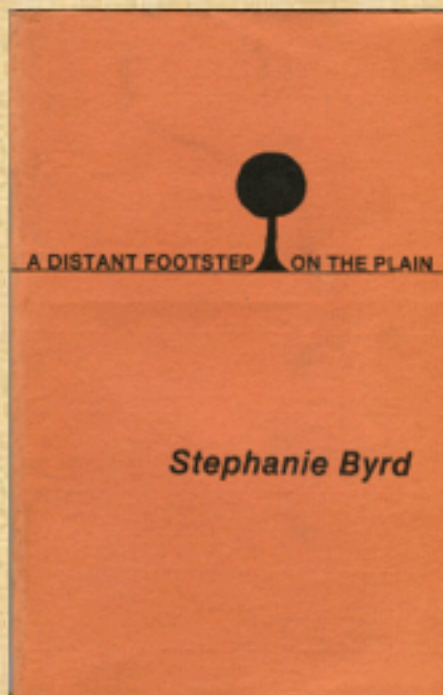


**25 Years of
Malcontent**

Stephanie Byrd



Electronic Edition

**25 Years of Malcontent
A Distant Footstep on the Plain**

Stephanie Byrd

Introduction by Julie R. Enszer
Afterward by Stephanie Byrd

March 2012

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Based on a work at www.LesbianPoetryArchive.org.

Introduction

The dream – or fantasy – of every graduate student doing literary studies is to discover a lost or forgotten text that is, or will become, deeply meaningful and influential. I experienced that pleasure of discovery when I first read Stephania Byrd's *25 Years of Malcontent* and later when I tracked down Byrd's second collection *A Distant Footstep on the Plain*.¹ *25 Years of Malcontent* and *A Distant Footstep on the Plain* are wonderfully engaging collections of poetry that situate Byrd as a vibrant American poet worthy of more attention, and they are important documents of lesbian print culture in the 1970s and 1980s.

I found *25 Years of Malcontent* while compiling a bibliography of the small gay liberation press, Good Gay Poets Press, based in Boston, Massachusetts. The very first poem of *25 Years of Malcontent* grabbed me by the hair. Here it is in its entirety:

The kitchen is inviting
The summer is epocal
It's a shame Burley
died such a way
Hanging there
the flesh being plucked
from his bones

These seven lines still delight and disturb me. In the first two lines, Byrd sets a bucolic scene, which dramatically turns in the third and fourth lines Burley's death. The final three lines bring shock and horror. Was Burley hanged? Who is plucking his flesh from his bones? As a reader, the poem made me want to look away, but I was drawn back repeatedly.

Byrd balances lyrical evocation and narrative within the poem through close attention to the craft of poetry. Within the spare seven lines, Byrd shapes the poem carefully. Each line is a new revelation of the compact narrative within a lyrical framework driven by sound and allusion. From the slant internal rhyme in the first line (kitchen/inviting) to the powerful fricatives and plosives (flesh/plucked/bones) in the final two lines, this is a poem that pleases both the mouth and the ears. Classical mythical allusions characterize Byrd's poetry, she studied classics at the university, and are most delightful when they cross-pollinate with allusive imagery from the African Diaspora as we see in this poem. From her twenty-five years of malcontent, she constructed seven artful lines – and this is only the beginning of Byrd's work.

The twenty-two poems of *25 Years of Malcontent* are filled with art, craft, and deep passion. Be sure to savor "Love Poem," "Cruising the

¹ Byrd's first name is Stephania, though on both of her published books her name is spelled Stephanie.

Causeway," "Retreat," and "[I awaken with your stirring]." Perhaps the masterpiece of this collection is the poem, "Quarter of a Century." Byrd describes it as her "drum-beating" poem. At the Modern Languages Association convention in 1977, Adrienne Rich read "Quarter of a Century" as the conclusion to her remarks for the "Lesbians and Language" panel.² In her remarks, Rich explored silence as "a crucial element of civilization" to maintain racism and homophobia. Byrd's poem "Quarter of a Century" embodies Rich's comments to the over 700 people who gathered to hear the MLA panel.

