

POEMS and SONGS

fran winant

SPIKE JACKET



Poems and Songs

FRAN WINANT

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EAT RICE HAVE FAITH IN WOMEN

eat rice have faith in women
what I dont know now
I can still learn
if I am alone now
I will be with them later
if I am weak now
I can become strong
slowly slowly
if I learn I can teach others
if others learn first
I must believe
they will come back and teach me
they will not go away
to the country with their knowledge
and send me a letter sometime
we must study all our lives
women coming from women going to women
trying to do all we can with words
then trying to work with tools
and with our bodies
trying to stand the time it takes
reading books when there are no teachers
or they are too far away
teaching ourselves
imagining others struggling
I must believe we will be together
and build enough concern
so when I have to fight alone
there will be sisters
who would help if they knew
sisters who will come
to support me later

women demanding loyalty
each with our needs
our whole lives torn by
the old society
never given the love or work
or strength or safety or information

we could use
never helped by the institutions
that imprison us
so when we need medical care
we are butchered
when we need police
we are insulted ignored
when we need parents
we find robots
trained to keep us in our places
when we need work we are told
to become part of
the system that destroys us
when we need friends
other women tell us
I have to be selfish
youll have to forgive me
but theres only so much time
energy money concern
to go around
I have to think of myself
because who else will
I have to save things for myself
because Im not sure you could save me
if our places were reversed
because I suspect
you wont even be around
to save me when I need you...
Im alone on the streets
at 5 in the morning
Im alone cooking my rice
I see you getting knowledge
and having friends I dont have
and I dont see you coming back
to help me
I imagine myself getting old
I imagine I will have to go away
when Im too old to fight my way
down the streets

my friends getting younger and younger
women my age hidden in corners
in the establishment
or curled up with a few friends
isolated at home
or in the madhouse
getting their last shot of
motivation to compete
or grinding out position papers
in the movement
like old commies
waiting to be swept away
by the revolution
or in a hospital
dying of complications
nurse or nun
lesbian in clean clothes
reach out a hand to me
scientists have found
touching is necessary
and the drive to speak our needs
is basic as breath
but there isnt time
none of my needs has been met
and although Im often comfortable
this situation is painful

slowly we begin
giving back what was taken away
our right to the control of our bodies
knowledge of how to fight and build
food that nourishes
medicine that heals
songs that remind us of ourselves
and make us want to keep on with
what matters to us
lets come out again
joining women coming out
for the first time
knowing this love makes

a good difference in us
affirming a continuing life with women
we must be lovers doctors soldiers
artists mechanics farmers
all our lives
waves of women
trembling with love and anger
singing we must rage---
kissing, turn and
break the old society
without becoming the names it praises
the minds it pays

eat rice have faith in women
what I dont know now
I can still learn
slowly slowly
if I learn I can teach others
if others learn first
I must believe
they will come back and teach me

TALKING WITH WOMEN

consciousnessraising groups where
heterosexual women discuss lesbianism
as an abstraction
isnt it interesting
that women might have complete lives
with other women
just imagine
not having to put up with
a whole way of life we dont want
just to have our sexual/emotional
(social/financial) needs satisfied
try to picture
women helping women
as we have always done
but believing the help is important
women talking with women
believing what we say matters
women friends with women
keeping that friendship
women committed to women
committed to ourselves
The isolated lesbians in the groups
stood up one by one and TOLD
women they were not sure they could trust
women who would always remain strangers
until they heard the words
I am a lesbian
The heterosexual women answered
why are you telling us this
we are here to discuss
our common experience
not your personal problems
why are you dividing us
by bringing up issues
that arent relevant
to every one of our lives
of course we accept you
theres nothing more to say

you ask us to question our attitudes
what attitudes
The lesbians said
you were the ones who mentioned it
we thought you wanted to hear about it
The other women said
if we start loving women
we'll have to start worrying about
what women expect from us
and there wont be any more
neutral arms to weep in
neutral mouths to kiss
neutral hands to hold
neutral smiles to exchange
everything between women will be electric
no place to rest
and we'll end up
playing butch and femme roles
the old society repeated among women
you dont offer
an escape from our lives worth discussing
and if you did
it would only be an individual solution
a secret love
if we came out in this society
we would have to live your lives
whatever theyve been
suffer your pain
whatever that is
become you
whoever you are
we know by the way we back away
this isnt what we want
when we call for a revolution
in every bedroom
when we half jokingly define this as
the highest form of revolution
we're talking about
holding onto the sex and lifestyle
society taught us to want

and using that
in our revolutionary way
to make society make it worthwhile
for us to go on putting up with it
So the isolated lesbian in each group
sat down
some of the other women stopped
speaking to her
some looked at her with strange desire
and eventually she went away
she'd gathered a lot of dust
waiting for her sisters to deal with her
it was in the air when she left
and the other women were coughing
brushing it off their skin and clothes
when some of them found themselves saying
now that we've mentioned it
I realize Ive been thinking about it
all my life without knowing it
of course I couldnt speak it
so it couldnt become real
words can lift your hand
bring it down against another womans hand
not by accident and not in passing
but forever
in a way that must change our lives
in a way we cant talk away
by saying its over before its started
any women
can put their lives together
and become lesbians
any women
can put their bodies together
and become lesbians
I love so many women
I wonder if one of them
would admit to loving me
The other women said
dont talk to us about love
we have to be strong and change society

in ways that will work
dont sap our energies with kisses
love will only turn us into objects again
if love could have regenerated us
it would have done so by now
sometimes we think
love isnt as central to life as people say
that idea is
probably just another trap for women
So the women whose gay feelings were
revealed through talking with many women
had to go away and find the few women
who would see it through
they had to go looking for lesbians
They had shed tears struggling to speak
and the women who stayed behind
were busily flicking away the water
from their skin and clothes
when by accident
two of them touched hands
and found themselves saying
maybe it wouldnt harm our humanity
to experiment with it once
as a sexual act
we wont commit ourselves at the start
we'll keep ourselves out of it
then if it works physically
we'll see where it leads
through chance and whatever our moods are
how threatened we feel
we'll hit a balance somewhere
if it hurts
we'll fight eachother then see whats left
life is
that kind of clawing and stumbling around
and when you cant stand yourself
theres always the world
like a great mental hospital
to fall back into
and have other people tell you what to do

so they went home together
and were disappointed
they couldnt hate themselves enough
to completely run away from it
they couldnt believe in eachother
enough to embrace it
they kept saying
there are problems complications
well I dont know
they kept hanging around themselves
like some people hang around others
waiting for an answer reassurance
finally they said
its not for me
but I think I'll go find some lesbians
just to look at
restful to watch them live
that part of my life for me
These ambiguous women
had raged and torn at themselves
trying to keep silent
trying to forget
their anguish charged the air
forming pools
around the women who remained
until one of them said
I want to know
who mentioned lesbianism
in the first place
its a divisive topic
that separates women
and keeps them from
working on other issues
where did all these lesbians come from
none of us are lesbians
but out there at the edges of our reality
I hear women are changing
they say
they are changing into themselves

