Goddess of Lesbian Dreams

poems and songs

fran winant

Goddess of Lesbian Dreams



poems and songs

fran winant

VIOLET PRESS
P. O. BOX 398
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10009

Copyright © 1980 by Fran Winant
All rights reserved.
ISBN 0-912968-07-9
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 79-67022

Some of these poems first appeared in *The Lesbian Tide; Women: A Journal of Liberation; 13th Moon;* and the anthology, *Poets On Photography* (The Dog Ear Press, Hulls Cove ME 04644.)

Cover and book design by Fran Winant.
Cover painting by Fran Winant; title page drawing and detail from photograph by Flavia; p.51 contains details from photographs by Diana Davies and Flavia.

Typesetting and musical notation by Michèle Hehn.

Typeset at The Print Center, Inc., Box 1050, Brooklyn, NY 11202, a non-profit printing facility for literary and arts-related publications.

This work was made possible in part by support from the Creative Artists' Public Service Program.

Violet Press wishes to thank the National Endowment for the Arts for a small grant in support of this project.

CONTENTS

She Weaves Herself: Portraits

Letters By Eleanor Roosevelt
Detail Friendship With Lorena Hickok
(*The New York Times*, October 21, 1979) 6
She Weaves Herself 9
In The Crystal Palace 10
Celebrating Birth 12
Those Who Love You Wait For You 14
Strong Light Behind You 16
Collected Works 17
After The Last Class 18
A Place With A Key 20
A Sacred Grove 21
To Begin 22
November Springtime
I. Light Through Stained Glass 23
II. November Springtime 24
III. Womanbeast Is Making Her Revolution 25

Her Face: Dreams

Goddess Of Lesbian Dreams 28
Her Face 30
On A Sea Of Yeast 31
Night Flight 32
A Country Visit 34
Rush Hour In Heaven 36
Holiday Time 38
A New Kind Of Rabbit 39
My Clitoris Dances 40
In An Old House 42
Birthmarks 44
In Dreams You Come To Me 45

Credentials 46
Books 48
I Rested On A Bed Where Many Slept 50

Reincarnation: Songs & Music

Lesbian Nights 52
The Grand Seduction 54
Reincarnation 58
Angel Hair 60
Mindy's Song 62

SHE WEAVES HERSELF: PORTRAITS



LETTERS BY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
DETAIL FRIENDSHIP WITH LORENA HICKOK
(*The New York Times*, October 21, 1979)

You were a butter-maker's daughter,
I was a queen
who lived, as in a fairy-story,
in a house of white,
a house of white
where they locked me in at night.
But I had your ring,
a wondrous thing,
I'd look at it, recite:
she must love me,
she must love me,
or I would not have it,
I would not wear it.
She has given it to me
as proof of her love—
and what else could we exchange
in a land awaiting war
where we had to be brave,
Ladies of Courage
enduring our separations.
How well we endured,
I with your ring,
you with memories of my face,
my lips not an inch away—
closer than that,
as I kissed your photograph,
unable to bear the thought of you
crying yourself to sleep;
I, in my clean, bright house of white
with my husband, the president,
my family, the elite,
ruling as if it were our only destiny,
walking among the people,
serving their needs,
encouraging their busyness.
There was a soft spot

just northeast of the corner of my mouth
as it rested against your lips.
You remarked on it,
mapping me,
a territory
you could not completely learn.
I escaped,
you complained—
even the dearest face
fades in time—
but how well we sustained
our separations,
busy in this strange place,
nothing to fear but idleness.
I could lie without another need
or destination
holding you here all day
cut off from light,
candles in your eyes, voice, hair, gestures
leading the way.
How lucky you are not a man!
The gossip will not stick,
it cannot stick.
Encircling us like breath,
it drifts:
"Mother always wrote effusive letters
to many friends,"
my simple son explained,
a quarter-century and more
distant from our hungry bed.
You were a butter-maker's daughter,
I was a queen.
You became a newspaper reporter,
an unusual accomplishment for a woman.
We met when you covered
my husband's campaign,
told the story of my family, the elite,
how we were plain as the people
except for our house of white.
Later, you worked for the government,

told the authorities in vain
that relief was insufficient,
the people could not recover
from the Depression.
You drank your corn liquor joking about
how well we survived our separations,
only regretting
the alcohol sometimes made my image
fuzzy in your head.
I laughed with you
about the effects of drink,
encouraged you to give it up
along with overeating,
in a time
when people were starved and thirsty,
the economy crying War.
I cannot go to bed tonight
without a word to you.
I felt a little as though
a part of me was leaving tonight.
You have grown so much to be
a part of my life
that it is empty without you
even though I'm busy every minute.
How good it was
to hear your voice.
It was so inadaquate
to try and tell you what it meant.
Funny was that I couldn't say
je t'aime et je t'adore
as I longed to do,
but always remember
I am saying it,
that I go to sleep thinking of you.
Oh, I want to put my arms around you.
I ache to hold you close.
Your ring is a great comfort.
I look at it and think
she does love me,
or I wouldn't be wearing it.

