12) from

*The American Voice
332 W. Broadway, Ste. 1215
Louisville, KY 40202*

& HIKANÉ &

THE CAPABLE WOMON

Disabled Wimmin's Magazine
For Lesbians & Our Wimmin Friends



stories • poetry • drawings • essays
networking • reviews • experiences
letters • ideas • desires • demands
DISABLED WIMMIN SEND YOUR WORK!



Suggested Donation for 4 Issue Sub.:
\$14 individ \$18 groups \$24 institutions
Sample \$4 • Specify print or cassette
Outside US add \$5/year (US Funds)
• Approx. 40 pp/issue (2½ hrs. tape) •
more if/less if • free to wimmin locked-up

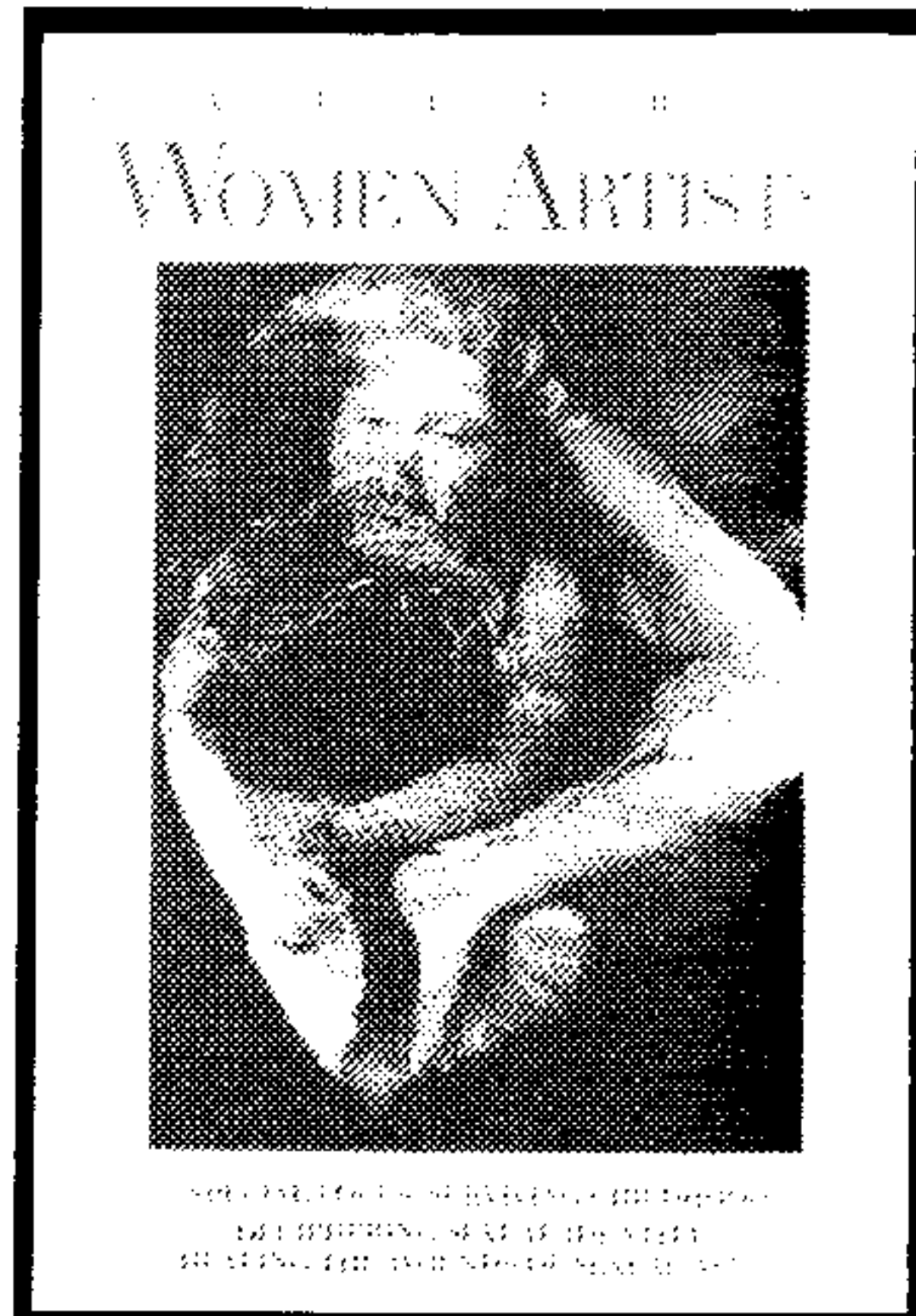
All wimmin welcome to subscribe
Please do not send scented mail