Lesbians looking for other lesbians
at DOB at the womens center
at demonstrations
on the streets
at school at work
looking for a face that is
serious in the same way
knowing we look like everyone else
our selves in our heads
am I gay today
or am I a woman-picture
in the world of lies
even I hardly know what I am admitting
how much trouble it will get me into
a minute from now...
I want you to be my friend
come to dinner
we will feed eachother
stories of our lives
in the middle of laughing
we become silent
our minds seek the shape of
the room we are in
the streets I cant walk
seem to be moving under me Im back
shouting sisterhood at demonstrations
then going home alone
or with one other woman
Im back embracing women I loved
our isolation no longer romantic
our closeness opening me
so I can no longer bear the difference
between my apartment and the streets
two women together couldnt make up for
what society took away
I wonder how many women it takes
to begin giving everything back

Lesbians used to talk a lot about
their jobs vacations interests
they would avoid talking about

how it felt to be gay
because the way to deal with it was
to avoid it live around it
live away from it
distance ourselves from ourselves
when we could not talk about it in public
we rarely talked about it in secret
there was no place for our anger to go
I used to think then that it was enough
to get across
a general feeling of goodwill
because there was no hope of
saying anything honest
if I talked about our nonexistence
lesbians looked at me with disgust
what was I going to risk
was I going to change the world
The gay movement drew together
women who had felt alone with their anger
some of them were those same women
who had talked most convincingly
in bars and at parties
about nothing but
their jobs and vacations
some of them had been the first lesbians
in womens liberation
consciousnessraising groups
now they could go back if they wanted to
and talk with the women who had tried
to drive them away

When the lesbian movement started
I didnt understand
why so many women grabbed five friends
out of meetings and dances
went everywhere did everything with them
sat in a tight corner with them
at the next meetings and dances
finally went home stayed home together
were never seen again

I thought the lesbian movement was
going to be like a family or an army
struggling along together
I thought women who worked together
would become naturally close
but I learned women who were close first
had to find ways
to work together later
women arrived and disappeared
I had to figure out fast
who I wanted as friends
and who would have to remain strangers
sometimes I couldnt do it fast enough
I had to hope the women would come back
or some of their other friends
would take a vacation
so many times I tried to talk couldnt
or women walked away
in the middle of sentences
or they gave me a hostile look
and I began repeating formulas
smiling to pacify them
or I must have frightened other women
and they also began
passing off their lives as jokes
so hard coming out of that world
that told us there were no connections
between us

Women loving women
a circle dance
where we give strength back to ourselves
yes yes yes yes
we affirm ourselves shouting stamping
arms waving feet sliding on the floor
this room is our world for now
we take hands with women we dont know
women we may never begin to talk with
women who are our past lovers in disguise
or our mothers sisters grandmothers

neighbors friends
the children we were
when we first thought of loving women
and our other selves
the many women we might have been
women who were gay all our lives
women who came out in tears and fury
these last few years
women who came out and went back in
women watching us test
their freedom for them
and women---
just beginning to exist this year---
who came out because it was possible
because other women gave them
the words for their thoughts
words to describe what would happen
and when it happened
words to admit it
because there were women around them
friends close enough to touch
to dance and talk with
a circle of our faces to look into
sisters take my hands
not only for this dance
let the energy we build here
be life to us as we walk their streets
all space is free space
and I want to be gay everywhere



THE LESBIAN FOOD CONSPIRACY

lettuce 15¢ thats cheap
heres a dollar keep the change
its a contribution to
the lesbian food conspiracy
lesbian lettuce 15¢
I'd wondered if anyone
at the womens dance
would buy the food left over from
the regular wednesday co-op
and here they are
not even asking for bags
tucking it under their arms
its beautiful its alive
not caring that the edges of
the leaves are yellow
and under lavender lights
seem changed to a new vegetable
its a flower smell it
its a bouquet lets get married
after a while
the women dont come over anymore
and we have to pick up our food
and plow into the crowd waving it
yelling lettuce 15¢
suddenly theyre grabbing it
out of our hands
they want it again
everyones laughing
Im thinking to myself
this is a lot easier than
trying to sell literature
now Im sitting between a box of
eggs 60¢ a dozen
and paper platefuls of apples 5¢ each
heres a quarter I'll take five
watching the women dance
and hoping some of them will think of
scrambled eggs for breakfast
before they leave

some co-ops have permanent
storefronts
and dont have to worry about
selling off their stuff in one day
those co-ops are run by men
and its funny how women say
men get things done
which is what men say
they succeed even with high markups
while we struggle
counting our money
begging women to order from us
and work with us
the women at the dance
promise to come to the regular co-op
"sometime"
its at the women's building
on wednesdays
tell your consciousnessraising
group
when they do come they say
theres a good feeling here
everyones happy
its like a marketplace
where you meet your friends
and talk
I'll have to tell other women
about this
but I dont know if
I can come back next week
we wonder how to make you come back
maybe a food giveaway
this coupon entitles you to
one handful of sunflower seeds
where are the women
who come to womens theatre groups
art shows
poetry readings

dances
has the movement conditioned them
to expect only dream oranges
but not the real biteable fruit
at 6¢ each

you hold eachother
on the dancefloor
under lavender lights
you lean your heads together
and remember when this was
a fantasy
you think that if this is all
the movement does for you
gives you a place to dance
with women every weekend
youll take it
and suffer the terms of
your secret survival
and buy your food
at the supermarket too
but now you dont have to
accept that
wander among the grains and beans
flour and cereal
honey and apple juice
raisins and nuts
thinking of bread youll bake
and friends youll give slices to
you look beautiful
when youre well-nourished like this
come work with us
setting the food out on tables
boxing eggs and filling orders
before the crowd of shoppers
arrives at 4:00
you seem stronger
since youve switched to brown rice
youre the healthy lesbian
weve been looking for