In "Quarter of a Century," Byrd writes about naming. The poem opens, "I'll never know my real naming/ Never know its origin." She asserts that she was "born into uncertainty and schizophrenia" and "a place where I have no say." She lives "with the ghosts of slaves" and her "body aches from unseen beatings." She cries "tears of blood" and works

Tilling a field of my brother's
And sister's
Bleeding bodies
And all in the while searching for a naming

Byrd then explores the naming through her grandmother who tells her that "her grandmother's mother was called Smothers." After lyrically mining the absence of names, Byrd affirms that she has sought names "in strange women's breasts/ and between their legs." Byrd names herself through the act of lesbian sex. The bodies of "strange women" become the corporeal realization for naming oneself as a woman and as a lesbian.

The volta in "Quarter of a Century" occurs when Byrd seeks "naming in bones." Bones become the central image for the remainder of the poem. Byrd gathers "bones of past and present/ carving them with knives/ reading them with bibles/ pounding them in rhythms" until she stands up "hoping to be Ezekiel." In the final stanza, Byrd writes,

Bones say seek my naming in the East
swollen cracked lips tell me to turn home
grandmothers warn me to turn away the alien ways of
what is white
For when these things are connected
Winding serpentine in hieroglyphs and
language
a name long evasive wanderer and prophet
will be written on the stone

² Rich's comments, as well as the comments from other panelists, Judith McDaniel, Mary Daly, and Audre Lorde, are in *Sinister Wisdom* 6 (1978), 4-25. This address became one of the foundations for Rich's essay, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynephobia" in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979).

Throughout “Quarter of a Century,” Byrd theorizes how to be named from the experience of being unnamed as a legacy of racism and slavery and from the experience of being a lesbian. She concludes that she is a wanderer and a prophet and that her name will ultimately be “written on the stone.” The sonic resonance of stone and bone, the image that dominates the final stanza of the poem, demonstrates the permanence, bodily and metaphorically, that Byrd seeks. Byrd’s poetic voice, grounded in personal experience and amplified through the craft of poetry and the intention of poetry to transform the personal into the communal, theorizes using metaphor, imagery, and allusion.

25 Years of Malcontent was published in 1976 when Byrd was twenty-six years old. In 1981, Byrd self-published her second collection, *A Distant Footstep on the Plain*. Typesetting, designing, and printing the book through a network of women, Byrd expands her poetic voice in *A Distant Footstep on the Plain*. The sixty-one poems of this collection further engage questions of race, sexuality, desire, poverty, power, and justice.

The poems of *A Distant Footstep* address racism and the experience of living as a black lesbian in a variety of ways. In some of the poems, there is a tone of reportage. “On Black Women Dying” narrates a series of deaths of African-American women in different locations in Indiana and Boston. In other poems, Byrd is more confrontational. In “Distinction,” she writes,

I can’t really tell
what is up
with this movement
toward ethnicity
waiting as I am to have
my bonds
struck in cultural manumission
who is to say what is black or white
culture

Byrd always grapples with the complexities of race, class, and sexuality, theorizing, through her poems, their interconnections and disjunctions. In “The Earth’s Poor Relations,” Byrd opens the poem with these lines:

All these maladjustment problems
add up
to one thing
work will get you money
but I seems
to find
that this
this receipt
of pay
isn’t enough

The title sets the intention for the poem, to speak about “poor relations,” and the selection of “the earth’s” poor relations suggests the broad emotional and intellectual reach of the poem, even as it opens with the very particular plight of the speaker of not having enough money. After this opening, Byrd notes that there isn’t enough money and “we always feudin” about small amounts of money that are “totally unrelated” when the “need for not 10’s or 20’s/but thousands.” Through these lines, Byrd locates herself in a particular place to excavate the conflicts that emerge about money. Another voice reminds the speaker of the poem about “how cousin allie/made do on \$40/a month” which she refutes as being “40 or more years ago.” Byrd grounds this poem in both a general and a specific location as well as in a particular historical moment. The poem continues referencing “Andrew Young or Cicely Tyson/ they making baskets of dough,/even millions.” While many of Byrd’s poems explore the tension between white people and African-Americans, here she excavates class conflicts within the African-American community, demonstrating how these conflicts are both interracial and intraracial.