SHE WEAVES HERSELF

Shadows outline
her dark eyes,
flared nostrils,
etched lips,
chin like Athena's
carved in air.
Her hand lies
angled
as if drawn by a brush
across her knee,
halftones
accentuating the knuckles.
Her clothes drape in folds
of echoing highlights.
She creates herself
like fine photographic paper,
forming the image
before the picture is taken.
Each turn of head,
shift of body,
exchanges
one portrait for another.
They spill from her,
cloned children,
sisters of the mother,
my senses spun together
as she weaves herself
through me.

IN THE CRYSTAL PALACE

In the Crystal Palace
each flower and leaf
trumpets femaleness,
petals and stamens
sprung with pleasure.
I reach to continue a thought,
find it impossible
in the stifling heat.
My eyes burn with salt sweat
as I focus my camera.
I have come here
to capture this inner flesh
and the waterfall
I know also exists inside me
with its ferns and vines,
slow streams unfolding
into a rock-rimmed pool.
The camera weighs
more than my body,
I can't feel myself
except through breaths
outlining my hollow lungs.
In my photographs
leaves will block the framework
of metal arches above me,
the bubble-like panes
of window-walls clouded with steam
that create
this hothouse atmosphere,
the tile floor, wood borders,
keeping nature in.
And I am no longer present
as photographer,
my pictures are cut
for seamless illusion.

A woman I love is eating fruit,
mouth pressed to the peel,

the thick scent
reminding me of her skin.
Her comments about art
and my wish to hear them
formed the structure
that drew us close.
It mattered that her words were there
as my mind blanked behind the lens.
A quality in her voice
when I hoped she shared my feeling
brought me to my knees
before an orchid on its stone.
I don't simply want a person
or peacefulness or work or food,
I have a delicate system of choices.
I persist in my purpose
even as I am dying of need.
I stun her with my colors,
shock her with my smells,
fold her into my shapes,
then lose her among women
talking about art.
I cannot follow what she says.
I have admired intelligence
to the point of loving
someone who makes no sense to me.
I was on display here
in my glory
only to be near her for a minute.
Outside,
birds sing relentlessly,
an army massed around the Palace.
Dissolving into the viewfinder,
I am fulfilled simply by breathing.

CELEBRATING BIRTH

At my birthday party
everyone wants to hold my tail,
an old karate belt,
telephone wire
wrapped around it,
strips of worn sheets
tied and knotted around that,
clumped ribbons of trailing cloth
hanging down,
dyed purple, dotted and streaked
with silver, gold, red, white
iridescent paint,
the entire creation
attached so it swings freely
from a belt at my waist,
the point of connection hidden
by a dark super-being cape
so it seems truly flesh
of my purple flesh.

We dance in and out of mirrors—
floor, ceiling, walls,
hurling us endlessly
through an expanding universe—
costumed elves,
personified seasons,
celebrating birth,
not yet ready for
the anonymous annihilation
the world holds out
as its special gift,
a trust fund of regret
payable at maturity.
We dance celebrating my birth,
my pulse, smile,
forced like bullets through
the narrow tunnel of my vision.

I flick my tail as I move,
it keeps the beat
with seething intensity,
it mops the floor,
I drape it around my shoulders
or a friend's,
the wire inside
giving it a feel of nerves and veins.
Holding it brings out
the lust in your hands,
makes you want to wrap me
in your Arabian Nights cloak,
gold and green,
your turbaned tongue
entering the tent of my mouth.

THOSE WHO LOVE YOU WAIT FOR YOU

An angel shines her light out
through your eyes.
Others see it, wonder,
"Can this one be illuminated?"
You like to have them come around
and look,
you count on it,
your angel brings you friends.
But then you tell them
there's no angel, no light,
and most, believing, leave.
Those who've seen her clearly stay,
waiting for her to surface again.
Sometimes they hear her speak
through you for a minute,
or see her outlined
in your form, radiant.
In sleep,
your angel tells you stories,
takes you for rides in fine carriages,
brings you the spirits of other women
to make love with in your dreams,
and when you cried for earthly lovers
she brought you these too.
She showed them her face
and told them it was yours.
But you are not your angel
though she is your spirit.
You need to feel pain
to know that you exist,
and then you're still not sure
you want to be here,
drifting out on your own breath
in the middle of a conversation,
fading out of your own light,
disappearing almost as easily
as she does,

leaving your body untenanted.
I've stayed beside you waiting your return
from somewhere I don't know,
maybe from a fantasy
where those you love—
those who love you—
torture you and laugh,
or maybe from outside the curve
of time,
a nowhere where you coast birdlike,
suddenly,
when the air current changes,
dropping into some arbitrary spot
on the line of past-present-future,
into the world I still call "reality,"
where you find your body
functioning without you.
I call you The Always Welcome Guest.
Those who love you
wait for you,
though dinner may be cold on the table
and night dark
before the elevator brings you
to your floor.
Sometimes I hold you,
giving you the warmth of my body,
and your angel stands behind you,
giving you breath,
until the inexhaustible source
of life is so close
I feel it on your skin
against my fingers.
Light pours into me through you
and I try hard
to pour it back.