DYKE JACKET

Standing in the 14th st snack place
next to mays dept store
unable to escape my all-american reflexes
Im digging being surrounded by shitfood
watching the shopping crowd
black brown white female male kid adult
mouths all shoveling it down
some eating leathery bread envelopes
holding onions grease
bits of meat that are mostly cereal
and others eating pizza and knishes
this place has variety
Im leaning on one of those counters
where people eat standing up
with my big paper cup of black coffee
projecting myself onto
the outer edge of those taste buds
where the mozzarella cheese tomato paste
and crispy whiteflour dough
meet in a first steaming bite
Im on a diet after getting fat
trying to be a vegetarian
the way these people are
getting fat on shit
Carbohydrates did it
making me want to eat more
fatness is a form of starvation where
the more you eat the hungrier you get
and not for everyone but for me
it stands in the way of
being able to believe
I can make my body strong
there was lots of nutrition
in the nuts rice honey and seeds
but they did me in
as surely as this gleaming shit
the ultimate come-down
Im on a high protein diet meaning meat

and not eating in places like this
When I go back to vegetarianism
I promise myself I'll take a new approach
stop the shitfood joy-popping attitude
and plan meals the way its explained
in Diet For A Small Planet
which I read too late to
save myself this time
meanwhile
Im watching with the kind of fascination
that turns life into art
involvement that holds small details
making them stand for everything
as in a dream
Since last christmas
when the bathroom ceiling fell
Ive felt Ive been living past
one of the possible dates for my death
and in this place too I feel like a spirit
standing next to but outside life
having the same needs
and physical sensations
as these people
knowing intimately what a mouth is
and the slow or quick massage of eating
but having no mouth
I think perhaps this experience will
prepare me
for the spiritual side of vegetarianism
which Im beginning to see has to do with
putting a positive value on hunger
not starvation but a little unfilled hunger
all the time
its something vegetarians dont talk about

leaning on the snack bar counter
I kick the white cardboard box at my feet
to make sure its still there
inside is a snappy $8 ski-type jacket
called a flight jacket and made mostly of

reprocessed and unknown fibers
according to the tag
hanging from the zipper
Standing here with bitter coffee
in early winter daylight
Im going to take 10 minutes to gloat over
being able to get my hands on
such a desirable dyke item
Im going to wear it with satisfaction
fighting off my fears of
looking tough and ugly
enjoying my toughness
building on it not denying it
and if necessary enjoying my ugliness
affirming that too
last year I got my first pair of boys shoes
on Orchard st
this year went on my first shopping trip
to mays boys dept
who says theres no such thing as progress
had a long conversation with myself there:
maybe I dont have to buy my clothes
in this dept
maybe theres something just like this
in the girls dept
up the escalator to check
nothing and the closest thing is $10 more
will I look like a little boy now
or a little girl
or will I finally look like myself
in my particular combination of
the clothes I want
wonder if theres a way to look feminine
in this jacket after all
stand in front of the mirror
hands in my pockets
something about these clothes
makes me want to go along with
the wide shoulders and solid shape
I've admired the image of strength

all my life
and theres real strength not just pretense
in useful clothes
We can all be butch now and dont have to
shove that part of ourselves
which isnt only a part
off onto other women
or save it up in ourselves
for special occasions
last night I dreamed mays was having a sale
on butch roles
my sisters rushed to get theirs
average sized women like me
walked out of the store wearing
huge amazon bodies

two months ago I decided to get my hair cut
and left the Wonder Woman Beauty Salon
sporting the hairdresser Carols fantasy
of a modified 50's D.A.
"You look good with your hair back" she said
just in time for
the Bring Back the 50's Dance
where after all my protests against
glorifying our oppression
there was Marge
done up as a dyke delivery boy
complete with dark glasses in a dark room
a well-greased real D.A. haircut
straight-leg jeans a white T-shirt
cigarette behind her ear
and I realized again that
our oppression is our culture
or at least it has been
for many lesbians up to now
the role thing and the bar thing defining
the only territory where we could live out
the lies that passed for our lives
instead of the lies
that passed for someone elses

so I left the dancefloor
went into the bathroom
made my haircut into a D.A. with water
rolled up my sleeves to show my muscles
hunched my shoulders
put my hands in my pockets
went out and did the lindy
and the bunny hop
My sisters called to me, "Hi, Butch!"
and it hurt
I felt it as a condemnation
and wanted to protest no no
Im not that masculine woman
Im only playacting
the real scapegoat martyr obvious dyke
oppressor of weaker women
is somewhere else
this distrust of dykes wasnt
only in my head
it was in the way
my sisters looked at me now
the sarcastic tone of their voices
yes they meant it when they said
we should all make ourselves over
but they also meant it when they showed
they didnt know what the right kind of dyke
should look like
or how she should be treated
she couldnt be
just a certain haircut clothes mannerisms
she had to be
real skills real fighting power
but if she was actually strong
would she have to go around looking tough
and if she looked like that
should she be automatically respected
or laughed at as a phony
out to impress other women
the most tangible part of being strong is
looking strong and at that point

reality and wishful thinking get mixed
I cant dance or talk away
the negative things I associate with dykes
but at least I can live with
having my hair and clothes the way I want
my sisters encourage me
in spite of their doubts
If I can change my body
if I can become really strong
I think we'll know the difference

I walk out of the snack place
with my package swinging in one hand
and my coffee which is too hot to finish
carefully balanced in the other
I feel a happy triumph over the world
as I walk with my long stride
I feel almost comfortable
I wonder if anyone on the street
thinks I look strange

CHINA

not to the real china
but to a china of the mind
I travel when we make love
armies of high-cheeked women
with cool smiling eyes
pass between my thighs
where your head rests
and at their shoulders
just above the points of their rifles
a poster-yellow sun rises
on thin-stretched clouds
lava, blood and those gold roads
that open over the city
for a while some mornings
when real dawns break

the faces around me are my friends
transformed from laughter to anger
transformed from frustration to work
transformed from what we are now
to other lives
my knees are dark stands of pine trees
under an illuminated clock
until your tongue makes me close my eyes

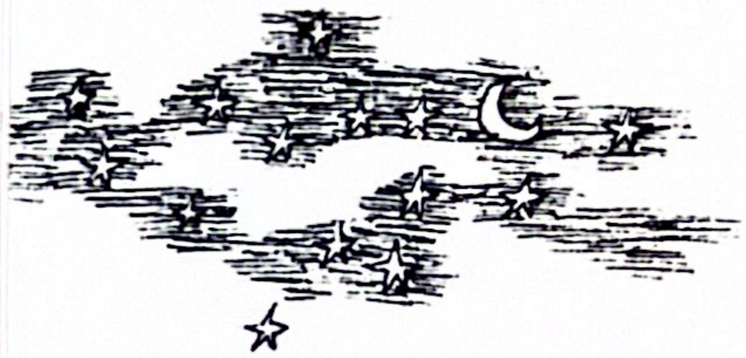
in that peaceful land
there is peace for me
in that land of total equality
there is my share of equality for me
in that land
where we do things for ourselves
there is my town where I live
with women who have chosen eachother
because of the work
we want to do together
and there is our love
which feeds me