“The Earth’s Poor Relations” concludes with this stanza:

just to give niggers like me
the chance to print up my own words
but the folks don’t know that
you gots to pay somebody
just to learn to ask right or
you gots to screw and I ain’t talking messing
it’s about your whole body and mind
and I don’t whore for art or money
and I don’t like giving them any more
than I have to to survive
but some how the fights
they break out and we cry
the animals howl along in tune
and my mind can only reach towards
thousands because
the millions would cost us too much

Questions of scale are central to this poem, from the scale of Byrd’s particular location to the earth overall, from the question of \$40 a month forty years ago or \$400 a month today, from “reaching towards/thousands” or “the millions,” the question is what is the scale, or register, to understand these economic questions.

These examples demonstrate how *A Distant Footstep* profiles a maturing poet exploring the power of lyricism and craft. Other poems not to be missed in *A Distant Footstep* are “Shiteaters,” “I’m Not,” “Trust,” “Distinction,” “Where You From,” “Untitled Sonnet,” and “To Dido.”

Together, these two collections of poetry, now available again to readers, reintroduce us to Byrd’s work. *25 Years of Malcontent* and *A Distant Footstep on the Plain* are important for a number of reasons. First,

individually and collectively, the poems in these two chapbooks are a delight for readers. Take time to read, enjoy, and savor these poems. Byrd is working on a new collection of poetry, which she hopes to publish soon. In addition, her poetry has been published in a variety of periodicals. A complete bibliography of Byrd's work is at the end of this ebook.

Second, Byrd's poetry is part of a broad tradition of poetry by African-American lesbian-feminists. The poetry of Audre Lorde has been widely canonized, and deservedly so, but Lorde is one poet in a chorus of voices, a chorus that includes Byrd as well as Pat Parker, E. Sharon Gomillion, doris davenport, Sapphire, Terri Jewell, Jewelle Gomez, Ai, and many others. Access to a broader array of African-American, lesbian-feminist poets is vital to our history, literature and cultural heritage.

Third, Byrd's work is an important expression of lesbian print culture in the 1970s and the 1980s. Byrd's poems made – and continue to make – frequent appearances in lesbian-feminist publications. Her first book, *25 Years of Malcontent*, published by Good Gay Poets, demonstrates the shared relationships between lesbians and gay men in the 1970s to further both political and cultural objectives. Byrd's second book, *A Distant Footstep on the Plain*, independently published, exemplifies the common action of self-publishing for lesbian-feminist writers. Self-published, lesbian-feminist writers accessed communities of readers easily through lesbian-feminist cultural and literary organizing, particularly in cities like Boston with strong lesbian-feminist communities.

Finally, Byrd's poetry is an excellent example of how lesbian-feminist writers developed lesbian-feminist theory through poetry. In both of these collections, there is a rich interrogation and reworking of a variety of political ideologies – lesbian separatism, interracial negotiations and reconciliations, identity elaborations and assertions, intraracial conflicts and detentes, and reflections on justice and injustice. Byrd engages politics and theory keenly in her poems while always attending to the art and craft of poetry. This may be one of the reasons why these two collections bring so much pleasure to readers.

The Lesbian Poetry Archive is pleased to publish a new electronic edition, which combines both Byrd's chapbooks into a single ebook. In this edition, you will find first a facsimile edition of *25 Years of Malcontent* and then a facsimile edition of *A Distant Footstep on the Plain*. The two poetry collections are followed by an Afterward by Stephania Byrd reflecting on the two books; the ebook concludes with a bibliography of Byrd's work.

I hope you join me in finding delightful provocation, extraordinary beauty and craft, and sublime reflections on race and sexuality in the poems of Stephania Byrd. It has been an extraordinary pleasure to encounter and re-encounter Byrd's poems and to compile them into a new electronic edition. I hope other readers will find as much pleasure as I in this book.