HIKANÉ

P.O. Box 841

Great Barrington, MA 01230 USA

Women artists discuss their work
and ideas in this beautiful and
thought-provoking publication.



Subscribe!

4 Issues a year—\$24

Gallerie Publications
Box 2901 Panorama Drive
North Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V7G 2A4

- Do You Need Facts About Menopause?
- Does the Stereotyping of Older Women Make You Angry?
- Do You want to be Part of an Older Feminists' Network?



BROOMSTICK

*a Bimonthly National Magazine
by, for, and about Women Over Forty*

Annual Subscription (U.S. Funds Only)

U.S. \$15; Canada \$20;

Overseas and Institutions \$25;

sliding scale available

Sample Copy: \$3.50

3543 18th St., #3
San Francisco, CA 94110

HYPATIA

*A Journal
Of Feminist
Philosophy*

HYPATIA, a journal founded by members of the Society for Women in Philosophy as a forum for dialogue within the women's movement, is dedicated to the publication of scholarly research in feminist philosophy and the only journal in the country for scholarly research at the intersection of philosophy and women's studies.



Triannual. Subscriptions: \$25 individuals (one year), \$48.00 individuals (two years), \$40 institutions. Outside US, add \$10 per year for foreign surface postage. Send orders to Indiana University Press, Journals Division, 10th & Morton Streets, Bloomington, IN 47405. Or call 812-855-9449.

RIVER STYX

Poetry Fiction Interviews

"A wonderful magazine with excellent poetry
and fascinating interviews."

-- John Houseman

John Barth
Howard Nemerov
Grace Paley
Susan Sontag
Ishmael Reed
William Gass
Quincy Troupe
Toni Morrison
Fielding Dawson

Derek Walcott
Sharon Olds
Galway Kinnell
Margaret Atwood
Amy Clampitt
Robert Creeley
Alberto Rios
Lucille Clifton
Amiri Baraka

Please send me : 1 year (\$20/3 issues) of *River Styx* .
 2 years (\$38/6 issues) of *River Styx* .

Name: _____

Address: _____

River Styx 14 South Euclid St. Louis MO
63108

\$8.95

(O)N(D)I(T)I(O)N(S)

WRITING AND GRAPHICS BY:

Meena Alexander...Annharte...Stephanie
Byrd...Pat Califia...Kathryn Daniels...
Carolyn Gammon...Melinda Goodman...
M. Corbin Gould...Anne Haines...Eloise
Klein Healy...Nikki Herbst...Yolanda
Ingianna M...Terri L. Jewell...Leslie Lopez
...Paula Martinac...Doris Moromisato...
Sawnie Morris...Cherry Muhanji...Francis
Negrón-Muntaner...Joan Nestle...
Karen Outen...Diane Palladino...Deb
Parks-Satterfield...Margaret Randall...
Mariana Romo-Carmona...Sapphire...
Hitomi Sawabe...Maureen Seaton...Robyn
Selman...Yasmin Tambiah...Joni Van
Dyke...A. J. Verdelle...Jacqueline Woodson

E
V
E
N
T
E
E
N