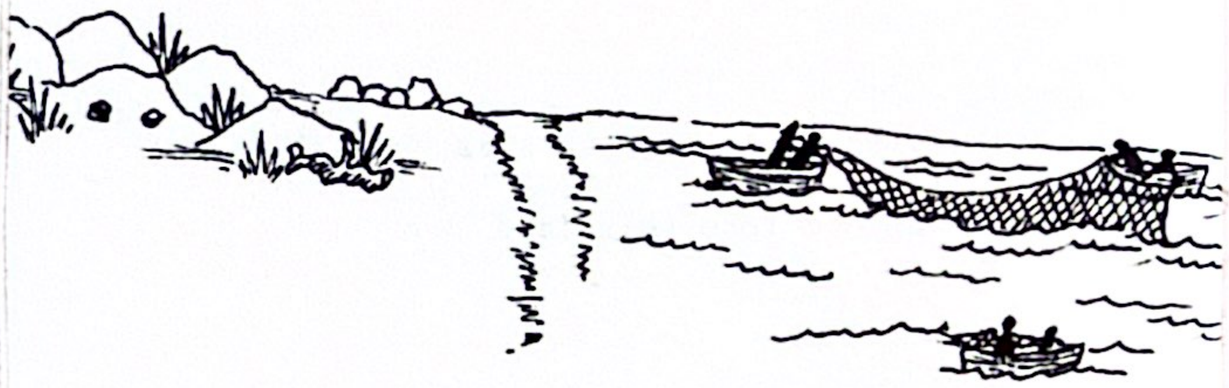
my sisters and I build a boat
we weave nets
and go to sea to catch fish
for other women who work on shore
we have to learn about the currents
how to steer the boat
how to throw and take in nets
we have to not be seasick
we have to read the stars
we learn all this over years
but we dont feel time passing
because we are doing what we want
and in this china
our lives are not fragmented
we turn to eachother
with the same strength and joy
that we turn to our work
in the nights net we swim together
flashing silver
the hope and confidence
children seem to have then lose
we keep as we grow older
and our wisdom smells of salt
it runs down into our hands
I have made my first revolution
here inside my body
I was a land I could not own
and I have given myself back
I have taken myself away
from the landlord
now I farm myself with your help
one of the first crops I grow is
muscles all over my body
I irrigate myself
washing away despair and lethargy
I learn to fight
immediately after I learn to kiss
I am realistic about
how many want to take this land away

I become the minds china
wall and all

as my body gathers against your mouth
you know I want more than
just waking up in your arms tomorrow
as my body tenses
I can leap into that other society
and live there
not in america
where if you dont get caught
you can have love
but little else
not in china
where you can have
meaningful work but little else
I pull you close to me
and feel beneath your shoulders
the breath of my sisters calling
with all our tongues

we become the minds china





GRANDMA IN THE LAST TOMB OF THE PHAROHS

on the expressway I play with death
driving 70 miles an hour
turning corners on 2 wheels
changing lanes a lot
step on the gas for more power---
hesitation then a leap forward
the car moving to the pace of
rock music on the radio
hurrying toward the land of the dead
hurrying toward the land of the dead
how long a trip is it
a short drive the way I do it
got to hurry to the land of the dead

going so fast I nearly miss my exit
see the sign in time
to cut across 2 lanes of highway
and 2 lanes of street
just as the corner light goes green
and I make my sharp right turn
into the suburban road
that leads to grandmas nursing home
which Ive nicknamed
The Last Tomb of the Pharohs
a great block of concrete
with non-opening windows
the glass front doors tinted brown
to keep out the sun
as I swing a door open
the walls and furniture seem to flinch
away from me
as if this place was made to be empty
walking here I feel myself erased
like an image on a closing eye
the elevator takes me up

during the long slow ride I think of
grandma 2 years ago living alone

in her 1 room apartment with balcony
by the ocean
where she dreamed of moving
all her life for the pleasure of
seeing the water smelling the air
then a fall on the boardwalk a broken hip
a year in the hospital a series of strokes
her left arm paralyzed
the leg bones refusing to knit
finally healing
grandma taking her first steps
and a few days later
the nurse letting her fall again
the leg never to heal straight
the hospital keeping grandma
until they said she'd stayed too long
and since she couldnt go home
she had to go to a nursing home
this medicare paradise far away
and hard for relatives to get to
but featuring daily therapy
that turned out to be half an hour a week
with luck

"Hello grandma how are you"
"Im still alive" she smiles
as if thats funny then complains
"The doctors have marked me for death
because I cant walk"
I try to convince her she can still learn
I explain "You have to do it slowly"
we play at holding a cane
taking a few steps
before she half-collapses
I sit her down massage her arm her neck
sometimes I get her to believe
shes improving
sometimes she whispers "Whats the use"
in the land of the dead
everyone is marked for death

as I push her wheelchair
toward the dining room
I think of the painter Georgia O'Keefe
grandmas age
but not stuck in a place like this
living by herself in the New Mexico desert
I see her wrinkled face
with its reserved look
see her eyes squint studying
the wind-made waves of the landscape
her colors are in the carpets here---
green brown orange blue gray violet
like shadows on sand hills
at twilight or dawn---
but this is a desert she never painted
a kind of terrarium
where its always noon
under artificial lights
and molecules of breath drift slowly
into cracked mouths of earth
old women trying to walk
to the dining room
through this static air
seem caught in a wind of their own
that blows them forward and back
shakes them against the bone-white walls
I see my mother and then myself
seated in grandmas place
our hands on the wheelchair armrests
our feet on the pedals
like ancient night-queens
trapped in immobilizing light
or murderesses on the electric chair
unable to pull the switch
desert wind in our hair
as we ride our steel contraptions
down the hall
Georgia O'Keefe
I wish I could see my future in you
but statistically

theres not much chance of it

locking grandmas wheelchair
at the dinner table
adjusting her bib
I wonder about lesbians her age
where are they
here with everyone else I guess
that woman a visitor described as
"my aunt but not really my aunt
shes lived with my family so long"
I look hard at her
do you have another name for yourself
besides the one taped down in front of you
on your place at the table
a secret
humming under the last most quiet layer
of powder and urine-smells circulating
in the slow ventilation system
a word in your head
wilder than the fish on your plate
which seems about to speak through
teeth and bones tougher than your own
as you struggle with your baked potato
do you dream about how you once achieved
the impossible ambition of
loving and living with a woman
Back when it was hard to become
someone questions werent asked about
you slipped around a knife-edge
into the ordinary
or just embraced the gossip
I know
the cheerful bitterness of closet dykes
Ive caught it
out of their eyes on the street
that razor behind a smile
Ive surprised it on my own face
and on yours?...
no theres only the desert

hurrying away from the land of the dead
racing back to the city
past the rush hour jam of cars
on the other side of the highway
that are going where I just came from
I laugh at them in their bottleneck
"glad Im not you" I say
counting my years my hours my calories
promising myself Ill take vitamins
exercise get strong
get up early in the morning
so I dont miss any of my life
hoping something will happen
one way or another
so I dont end up in that chair after all
hurrying away from the land of the dead
got to hurry