STRONG LIGHT BEHIND YOU

Strong light behind you
shines right through your ears
and through thin membranes
of your back legs.
I tell people about this
but they don't care to stop
to admire
your inner iridescence,
this gold-rose flash of almost-wings
beside your head,
part sun, part blood.

There's a halo around you
where light catches
the fine fins of fur
that run along
the sides of your neck.
You are a noble-being
dressed in a high-collared dark cloak.
The V-shaped band of gray
that slips across
your white shoulders and chest
seems to hold the cloak in place,
clasped with a knot of bone.

Your shadowy polished eyes,
like amber crystals,
offer their light back to the world
in a casual blessing,
only a dog's glance,
while the spirit in you
sparks and swells,
a great tide expanding
from a single point.
This vibration touches me
until I have to turn away.

COLLECTED WORKS

You died of poverty,
you died of rage,
you died of anticipation.
Now we gather your manuscripts
into our collections,
we debate
methods of preserving old paper,
and enough money is spent
to buy back your life—

if the hours could be unstruck,
the earth unspaded,
your hair ungrown from
its prodigious length,
flesh unyellowed,
tight-stretched hollows
given back old wrinkles of
exasperation,
underside of skin
layered again
with muscle and fat enough
to support a smile
against jutting bone.

But your hours,
when they could be sold.
went at bargain rates.
Sister, do you shriek with angels now,
watching us bid for your
pen, your chair, your books,
and trade your
authentic handwritten poems
like shares of celestial stock?

AFTER THE LAST CLASS

In Amy's mideastern restaurant,
I feel infinitely lonely.
The man at the counter,
who remembers me,
seems diabolical,
a smile hung sideways
under a harsh kitchen light.
My paintings have just survived
their classroom critique,
teacher liking them enough
to point out colors I missed,
shapes I didn't see.
Part of me is still in class.
Low on energy,
I try to feel the life
in the faces around me.
We're all alive here, aren't we?
And very much in the present,
surrounded by our work.
Inevitably, I think of food
and soon the felafel sandwich
is hitting my stomach—
greasy, spicy, tough salad
and a ball of fried grain-stuff
cooled by creamy, flesh-colored dressing,
my mouth sunk into the lips of
the enclosing bread,
flesh on flesh.
Pan's face coming back to me
from this afternoon saying,
"Your poems really capture
the feeling of how it was
in the early days
of the movement."
Accepting, taking for granted,
that those days, that feeling, are gone.
In Amy's, the radio plays classical music,

light gleams on the salad,
colors soften, change.
Travel posters on the brick walls
draw me away.
I'm in Paris,
back in someone else's past,
sitting in on their conversations.
"Better work when you're twenty
or no one will love you
when you're thirty,"
a witty musician says.
"Yeah, and better work
when you're thirty," I add,
"or no one will love you..."
Reality not matching fantasy
in art, politics, friendship.
My new motto:
Make A Religion Out Of
Anything You Can Love.
I love as strangely as ever
but differently than before.
Paris lasts only as long
as the sugar content of the meal.
I taste my breath
and the spices come back.
I could use a third cup of coffee.
Music playing
directly inside my head:
Am I
The Well-Tempered Clavier?
What am I doing in this world?

A PLACE WITH A KEY

We allowed her to lock herself away.
She found a place,
not a safe place,
but a place with a key.
She fed her belly, her mind screamed.
We came to visit. She said,
"This may be the last time you see me alive."
If I must look into an abyss
pretending not to,
stay close to me,
maybe some of your sanity
will rub off.
Dancing,
I felt awkward holding her.
"I see myself in her,"
I explained to the others.
"Of course," they agreed.
"It's the same for us.
The difference is
we're on the outside."
I've sorrowed over lack of love,
ached for comforting arms around me,
haven't felt them when they came.
I no longer find this life unusual.
I've made my terms with it,
drugged,
so I see and don't speak of it.
Soon I'll have a job, the final test.
These doors will open
into a locked world called Freedom.

A SACRED GROVE

What would it be like
for the landscape of the moon
no longer to be your place,
for you to wander green earth,
claiming it as home,
for you not to smile
with thin-lipped welcome
at despair,
calling it a privilege,
equating it with love,
for you to bury
the bones of your hunger,
gnawed rough these years,
wearing your teeth down
while keeping them white,
for you to remove
the Abandon All Hope sign
you found it amusing to keep
over your door,
for you to step into open sunlight,
not always feeling it stark
as a bare bulb in a hall,
for you to plant
a stand of trees
in your interior,
a sacred grove
that swayed and sang
when the wind passed through