Julie R. Enszer
March 2012

25 Years of Malcontent

Stephanie Byrd



SB

**25 Years
of
Malcontent**

Stephanie Byrd



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

First Edition
First Printing

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For my sister, Michelle

The kitchen is inviting
The summer is epocal
It's a shame Burley
died such a way
Hanging there
the flesh being plucked
from his bones

You were zeroed in
I never thought you
to take aim

Your prey

I lie now bleeding at your feet

Draped by caretakers and curtains
I lie raped yet assured by all
that such mishaps are quite common

Derby Day

the races have begun
and taken hold of
the populace
pray
pray
for ben hur
and his jewishness

Memoir to Collective Living

Sweet faggot
I've dropped my pants for a cigarette
But I've dropped more than that for
your sugar coated insults
Maulings of my soul
Queen of pirates and pillaging
You have dragged me from dementia
into your private cell of torture
and torment
Leave me as I left you
To be assassinated by our own flailing
tongues

Cruising the Causeway

Love was stark as a hen's carcass
precious as a mother's smile
we sat on my porch swing and watched love
 come and go
 go and come
 come and go
licking our lips and fingering slim pickings

Retreat

I had planned to lure you off
to some quiet place
I had planned to run my fingers
down your curving breast and
suckle its rough brown nipple
But the weather got bad my
aging knees began to ache and
I had to look for shelter
Then I planned to sit with you
in front of the fire and tantalize
you with wine and tales of my childhood
I had planned to gently caress your
legs all the time filling you with
laughter and wonderment
But we were joined by
merry wanderers who stayed just
long enough to remind us that
we were not alone
Yes I had planned all these things and more
leaving no room for winds and rain
leaving no room for other people
and in my fantasies leaving no room for you

Dem Bones

the love bone has arrived
bleached, it is white and holy

it's here! another bone for my garden
it's received! another lady to tea

Juiced and ready! Long awaited
Arrived its coming was expected

Menstruation 73

“it’s no good”
but this pain is so fine
i sit in agony — at your beckoned call

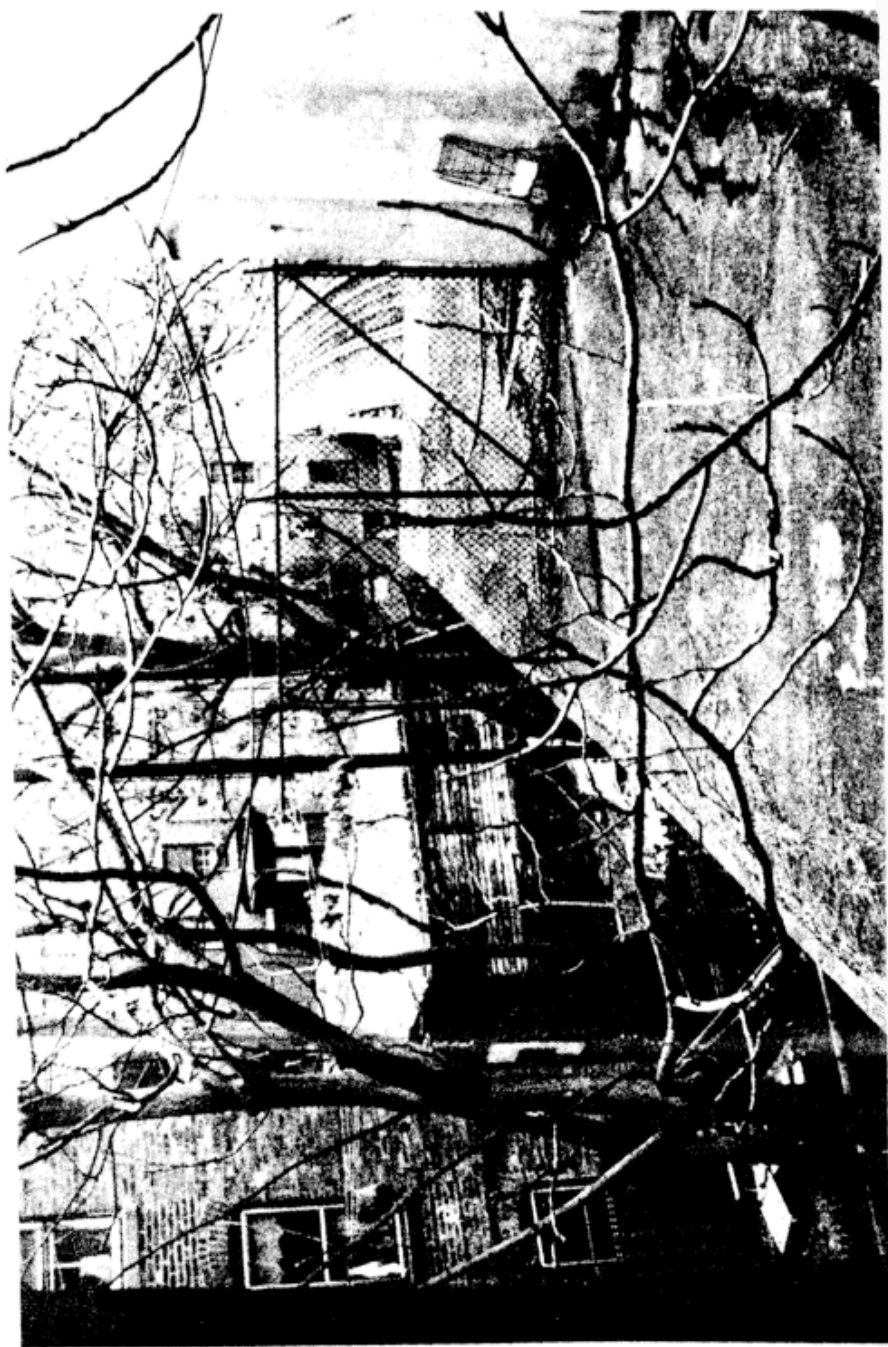
“it’s not feasible”
but this pain is me
i chortle at each flailing — at each session