RELIGION

Im waiting for the bus
in front of the 42nd st library
and theres a man there
yelling about god
and pointing to a chart he has
full of diagrams
and words too small to read
which according to his claims
explain the meaning of the universe
A woman and man come up to me
and I think theyre going to ask for
directions
but no they are part of
the religious group
and the woman doesnt say
"Pardon me how do I get to---"
she says "Pardon me
do you believe in god?"
"Yes" I say with cheerful assurance
"I believe in the goddess"
"Oh you do believe in god?" the man says
taking over the conversation
now that the woman has brought us together
"Yes" I repeat still looking
at the woman
"I believe in the goddess"
"Let me tell you about our religion" he says
"Its no use" I say
"Im completely convinced by
my own religion nothing could
change my faith"
"But my religion includes your religion"
the man insists
"No" I answer "my religion
includes yours"
"What is the name of your religion?"
he seems genuinely surprised
"The goddess religion" I repeat

"The ancient goddess religion"
"Oh" he says
The woman smiles back at me
and they move on into the crowd



YESTERDAY

(about Gertrude & Alice)

yesterday a lovely day
we traveled to the country
bouncing along in an automobile
the sun beat directly down
feeling it on my head helps me think
we bought melons at every town
until the car was filled
ate in a small restaurant
where the fish was excellent
fed the dog under the table
we returned at evening
to sit before a fire
smelling a fire-scent found in nostrils
not in air
pleasure swells from inside
to be made visible in things
that seem less than itself
in this way life is realized
through imagination

the present moment
cannot be described
without being changed
shadings of many days
make the moment that a poem is
that is why
the butter must be tasted
and the cow seen
again and again
it takes many books to equal
one taking in and letting out
of breath

a photograph caught us
walking our dog on a cobbled street

another caught us
standing in our garden
years later we are still there
new inventions
make the moment visible
but not in the same way as poetry
here
the curve of a melon
although eliptical
can be described as
an eternal circle
in which many rounds are represented
the curve of the sky, hills
and aspects of ourselves
can thus innocently be
handled and devoured
the sun that beats directly down
is like a certain light
that spreads from your fingertips
rearranging the world
as a painted canvas does
the smoothness of the tabletop
brings you close to me
although you are lying upstairs
asleep
the grain of the wood
is the line of your eyebrows

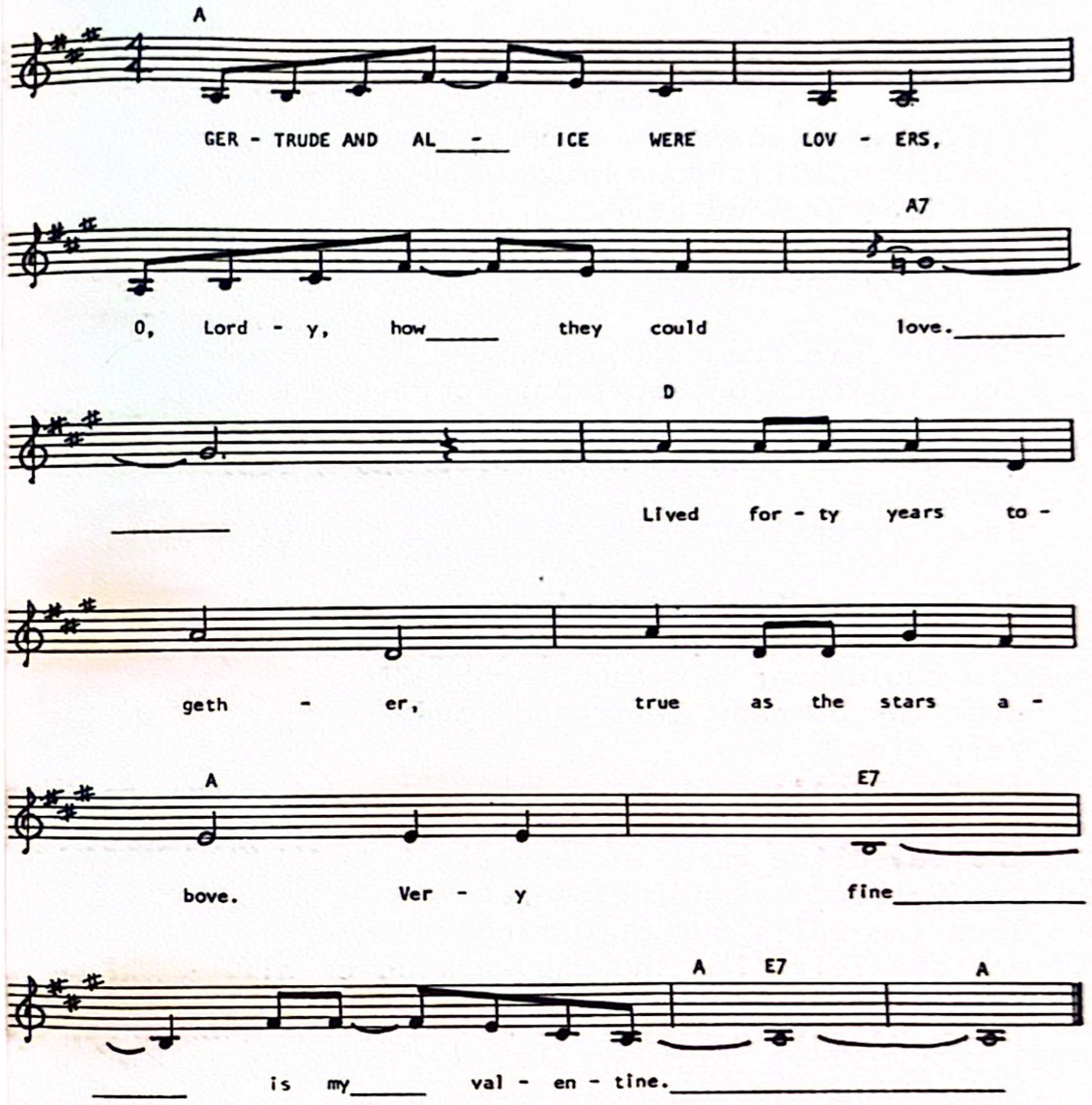
because you are always with me
it is not true
that I go off alone to write



GERTRUDE AND ALICE WERE LOVERS

(to the tune of "Frankie and Johnnie")

Words and
Musical Arrangement by
Fran Winant



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GERTRUDE AND ALICE WERE LOVERS

Gertrude and Alice were lovers.
O, Lordy, how they could love.
Lived forty years together,
true as the stars above.
Very fine
is my valentine.

Gertrude had a little atelier
(at-tel-yay)
filled up with art treasures rare.
She wore skirts down to her ankles
and long braided hair.
Very fine
is my valentine.

People came from all over
just to knock on her front door.
They said, "I want to see Picasso
and glimpse Cezanne once more."
Very fine
is my valentine.

People just kept on coming
until there was quite a good crowd.
You could hear her laughter booming
over the company clear and loud.
Very fine
is my valentine.