TO BEGIN

to begin
to continue to begin
to begin over
to continue beginning over
to begin and continue beginning
over and over again
not to have the strength to begin
not to know anymore
how to begin
how dare you not have the strength
you won't get anywhere
unless you begin
everyone has to begin somewhere
beginning for ten years
beginning for twenty
learning
forgetting
being told
you have to learn more
doing
undoing
being told to do more
being told to begin
for the joy of it
love your process
always beginning
never worrying about the end
caught in this moment
stunned
fixed
between desire
hope
wonder
a child kneeling
you have only to begin
again

NOVEMBER SPRINGTIME

I. LIGHT THROUGH STAINED GLASS

Light through stained glass
sends dust spinning
in the high old cathedral.
Candles cast up shadows like spirits
catching at the cracks
of this dimension.
Presences around the wicks
are eager to speak,
they are only voice,
they have no choice,
speaking is all, is all.
But words can tear you loose
from your hold,
calling in torrents that strike
everything against the walls.
The Temple is lit for celebration.
Singing that will not stop
climbs your vertebrae
as if you were the pyramid
whose measured steps
worshippers walked
to a stone platform naked to the sky
where the heart was plucked,
blood ran down,
while poets chanted, "Life is short."
Those before us knew
ultimate sacrifices were
less than petals falling—
how naturally
the rose dismembers itself,
blooming more full than it can bear.

II. NOVEMBER SPRINGTIME

In November I awoke,
went into the world.
Snow was falling
onto mud, stones, flowers–
the thinnest flakes that could survive.
My inner heat
dissolved them all.
I had mastered
the desires of my body.
Locked up with death
I had become very warm.
A hand wrote,
"Learn to love the raging light,"
across images of trees and sunrise.
Spring exploded the windows,
curtains shattered around it.
The bright wall made my glance flicker.
In November I walked the world
with poems for everyone,
lest they be allowed to forget me.
My lips were red,
infused with blood in the morning,
my eyes were dark.
My Inner Self sealed her fortress,
only let me in for a while
under heavy guard
to worship at Her Temple.
Still, all who knew me saw Her
shining through me,
asked, "What has changed you,
is it something you ate?"

III. WOMANBEAST IS MAKING HER REVOLUTION

She knows the value of murder
in providing a good dinner,
she knows the value of laughter
after a good kill.
On a jungle veldt of her own energy,
she daily slaughters everything
that whispers, "No,"
when she insists, "Yes,"
doing it with a gardener's touch,
pruning herself for growth.
Nothing is discarded,
her rage ferments in the earth.
She has given herself to herself,
falling gladly under her own weight.
Blood symphonies
like oceans in her breath,
say she must kill again
to satisfy her desire,
paws on the easel,
tongue licking the paint,
fur matted with dust
from urns of ashes
she has knocked aside
to reach this place.
Womanbeast is making her revolution,
will not be stopped.
Her heart barks,
praising November springtime.
Months have touched
the silken, secret places
at the backs of her paws
like lovers,
months have almost devoured her,
grown fat on her anguish.
Now, muscles tense, she leaps,

death dribbling across her face,
the gush of sorrow
transmuted to a wholesome food;
months eaten,
their wings hung
shattered in her fangs.
Primary colors bleed the hunt
into a tapestry.
Womanbeast knows
what the creative impulse feels like,
an artist sucking oils
out of the tube,
wallowing in the buttery mass,
tasting the essence
where thought and act unite.
"I have so much," she growls,
heaping up
the elements of her understanding.
"Goddess help me!—I'm still shocked
by my own resounding pawfalls.
Goddess break me!—as ground cracks,
seeded at spring.
Goddess yield me!—
as the many-breasted corn-fruit
pushes and pulls to birth."
She has surpassed
her own record for endurance,
she herself hardly suspecting
until now
the extent of her ability
to synthesize protein,
burning her own dead cells.
"Mother," she sings,
dancing against the struggle
of what she has caught in her mouth,
"Mother, O, Mother!"



GODDESS OF LESBIAN DREAMS

She was a goddess of lesbian dreams,
a wild charioteer,
now disguised as a taxi driver,
thin, dark, angular,
wearing a white Indian shirt
to show her origin,
driving an old-fashioned black cab
to show her antiquity.
But I'd just gotten a parking ticket
in the streets of the next dimension
where they switch the signs
to fool you with false directions
the way they do here.
"Hell," they say,
"if you can't accept astral projection
and have to make up stories about
how you're really using some
car, plane, or bus,
we're going to make it hard
for you to park."
I was relieved the ticket said only $15.
I'd expected it to be higher.
Someone had pushed my car
over to a hydrant
when I wasn't looking.
Still, I was mad
because I knew the sign was
changed.
So when the Goddess pulled up
in her cab,
giving me a knowing look,
I thought she was a friend,
walked over waving my ticket.
"You think I have a chance
to contest this in court?"
"Maybe," she said, grinning sadly,
"but are you so caught up
in the plot of this dream

you can't think of anything better
to ask me? After you've called for me
so many times?
Did you expect me to appear
in a burst of light,
blowing your circuits?
Even this cab
can hardly contain my radiance.
See it leaking out
around windows?
It isn't every night
I cruise past your corner of the universe,
or stop to see
if you recognize my face."