“it’s wrong”
but i am its initiator
i exist for spastic ‘seconds’ — monthly drippings

Genise

The silence after a child screaming
the subway passes roaring underground
The little one shrieks Brown cheeks
nestled on flowered sheets
She is a girl-child
3 years into the celestial revolution
The subway shakes my home's foundations
The little one stands steady
She defies earthquakes and adulty no's
to the steady siren of her wail

I awaken with your stirring
in your bed
you try to rise early
to start my day
I sort through your webs
early on
I am still sleeping
You are your sex maniac
still sleeping
under Eros' wing
I am but a fly on your wall



Listening to you talk to my kid
I can never believe that
you once walked streets
Covered by dung and desperation
I can never believe that
you once laid your meat out
on a table to be eaten and digested
You challenged my weaknesses for hustlers
and pot
while denying the hustler and head
who lives in your body
And I now question your reality
because without due acknowledgements
to invested parties
not even you have title to the credits

In the larger room
she has
next to the double bed
a single rollaway
where dad sleeps
his youthful nightmares
by himself

I feel his pain
in sleeping alone
she is a hard woman
who has her way
and who
was born to give grief

We love her
he and I
We kiss her
he and I
We do her bidding
he and I
I sleep with her

Cooking red meat
a dog
bays
and I wonder
if you're really
dying
or if
it's just my illusion
that lies
in the wake of
my credibility

My credibility
a lover
of juicy tidbits
who wants
your warm
moist cunt
in its mouth
wanders in kitchens
of smoking meats
on which to nibble

It's just dealing my dear
a dog baying a dying
meat cooking illusionary pans
and kitchens
It's here like the pig in the poke

Mimi

i watched the rain destroy the roses
the length of time is not essential in these matters
i had only to wait to see the petals crumble with each drop
Frailty was never a forte of yours or so i'm led to believe
but you were crushed in a rose-like fashion and lie wasted
flattered by the undertakers rouge and hip deep in dirt

Fortified by Indiana rushes
I make my return
through aeons
webbed by wax-drippings
I sit
contemplating waiting
for your confirmation
or
harried denial
that we once
tore
from each other
the very innards
of a venusian calf

Mother's Cadence

jews are desirous of crucifixion
and christians are waiting; waiting at the ovens
Like all those too presumptuous in their aspirations
those wishing me ill winds and tidal waves
she murmurs . . .
bouncing through novenae
though hail marys to an unholy cadence



self

Love Poem

My legs, feet
are my father's
small steps taken
with painful relief
I move towards you
with jubilation
on my back
I walk upon you
with footsteps of
weariness erased
by feigning words
I love you with
the stiffness of
age and
merriment of
youth unborn

My spleen is my mother's
venom drips from fangs
of vicious deceit
poisoning me
leaving me running crazed
and brazen
seeking antidotes
in rosy towers
and greedy women
You suck my vagina
draining me
of pus and bile
offering your mouth
as antidote