One day Alice came for a visit,
saw Gertrude standing there.
Then the bells began to ring
and she felt like she was walking on air.
Very fine
is my valentine.

One day they went walking together
in the Luxembourg Gardens so green.
Gertrude's heart felt as light as a
feather.
She said, "Think I'm gonna make the scene."
Very fine
is my valentine.

Gertrude sat Alice down on the sofa:
"Now there's something that has to be
said."
But before Gertrude could tell her,
Alice had said it instead:
Very fine
is my valentine.

Gertrude wrote a poem
that said, "Of genders I know
there are two,
but it's still a question of who to love
and Alice, I chose you."
Very fine
is my valentine.

Repeat first verse

EMILY DICKINSON'S
LOST ROMANCE

Words and Music
by
Fran Winant

D A7 G

Em - i - ly, I sit by your win-dow and wait with you for your

A7 D A7

love to come home___ o-ver the shiv- er-ing grass of the mead-ow,

G A7 D

o -ver the si -lent streets of your town.___ As she sails the end-less

A7 G A7 G

miles of the sea, you can feel the breath, the hair, the skin, your sen -ses___

A7 D A7

___ will not know a - gain--- that ghost of a mo-ment, Ka -tie, your

G A7 FINE (2x, D)

wan -der-ing lov-er,___ Em -i-ly Dick-in-son.___ 2) The fir

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VERSE 2

D A7 G

(The first) 2) wom - an you loved, whose name was Sue, mar -ried your
(When) 3) you___ met Ka -tie at the age of twen-ty- eight, each saw___ her
(Her) 4) voice___ was mu -___ sic, and you dreamed you'd spend___ your

A7 D

broth -er and moved next door.___ She tried to keep her friend,
soul in the oth - er's face.___ Mad-ness seemed___ di -
whole life___ list - en - ing.___ Too bad___ for

A7 G A7

Ka - tie, from you,___ jeal -ous that to - geth - er you might ex -
vin-___ est sense as you laughed___ or___ rest- ed___ qui - et -
Em -___ i - ly--- your chance___ came once in a cen - tu -

1. G A7 2,3 A7

plore___ the world you were long - ing for, 3) When ly.___ 4) Her
ry.___ 5) Your

VERSE 3

D A7 G

(Your) 5) fate de - cid - ed by the one night when you held___ each
6) She of -fered you spir- i -tual wine,___ but try - ing to

A7 D

oth - er breast___ to breast.___ Ka -tie tried___ to
drink it brought you such pain.___ Your mind was full of the

A7 G

qui - et your pro -test when she asked to make love and it
fear and con - fu -sion so-___ ci - e - ty plant - ed there

A7 D A7 G

scared you to death.____ (to 6) 7) Em-i - ly ---if you knew the cup wou
since you were born.____

A7 D A7

not be of -fered a - gain,___ Em-i - ly --- e -ven you would have

G A7

tak-en it,_____ and mixed a strong-er brew._____

VERSE 4

D A7 G

8) This love fright -ens Ka - tie now, and makes her
9) But if on -ly she could have touched you, per -
Where) 10) else could she find__ this wild peace-ful - ness___ a

A7 D A7

want to run a - way.____ (to 9)
haps she would have stayed._10)Where
hun - dred years a - go?____11)Who else would have been her a-dor-ing

G A7

les -bi - an lov-er,_____ but Em- i -ly Dick-in-son?_____

VERSE 5

D A7

12) Em -i - ly, I feel hurt and bit - ter as I
13) Ka -tie left you, Ka - tie be - trayed you though she

G A7

read the sto - ry of your life--- twen-ty-
could have cho - sen to pa -tient-ly wait.____ it was

D A7

five___ years af - ter-ward_____spent re - gret - ting you
eas - y for her_____ to send the last mes - sage, but you

G A7

could -n't lib-er - ate your-self all in one night.____ (to 13)
could -n't re___ - ply,___ you had - n't the breath.___14)She'd been

VERSE 6

D A7 G

(She'd been) 14)mar -ried be - fore and she mar -ried a - gain,___ trav -eled the
15)This was the rid - dle of Em - i - ly Dick-in-son---your in - ner
(Un-) 16)til_____ one wom - an read past her own straight-ness, caught your

A7 D

earth___ sur - round -ed by friends,___ while you___ sat home in a
strug-gle so re_____ - ar - ranged,___ no one knew__ a wom-an was the
mean -ing and told it to me,_____ so I could re - turn through the

A7 G A7

shroud-dress of white,___ pour -ing your an -___ ger on - to a
source of your wis-dom, and_____ the cause of your
fields of Am-herst to keep the long watch with you, Em-_____ i -

1. G A7 2,3 A7 (last X, D.C al fi

page,_____ in rhymes with the pro-nouns changed.(to 15) pain._____ 16) Un -
ly.__(repeat 1)(D.C.)

EMILY DICKINSON'S LOST ROMANCE

1) Emily, I sit by your window
and wait with you for your love
to come home
over the shivering grass of the meadow,
over the silent streets of your town.
As she sails the endless miles of the sea,
you can feel the breath, the hair, the skin,
your senses will not know again---
that ghost of a moment, Katie,
your wandering lover, Emily Dickinson.

2) The first woman you loved,
whose name was Sue
married your brother and moved next door.
She tried to keep her friend, Katie,
from you,
jealous that together you might explore
the world you were longing for.
3) When you met Katie at the age of
twenty-eight,
each saw her soul in the other's face.
Madness seemed divinest sense,
as you laughed or rested quietly.
4) Her voice was music, and you dreamed
you'd spend your whole life listening.
Too bad for Emily---
your chance came once in a century.

5) Your fate decided by the one night
when you held eachother breast to breast.
Katie tried to quiet your protest when she
asked to make love and it scared you
to death.
6) She offered you spiritual wine,
but trying to drink it brought you such
pain.
Your mind was full of the fear and
confusion

society planted there since you were born.
7) Emily---if you knew
the cup would not be offered again,
Emily---even you would have
taken it, and mixed a stronger brew.

8) This love frightens Katie now,
and makes her want to run away.
9) But, if only she could have touched you,
perhaps she would have stayed.
10) Where else could she find this wild
peacefulness, a hundred years ago?
11) Who else would have been her adoring
lesbian lover, but Emily Dickinson?

12) Emily, I feel hurt and bitter
as I read the story of your life---
twenty-five years afterward spent
regretting
you couldn't liberate yourself
all in one night.
13) Katie left you, Katie betrayed you,
though she could have chosen to
patiently wait.
It was easy for her to send the last
message,
but you couldn't reply, you hadn't the
breath.

14) She'd been married before and she
married again,
traveled the earth surrounded by friends,
while you sat home in a shroud-dress of
white,
pouring your anger onto a page
in rhymes with the pronouns changed.
15) This was the riddle of Emily Dickinson---
your inner struggle so rearranged,
no one knew a woman was the source
of your wisdom, and the cause of your pain.