HER FACE

We sit in a circle
in one of Her night classes,
teaching each other,
awaiting Her return.
"Sandwich two photo negatives
together," I explain,
"and Her face appears,
delicately washed in,
as if by one of Her miracles—
Her halo, a
full circle of stars."

Everyone looks at the picture
I'm holding
and Her face
in my photograph
pulls me deeper into sleep,
the turn of Her smile
slyly curving space,
opening the way.

ON A SEA OF YEAST

Floating on a sea of yeast,
on bubbling tides of brewer's yeast,
the sunlight is warmer now,
the dog is calmer.
She licks my arm
telling me I taste good.
The pointer on the ouija board
drifts toward "Yes."
A voice in my sleep
says things will be alright.
Someone is sending me love.
It shivers along the joining of
muscles and bones,
my skin ripples like a snake's.
Or was it the exercise gadget
with tension ropes I pulled
yesterday
that set my body humming
like a shot bow?
I invent you beside me,
believing almost completely
in your solidity,
golden freckled whale
belonging to a world where
the Goddess cares for her children,
where her beasts smile as they swim,
her daughters smile in their sleep,
I lean into your heat and scent
imagining how in a moment
you'll awake, roll toward me,
open your arms,
hold me against your breasts.
We, the cornucopia
of our own bounty,
magical serpents of our own mythology,
tossing in waves of yeast,
slowly washed ashore.

NIGHT FLIGHT

I

We were supposed to be on the bus
but there was none,
and we had no bodies.
Ellen's face and voice were clear.
"You don't have to go with me," she said.
"We can go different ways.
Do you want to go with me or not?"
We were flying swiftly
through bright sunlight,
the park a vivid green under us,
city buildings at the edge of my view.
A woman was walking
far below us,
her brown sweater
dark against the grass.
Ellen moved away,
her voice still close
but her-self distant. She said,
"June finally met a woman in the bar
who's willing to pay her friends."
The woman below us was the one.
I felt jealous; I didn't have
such a profitable social life.
"She's written me into her will,"
Ellen said.
"Seven thousand dollars."
The will filled my vision,
unreadable,
and I flew out of the park
into the city.

II

Not New York, too clean,
maybe Chicago.
Early morning, yellow light.
Moving over the business district.
People getting off buses,
going to work.
I flew through a window
seeming to know where I was going.
landing in a chair opposite
a small plump man in a suit.
"I'm your agent," he said cheerfully,
"I'm telling you what to do."
Before I could hear his advice,
his voice became the vibration
that carried me slowly out the window,
disconcertingly able to feel myself
passing through the venetian blinds,
into a loft women were fixing.
I washed some clothes in a machine.
A woman with no body
but the distinct presence
of a housemother
walked toward me
carrying a red, plastic jig saw.
She held it out,
solid and bright,
in her non-material hand.
"Someone left this here," she said.
"Do you want it?"
I insisted it wasn't mine.
I made a watercolor painting,
then I was back in the agent's office
just as he was finishing a story.
"Don't worry," he said,
smiling, self-satisfied,
"You have until you're seventy."

A COUNTRY VISIT

I was visiting Alice Toklas
in her country house.
She was over ninety,
thin and light-footed
in a brown tweed suit,
moving
without hesitation of age.
Alice and I skipped
through sparely-furnished rooms
where women sat on floors
deep in conversation.
We went outside
past women
lying on the lawn
watching a long procession
of cars and walking women
moving slowly
along the highway.
Alice and I sat
on the back porch
facing the forest.
I asked about
a stone slab near us,
"Is someone buried there,
or is that an entrance
to tunnels under the house?"
She told me to ignore it
but I kept staring.
Finally, she answered
with regret,
"Yes, we had that built.
It's—it's—"
I found myself sitting
at a table on the front lawn
writing a letter
as the crowd continued
to stream past on the highway.
A woman came over, said,

"Sandy and I are driving
to the city.
It's only a few hours from here
and we're dying to meet
the women in the bars."
I looked at the highway
and thought again
there were too many
women going by
even for the summer.

RUSH HOUR IN HEAVEN

The day ended abruptly:
It was rush hour in Heaven.
We forgot the work we'd been doing,
forgot that just now
we'd been looking for a place to eat.
Stores closed, then were gone,
replaced by streets of private houses.
Day turned to night,
spring turned back to winter.
There was snow on the ground,
kids threw snowballs.
We were lost, had to hurry
to catch our bus.
We looked down side streets
until we saw a familiar open place
with steps and pillars
where crowds waited.
My mother chased a bus
shouting, "It's ours!"
I held her back.
Our bus arrived,
going the other way.
It was crowded,
but my mother still took time
to lecture the driver
that there were bigger crowds
traveling in the other direction,
the way she'd wanted to go,
and there should be more buses
coming to pick them up.
Why were there an equal number of
buses going in each direction?
"That's how it is,"
the driver said gruffly.
"That's how it has to be."
"But they're going home,"
my mother insisted,
and we're only going–

The words were lost
but I knew what she meant:
It was rush hour in Heaven.
Some were going home,
some were only going
to wake up.