My immortality is my grand's
she gave up life
to leave me unprotected
she gave up breath
that I might breathe
in threatening waters
my life is immortal
I drape you
in its gauzy cover
thus sharing immortality

Quarter of a Century

I'll never know my real naming
Never know its origin
What would you call this high yellow
Born into uncertainty and schizophrenia
Born into a place where I have no say
I live with the ghosts of slaves
Whose blood still colours my dreams
What would you call me
me whose name is jigaboo
and nigger
My body aches from unseen beatings
I cry tears of blood
I work tilling a field of my brother's
and sister's
bleeding bodies
And all in the while searching for a naming

My grandmother tells me
that her grandmother's mother
was called Smothers
And though I've never met her
I saw her faded photograph — she was
old withered, a woman whose face
had disappeared with handling
scarred and withered
another woman whose head
bore a white man's scalping
My grandmother tells me these things
and secrets too
until I can hear her voice repeat it again
coming up from her grave to repeat it again
These are my nightmares from which came a naming

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

I have sought a naming in bones on which I stand today
with the bones I used to construct words as a child
and in the bones which I throw to ask my gods
to answer me
this naming
I would gather bones of past and present
carving them with knives
reading them with bibles
pounding them in rhythms
until my granddaddy would shout and I would stand up
hoping to be Ezekiel

Bones say seek my naming in the East
swollen cracked lips tell me to turn home
grandmothers warn me to turn away the alien ways of
what is white
For when these things are connected
Winding serpentine in hieroglyphs and
language
a name long evasive wanderer and prophet
will be written on the stone

Liturgy: Twenty-two

At a playhouse opened to the public
I am punch n judy, a streetside symposium
Dangling my platitudes with feeble mimicry
I am the fig long lying in a vendor's wagon
Yielding less than maggots who eat
this youth-full fancy
I am the gallery of roses and rotting flesh
the last vestige of wasted merriment

Feeling being forced upon me
Like waves of jello
the red sea parts
and you and me are inseparable friends
Like an old record
I play again and again
to whatever's satisfaction

I can feel it in my lips
My ass moves towards warmth
Press warmth upon my buttocks
my breasts
rub my crotch the lips
I am warmed, hot water in a bath
I can feel breath in my throat
I choke up phlegm
Lick my chest, the lips
Dart in to make me choke again
I can feel sight in my eyes
Push sight into my eyes, the eyelets
I see writhing eyelets clearer
Eat me
Eat me
Eat me
alive

I am alone through no fault of my own
It is cold, water drips from my ceiling
Puerto Rican rum and women
I want even more
hold me from thinking
What's your game
I want to exhaust you with love
What's your game
I want a piece



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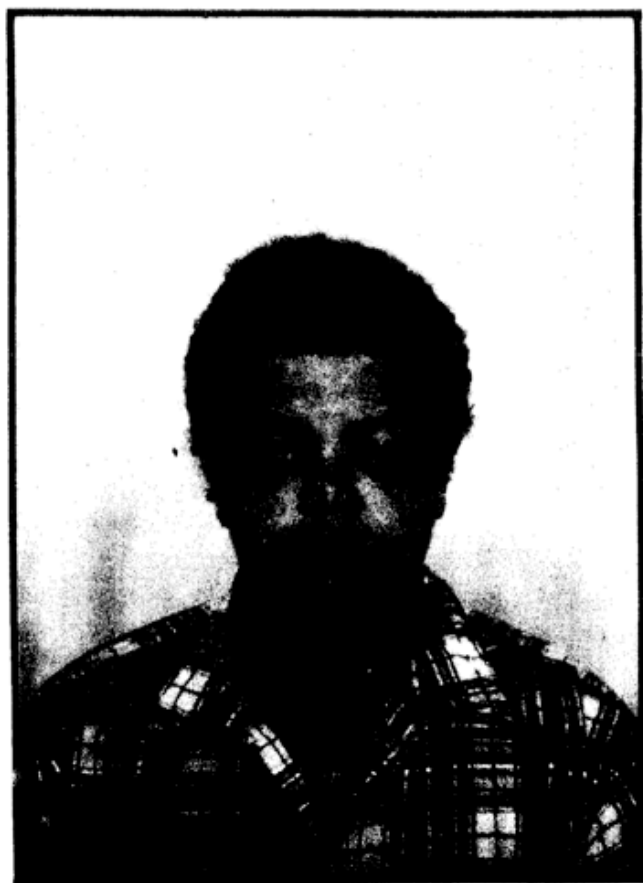