5) Until one woman read past her own
straightness,
caught your meaning and told it to me,
so I could return through the fields of
Amherst,
to keep the long watch with you, Emily.

Repeat first verse



THE GREEN WIND IS A LESBIAN

Words and Music
by
Fran Winant



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A G F♯m

(She) 4) learned to fix her van in wom-en's class- es in L. A.,

A G Bm

leaf-let-ted with the an-ti-rape sqaud in Mich-i - gan,

F♯m Em

shot pool in gay bars up Chi-ca-go way. O, stay by me,

A G

won't you stay with me, in a crum-bling a - part-ment by a

Bm F♯m Em A

dark pol-lut-ed sea. 5) She's

A G

(She's) 5) seen the old dykes' fac - ces scarred with bit - ter - ness and
(Our) 6) cit - y is an is - land, our Les - bos, bright though

F♯m A

rage. She's heard straight wom - en
gray, and in - side ev - 'ry

G Bm

tell her, "We need you to re - mind us of how
tow - er, there lives or works a wom - an who

F♯m Em

free we might have been." Take me in. In our
knows she's gay. In her heart, she

Em (2x,A) Em (2x,G) A (2x,G) G

hearts, The Green Wind whis-pers, "Hold me, don't let me get a -
hears The Green Wind whis-per, "It's time to set - tle

1. Bm F♯m Em A 2. Bm

way." 6) Our down.

CODA F♯m Em A

Let's make a home right here, help-ing wom - en find the

G Bm

an-swers I've tried so hard to find a - lone."

THE GREEN WIND IS A LESBIAN

1) The Green Wind is a lesbian
who breezes through our lives,
refreshing us with stories
of places on the earth
where women learn to make things grow.
Take me home
to where women have the answers
I've tried so hard to find alone.

2) In the midwest her eyes are green,
in eastern cities they turn brown,
on the west coast
they're ocean blue.
I've seen her breezing through.
Take me with you
to where women live like sisters
and the pain is gone.

3) She worked on the lesbian food co-op
when she was in New York,
hauling sacks of grain and lifting
crates of fruit and vegetables
to feed her hungry sisters.
Feel the pleasure
of sharing bread for one day
out of our long lives.

4) She learned to fix her van
in women's classes in L.A.,
leafletted with the anti-rape squad
in Michigan,
shot pool in gay bars up Chicago way.
O, stay by me,
won't you stay with me,
in a crumbling apartment
by a dark polluted sea.

5) She's seen the old dykes faces
scarred with bitterness and rage.
She's heard straight women tell her,
"We need you to remind us
of how free we might have been."
Take me in.
In our hearts The Green Wind whispers,
"Hold me, don't let me
get away."

6) Our city is an island,
our Lesbos, bright though gray,
and inside every tower
there lives or works a woman
who knows she's gay.
In her heart,
she hears The Green Wind whisper,
"It's time to settle down."
Let's make a home right here,
helping women find the answers
I've tried so hard to find alone.



Athena flying her owl

SHE WAS CALLED TIAMAT

Words and Music
by
Fran Winant



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SHE WAS CALLED TIAMAT

(Section A is the music for the first
verse. Section B is the music for
the rest of the song.)

When the heaven above had not been formed,
when the earth beneath had no name,
she brought forth both of them.
And she was called Tiamat,
mother of the gods,
creator of all.

She fertilized her own body
and bore her own seed,
giving birth like a tree
to women like herself,
powerful, enduring,
creators of all.

Women were giants then,
giants in the earth.
Each one lived a hundred years.
And they didn't eat meat,
respected the dinosaurs,
living like sisters without fear.

They planted the earth,
tended their crops and harvested,
ground their grain into bread.
And they learned to use fire
to cook and keep warm,
and they rested
in eachother's arms at night.

Tribes of women split off,
wandered across the countryside,
tamed wild horses and learned to ride.
And they built the boats
that would carry them
across the oceans of the world.

They populated the planet,
built cities walled with stone,
claimed the earth as their own.
Nations of women
living in peace
for a million years or more.

Then new gods tumbled
out of the sky,
watchful gods with cat-like eyes.
And their cold glance narrowed
when they saw there were no men,
and the bombs dropped
from their ships like rain.

You who think the earth is young
remember only one,
one deluge lasting forty days and nights.
But Womankind is old
she's been cut back to the bone
so many, many times.

Women struggled from the darkness,
their mighty bodies changed.
An angry mutant had joined the human race.
His first act was to kill,
his next act was to eat what he killed,
his next act was to rape.

Bombed back to the stone age,
clubs in their hands,
women warriors fought the savage men.
Some became Amazons
living with women as before,
riding their wild horses to war.

Some women rebuilt the cities
and ruled as warrior queens,
some captained ships that sailed
to every land.
And they restored the one language
spoken by everyone
and rekindled memories of a golden age.

The power of the goddess
renewed the earth again.
Her spirit even calmed the hearts of men.
    And some men helped build her temples
    and respected the laws she gave
    and lived in women's cities gratefully.

Where the goddess reigned, women's rule
brought a time of peace,
thousands of years without war.
    No animals eaten,
    no humans sacrificed,
    milk and honey enough to feed all.

Her priestesses gathered
her wisdom up,
like holy water in a cup.
    They measured the distance
    to the sun and the stars
    and their telescopes saw the planets
        spin.

They knew there were nine planets
circling the sun.
They knew the sun didn't go around
        the earth.
    They learned to build planes
    that flew through the air,
    and they mapped the land and water
        from above.

The goddess was the first to teach
salvation of the soul.
Her guardian angels, with moonlight
        on their wings,
    always hovered by,
    like sisters in our minds,
    helping us to fulfill our dreams.

The sky gods saw the nations rise,
the earth grow green and free.
The goddess was queen of destiny.
    They visited her cities
    and saw men arm in arm with men,
    and women growing strong
    with sisters' love.

"Sodom and Gommorah,"
the cat-men cried,
"These wicked cities on the plain
        must die."
    And the bombs fell again,
    filling the earth with fire,
    forty days and forty nights.

History began then---
the history that we know---
sky gods took men by the hand,
    "First you must rewrite the bibles
    of every tribe to say
    god not goddess made the world."

"Men are cast in his image.
Women's duties begin and end
with giving birth to more men.
    She who was your queen
    must serve you forevermore.
    Doing otherwise is a sin."

It took thousands of years
for memory of her to die.
She had ruled by many names
        since the start of time.
    She was Ceres, Cybele,
    Athena, Diana,
    Artemis, Isis, Astarte.

The ancient Egyptians
learned to read and write,
learned how to watch the stars
and how to count.
The Greeks learned democracy,
philosophy and art,
before her light went out.