HOLIDAY TIME

It always comes back to money,
don't I know abundance is mine?
The Goddess has opened Her Heaven,
dollars race into my hands...

A friend returned from a trip
to the west
is selling jewelry on the street.
Her trinkets are set in a frame,
symbolizing
the pictures she used to paint
when she could afford
art supplies.
Other friends watch to see
if she's successful in her sales.

A clever woman
has written a novel
entirely
on plastic and leather belts.
If she can't sell it
as literature,
she can try her luck
at a crafts fair.

It's Winter Solstice holiday time—
even my grandmother's
tired spirit
has risen from her immobile body,
insisting on taking me
to a fancy department store
to buy me a $50 ring
with a circle of small stones.

And each of my dreams
in its jeweled setting
sparkles with the message
of its price.

A NEW KIND OF RABBIT

The magazine article was titled,
"A New Kind Of Rabbit."
There were four photographs
at the bottom of the page:
rabbit on the ground under a tree,
rabbit slightly blurred,
transparent rabbit-form
rising from a solid rabbit-body,
then a picture containing
only trees and grass.
When I told Judy I'd found
a new kind of rabbit, she said,
"The teacher will be proud of you."
Then the teacher came in
looking stern.
She was the housemother
I'd seen in other dreams.
"How many vowels are there
in the word *rabbit*?" she asked.
I turned back to the article
to find out.

The next day, the real rabbit died,
the one I'd given away years ago,
the animal still connected to me
enough to try to call for help
or simply say goodbye:
the blurred picture symbolizing
disturbance,
the transparent image showing
departure of the soul,
the final picture explaining
that the rabbit was gone.

No photograph
of where it went.

IN AN OLD HOUSE

I'm in an old house
where everything cracks, falls,
breaks or gets lost
and many things have to be
packed in boxes, stored away.
It's good to have a big closet
for this purpose.
But then there's trouble
if you want to get things out again.
A woman accuses me of
not being friendly
while my life is being
not-so-neatly folded,
friends helping,
my own hands tying the packages
with cord.
A woman says,
"You only want to talk about
your problems."
Another asks for contributions
for a worthy cause,
"Just a bit of your money,
a drop of your energy,"
while others examine a box of
necklaces and bracelets.
I'm lying on my back on the floor.
A woman who loves me
talks soothingly,
holds my hand against my chest,
squeezing so I feel the pressure.
Her lover watches us, jealous.
Why is this the one
who has come to comfort me,
claimed by another,
soon to be torn away?
"Pull yourself together,"
a friend says,
leading me through a supermarket.

"Never mind your lost loves,
your old valuables packed up,
unreclaimable.
Look at all the possibilities *here*."

MY CLITORIS DANCES

My clitoris dances for you
in darkness.
You don't care to know
what you have touched.
You aren't here next to me
but I can feel you
moving away all night.
My dreams fall in knots on the floor.
At the coffeehouse,
a woman smiles at her lover
the way I smile at you.
At least *she* knows what I feel.

I try to write a poem about
how much I want your body.
My poem becomes a play,
new characters are introduced.
It's a family drama
about a woman, her lover,
her lover's daughter.
On a beach
a dog transforms herself
into a woman.
She is the daughter in my play.
I am attracted to her,
write a poem about her.
My poem is constantly being revised.

I'm in a bathroom.
A line of women enters.
One by one, they sit beside me
on the edge of the tub.
I have a bowl of water,
soap, and a sponge.
We play bath games,
a joyous celebration,
until someone announces
my time is up.

The last woman and I hurry
through our washing,
laughing,
squirming under the slippery soap.
I have forgotten about you.

In the morning I make love to myself,
summoning your intensity
and the face of the woman I saw
who was moved by her lover's touch.
You phone me and I go on,
floating on the sound of your voice.
Later, in the shower,
I sense my life
sparking along my surfaces,
but it becomes muted
as the day goes by.

DYKE JACKET: Poems and Songs PAM BRIGHT

BIRTHMARKS

Now
my birthmarks are moving.
The small brown dots
are bugs,
like the one
I pinned against your chest
years ago,
before I fell asleep.



IN DREAMS YOU COME TO ME

There are dark lines around your eyes,
drawn as if to accent your beauty.
In dreams, you come to me
as a woman I have just met.
We love each other at first sight.
The white of your dog-chest
has become a white blouse.
The black of your dog-back
has become a black suit.
You have long, dark human hair now,
swept around your head,
arms instead of paws.
We're the same height now,
just as we are when you dog-leap
onto my chest,
and we're mouth to mouth,
as we have often been.
More comfortable to embrace
now that we're both the same species.
There's electricity between us.
Our closeness must be expressed
quickly,
before the dream ends
and we resume our usual places,
I at my desk,
you on the floor.