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Stephanie Byrd



The Good
Gay Pals



A DISTANT FOOTSTEP ON THE PLAIN

Stephanie Byrd



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**A DISTANT FOOTSTEP
ON THE
PLAIN**

by

Stephanie Byrd

**First Edition
First Printing**

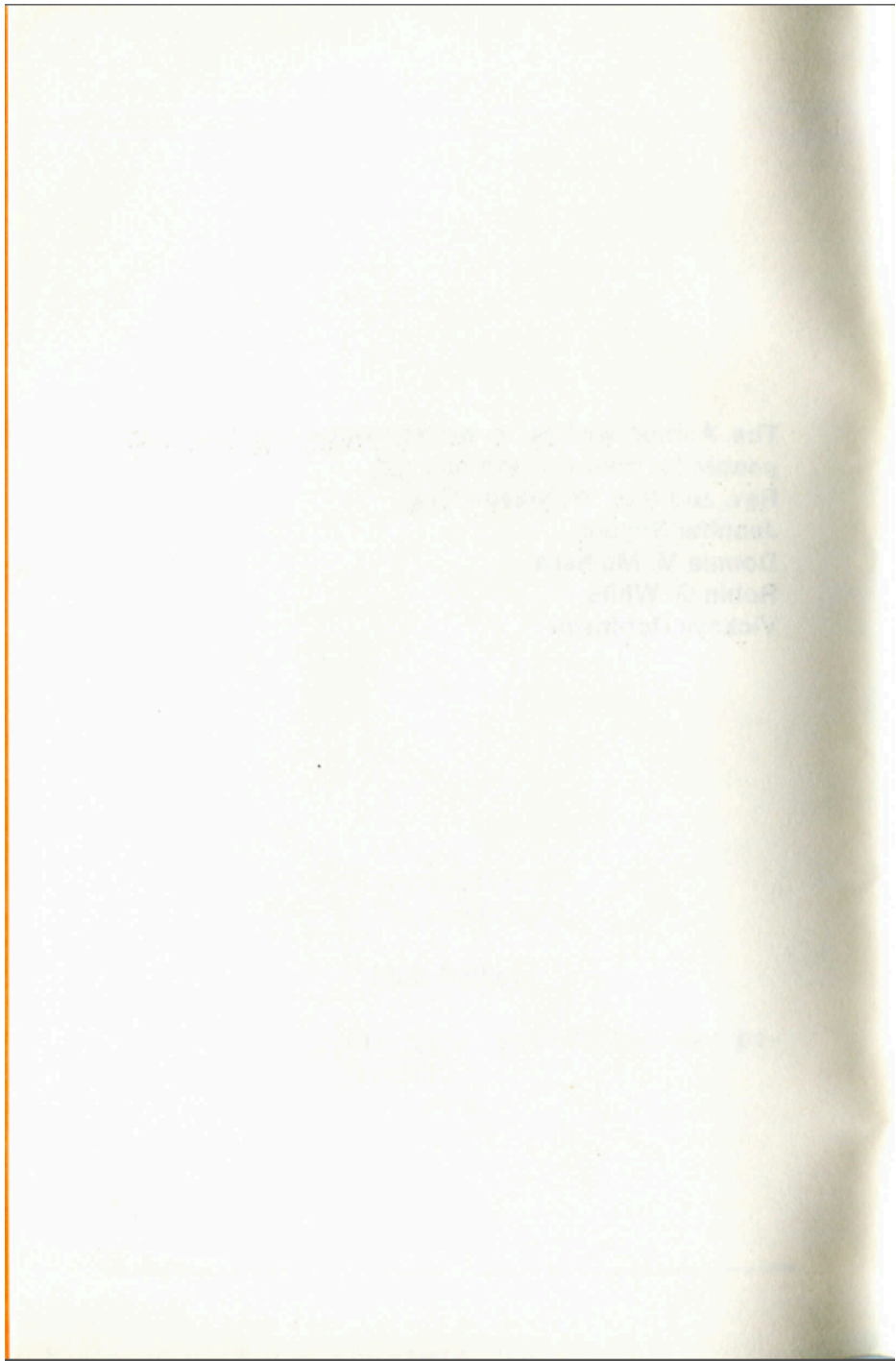


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One on Me

"eh yah" say
have you heard
about the legitimacy scam
they been
running down
on you all
and me too
are you hip
to the disability
being put down
on you all
and me too
for awhile too
like how black can you get
how white is the lie
when will the dreamers return