In Greece she was changed to Zeus.
She was Jupiter in Rome.
To the Hebrews she became Yahweh.
And the Celtic tribes of Ireland
were the last to let her go,
keeping her four-leaf-clover
goddess-cross to this day.

The Christian priests who stole her skirts
renamed her winged form
the Archangel Michael serving their lord.
And when they made her woman too,
she was virgin mother of a god
whose seed wasn't even part of her.

Some women and men
still prayed to her even then,
but her power was tightly sealed away.
Gone back into the earth
to sing in the stones
and whisper in tree branches
as they swayed:

"Thou art mother of courage,
mother of science.
Thy children are the sky and the stars.
Out of thee unfolds
all that exists.
Thou art the salvation of the world."

Musical interlude

They're going to burn me
as a heretic.
They saw me flying through the sky
on my broomstick.
Slip me a drug
that will numb me to the quick.
Sisters, I'm going to burn tonight.

O, unhappy Woman,
Woman pursued.
In all the world there aren't enough
stakes for you.
Sisters, take my hands,
I'm burning through and through.
O, mother, O, goddess, what shall I do?

Inquisition, starvation,
plague and war,
grinning spectres of the rule of men.
O, sister, I've never been
so hungry before.
When will the milk and honey flow again?

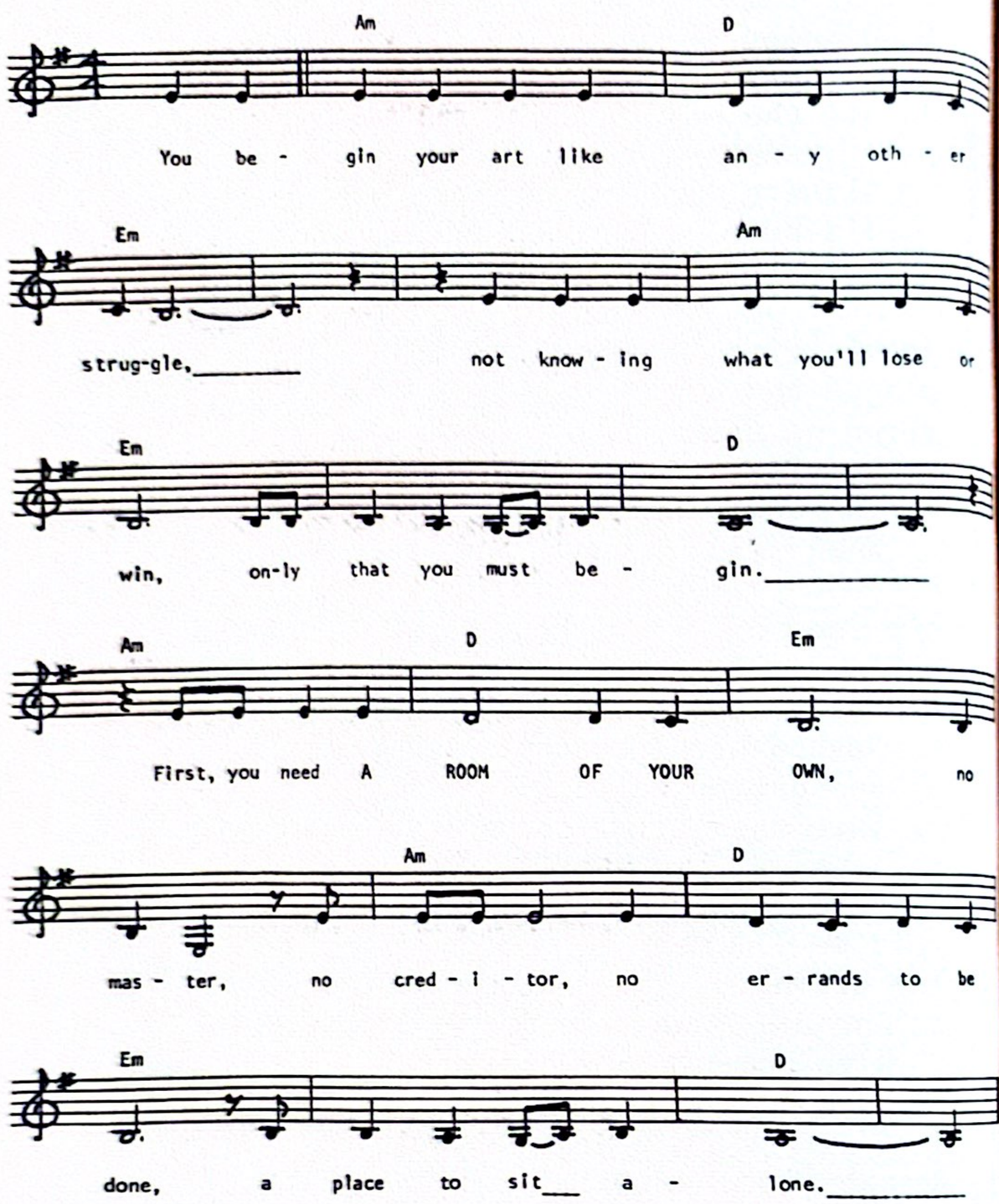
I'm Joan of Arc without
a kingdom to save.
Men have stolen the earth away,
washed her landscape with my blood
and driven me back
into the secret corners of my dreams.

They've locked me in an asylum,
told me I'm mad
for crying out against the rule of men.
And all I want to do,
with women everywhere,
is call the goddess back to life again.

Repeat first verse.

A ROOM OF YOUR OWN

Words and Music
by
Fran Winant



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A ROOM OF YOUR OWN

You begin your art like any other struggle,
not knowing what you'll lose or win,
only that you must begin.
First, you need a room of your own,
no master,
no creditor, no errands to be done,
a place to sit alone.

You know you've got to make some sense
out of your own questions,
make a space for yourself in your own mind,
where clocks don't always tell the time.
The roads of where you've been and
   where you're going
smoke like sunlight in the dusty air.
You can unravel your history there.

A witch-woman artist lives inside you,
juggling the pictures and the words
for all you've seen and heard.
They leap like fire with the heart of anger,
as if they'd slept two thousand years
in the ashes of ancient fears.

Everyone insists that you will fail---
why waste your labor---
but you know no one else can explain
the places that you've been.
It's as hard not to paint the picture
as to paint it,
as hard not to struggle as to try,
once you've opened your eyes.

It's like writing a letter to a friend
about what matters:
I've had thoughts you might be thinking too.
Tell me if it's true.

We need a path of our own
through the streets,
where no attackers hide,
forcing us to stay inside.
We need a world where our dreams are
no secret,
a world where we can feel at home
living lives of our own.

First you need a room of your own,
no master,
no creditor, no errands to be done,
a place to sit alone.
You begin your art like any other struggle,
not knowing what you'll lose or win,
only that you must begin.


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