CREDENTIALS

The Universal Life Church
Newsletter said:
You don't need a license,
you don't need a test
to have the right to speak your mind.
For $2 you receive
your minister's certificate
by return mail,
legal lifetime ordination,
and no one can take it away,
the right to marry people,
bury them,
preach to your family, friends, dog,
set up your church
and it's a Universal Life Church
no matter what you call it,
Christian, Jewish, anything.
"I'll call mine The Parthenon,"
I thought,
"Church of Athena, Diana,
all the blessed names of the Goddess,
consecrated to the memory
of the fighting Amazons.
I'll give my sermon every Monday
on the Moon's day."
So I sent my money,
the certificate arrived,
I wrote my name on the line provided
and I was a minister.
It was so easy
it wasn't real
until I awoke one night
bathed in a glow.
I was a point in space
and Ellen, existing as another point,
repeated,
"You don't need a license,
you don't need a test."

I thought,
"I'm a minister.
Lifetime ordination.
No one can take it away.
Isn't it amazing,
I did it in my sleep!
After the hard work I've done
for other things
with no reward,
here all I had to do was
go to sleep
and when I woke up
I'd achieved something
in that outside society
where hardly anyone succeeds.
I have credentials.
At last, women will respect me."
The glow intensified
and I felt euphoric,
as if I had received illumination.

BOOKS

I

I was both man and woman at once.
He thought he was running things,
she was his secretary.
"I'm perfecting my powers,"
he said, as she watched,
and he threw a book,
American Hypnotism,
into the air.
It bounced
a few feet off the ground,
hovering,
then began to rise
on bursts of energy
until it tapped the ceiling.
"Look how well I'm doing,"
he bragged to his secretary,
and as he turned to look at her,
the book fell.
She, never taking her glance off it,
caught it with her mind,
lifted it
to about the level of his waist.
When he saw it there,
he sent out his power,
and the secretary felt it
touch the book without effect,
so she gave it a boost
with her mind
and the book sailed up
to the ceiling.
"Look how well I'm doing,"
the man bragged,
and the book slipped down again.

II

I was inside a book,
Breakthrough to Creativity,
I saw the dark cover,
white paper,
lines of black print.
As the pages flipped, space opened
into a room in my apartment.
Translucent beings moved there,
radiating shyness.
"We're the Healers," they said.
"We're looking for a place to live."
"You can live here," I offered.
Then a friend rushed in.
"You hardly know them!"
she complained.
So I began hedging:
"Once a famous medium moved in
with five suitcases,
her personality, her prejudices.
There was no room for me,
I had to leave."
"That's alright," they answered softly,
"We're the Healers—
If you want us, we're already living
inside your hands."

I RESTED ON A BED WHERE MANY SLEPT

I rested on a bed where many slept,
teacher, mother,
others I didn't recognize.
As on a bed of waves,
I bobbed, was tossed,
above, beneath and through
clear forms
without barrier of flesh.

It is through others
that we rest,
like dreams
belonging to the bed.

REINCARNATION: SONGS & MUSIC



LESBIAN NIGHTS



LESBIAN NIGHTS

Lesbian nights in Tahiti,
lesbian dreams by the sea.
How fine it will be
when I win the lottery.

Then I'll be rich, sitting pretty.
You'll never again laugh at my dreams.
You will love me
when I win the lottery.

Seeing the sights in Tahiti,
soaking up culture under a tree.
How fine it will be
when I win the lottery.

Romantic flights in Tahiti:
I'll be Gauguin, you can be free.
Free to love me
when I win the lottery.

I remember when you were lost and hungry.
Then my kisses were riches indeed.
Now you wait to love me
'til I win the lottery.

But the thought of your face
goes right through me
and I still feel your hands touching me.
How long will it be
'til I win the lottery?

You've courted Lady Luck for your lover,
I've seen her turn her back while you weep.
O, can't you see there's more
to life than *her* lottery.

Repeat Verse I

THE GRAND SEDUCTION



THE GRAND SEDUCTION

It was just a day ago
at about this time,
I was sitting here feeling sleepy
though it was only a quarter of nine
and I thought I'd call you to say,
"Come over tomorrow night
and share with me the birthday dinner
I made for someone
who didn't seem to have the time."

When you answered the phone you said,
"Well, isn't this a big surprise?
I'm sitting here with a $5 steak
a woman turned down tonight.
She was in a sick and angry mood,
had her period besides.
I'd made plans to seduce her,
she went home
and left me a bouquet of flowers.

So let's have dinner tonight,
you bring yours and I'll broil mine.
We'll sit in the *Salon des Refusès*
drinking my red wine.
We'll laugh away our losses,
toast our future success,
and tell the tale of the Grand Seduction
that might have been
but just didn't happen this time."

Your steak was medium rare,
it had the look and taste of flesh,
but to my surprise, I didn't mind.
It went well with your red wine.
"I don't know why I wanted her anyway.
She bored me," you said.
"Guess I thought it would be easy
to share with a stranger

what I wouldn't
dare with a friend."

Your salad had a special nutmeg dressing
that made it taste like dessert,
and my eggplant parmesan birthday dinner
was so bittersweet it almost hurt.
"This is fun," I said,
"This is the way it should be—
Sharing with a friend the best we offer.
There isn't anyone
who deserves it more."

Our conversation wasn't boring,
it was full of our life and concerns.
We were giving names to your paintings
so they could go out into the world.
Between "Blue Sage" and "Purple Passion,"
your hand reached out to my breast.
"There was a lot of seduction
in that dinner," you laughed.
"I was brought up
to take dares," I said.

"Well, there's the door to the
bedroom," you said.
"Who'll be the first to go through?
I don't seem to be moving
and neither do you."
So we went through the door together
and lay down in a dream.
"This is just play, it's just a game,"
you said.
"We'll hold each other for a while,
then you'll leave."

You said I was going to be trouble,
you frowned and shook your head.
Then our clothes were gone
and our bodies answered
the songs that slept in the bed.
I reached up for your face,
it was softer than I'd guessed,
and in your mouth I drowned forever,
like the steak,
the red wine, and the salad greens.

"Why are you holding me?" you said.
"What is it that you need?"
"Do you want something from me?" you said.
"Is that why you're holding me?"
"I just want to hold you," I said,
"rest my face on your breasts,
sense the force of our intense bodies,
be blessed
by the grace that moves in our flesh."

All through work the next day
I couldn't wait to get home to the phone
to tell you about the vibration inside me
that felt almost as good as love.
"Why are you calling me?" you said.
"Don't ask for another time
when we laugh and feast
and share our pleasure.
The Grand Seduction
was only meant for one night."

REINCARNATION



Chord changes from F to G to A are made by
sliding F chord from Fret 1 (F) to 3 (G) to 5 (A)

REINCARNATION

As we drift through the ages of time
I hardly know which dream is mine
and which is just a story that you made up
about something to dream on, someone to love.

Like happy children, we danced around a tree,
hung a garland of flowers among the branches
and leaves
and prayed to the spirit that lives in the wood
for something to dream on, someone to love.

You made a picture and I wrote a song.
Then we acted it as a play
as the centuries rolled along
It became a novel, a movie, a symphony.
Our love was the garland we hung on the tree.

Through all your disguises, I know your face.
I pick you out every time, every place.
I cherish your pleasures, I weep when you go.
O, sometime I'll change how this story gets told.

Repeat Verse I

ANGEL HAIR



Introduction, interlude: D chord slides from Fret 2 to Frets 7,9,2,5,2

ANGEL HAIR

"What's the meaning of life?" she said
as she smiled and tossed her head.
Her angel hair caught the light,
and her eyes were wondrous bright.

God dissolves in purple shadows
and fades in a wash of white.
My eyes are wide open
from seeking day and night.

Once I feared everything,
but I fear nothing today.
I used to wonder if people liked me
as I sought the Ideal Way.

But now Heaven is near as air,
I breathe it with every sigh.
As the moon ascends the sky,
so in spirit do I.

If you could touch my mind,
perhaps you could find the key
to open my secret body,
unravel my waking dreams.

"But...what's the meaning of life?" she said
as she smiled and tossed her head.
Her angel hair caught the light,
and her eyes were wondrous bright.

MINDY'S SONG





MINDY'S SONG

I know what your dreams are for,
I see your way clear.
I always see you strong
and never lost.

I understand your struggles,
but if you could look from here,
you'd see how well your battles
have been fought.

I know what your life is for,
don't question what it means.
All you have to do is
keep right on.

I live to love my friends
and I believe they live for me.
What we have is priceless,
but we can pay the cost.

I know what your dreams are for,
I see your way clear.
All you have to do is
keep right on.

$3.50 ISBN 0-912968-07-9

Read this book awake at night.
Imagine that the moon has replaced the sun with her light.
walk outside to your own "Sacred Grove" your own place
of waking dreams.
And on your way, move through your own form,
Becoming Womanbeast, bird – fly! – or take a taxi driven
by a "Goddess of Lesbian Dreams."
Recognize her (give her a tip).
Eat at an all-night New York greasy spoon.

And seek. With Fran Winant.
With what power and authority we have to construct, re-create,
or otherwise transform this every/day world.
Perhaps even find out what is supposed to happen next.

Fran Winant creates her poems and songs from scratch
ing the surface. Of time, for instance.
Make a country visit to Alice Toklas
But do not let her slip through your fingers.
Because we regret the women passing by, passing on, passing through.
Or any time when we did not hold one another.

We are psychic/we are vulnerable.
We must live with these extreme contradictions.
"Books" – the nature of our power.
"A Place with a Key" – our pain/safety/madness.
Our sanity.

Our love. Our sexual love.
Lesbian love becoming lesbian work.
Celebrating.

"Celebrating Birth" – our own rituals of existence.
Our portraits. Our likenesses in the moon, the Goddess, our
sisters, mothers, lovers.

"To Begin" – the continuous struggle. Wondering why, but going on.

Read this book for one woman's answers and questions.
And read this book again during your day.

Arlene Raven
Los Angeles, California