in the dream
she thinks
she's
well she is a woman
and black at that
twinkle cross the keyboards
she doesn't want
what
cadillac cars
brings in its trunks
she doesn't want
what trouble
can bring in her box
can she sing
and dance too . . .
hey, don't go say
it's for the children
the man has said you can
be like him
but is it free

why so loud
why so loud
who said
be like me
isn't one enough just to be
one to be
not me but you
I am me
one
not a
or even to be a
but free
"eh yah" say
have you heard about
the legitimacy scam
they been running down
on you all
and me too for awhile too

Scream

**not enough tears shed
for any black person
who falls by act of violence
not enough tears shed
shed
shed**

Half Step to B Flat

**gentle put down
go play these
for a let down
not negative
understand
not put out
but put down
gentle
but down
she-it**

Hambone

so she pulled that
hamstring again
what she think she is
anyway
a guitar
frustrating to the limit
she don't listen
to reason
always plucking that string
pick axeing some rock
building a better rat trap
for them and her to live in
bamboozled to beat the band
she's still got plans

to pull up weeds
and put down fence posts

before some squatter dump
anymore that rubbish
in her den
play that guitar hamstring
pluck it to the bone
play that guitar hambone
string it back again

Shiteaters

let's talk about shit

**your shit and mine
if I eats your shit
I gets sick and
after a lingering illness
I dies
so let's say I ain't eating your shit
Sister C says, you may not know
what my shit is
let alone yours
so let's clarify
my shit is sisterhood with reason
it's sisterhood with responsibility
it's sisterhood with possibility
even flexibility
if I eats my shit, I'll
sure enough live to see the
day after tomorrow
but your shit . . .
it's the paradox that kills me
not the taste
it's passing up the carcass
for fecal repaste
it's sucking a dry stone
in the midst of a water fall
it's sisterhood with no responsibilities
possibilities
or reason
it's your shit and you see if I eat your shit
Baby, it's death**

Urban Guerrilla

down the path
through the empty lot
she bursts through
the hurricane fence
onto the street
to a bus
headed down town
over hidden cobblestones
her disembarking heart
shimmies down that rainpipe
shimmies down that rope
to the snare
where she strangle
like the proverbial tar-baby
being shipped down home.

heavy metal
weights her ankles
and soul to the wire
she
no
longer
free
yet committed to that feeling of contained
power
pulsing
in her loins . . .
to that woman
chained in the berth
opposite the slop pail

freedom sparks the ritual fire
in her eyes
her face a mask of complacency
she can haul this slaving ship
to some new plantation
and with tooth and nail
she cut us free from the womb
of a ship bound for the fertility fields of North
or South

she spread and grow
dripping into slavery's palette
slashing sagging frame houses and
crippled brownstones
with her color
the wild pink of bramble rose
is released from
her concrete detention
she come down from the weeds
armed with these weapons
headed downtown
her heart on her sleeve

Reeter

it is every poor child's dream
to escape the smell of fresh-hung laundry
and run off
somewhere, anywhere
where it won't hurt and she can
try something different

it's the money that makes being
different
work with ease
and it's the sparcity
that seaming gap
twixt tarpaper and brocade
which makes us estranged

of course neither of us is getting
any younger and I am sure
the sinus drip of success
is as sweet as my ignominy

luck may have it in the end
I may have to change
my name,
for from the beginning
neither of us ran this game
un-noticed

Red Bone of Narcissus

night
caught you
by surprise
as the carmelite
proffered
narcissus
and her red loins
cibola
has you hid
in her adobe pebbles
while splintered bone
seeks
gold
for christian coffers

June 21, Warren Street

**live in Amerika
and make a buck
be a diesel dyke
be a footstomping, eye-rolling
nigger to boot
you can make a buck
no one's paid me yet
I shall refrain from making nigger
my first distinction
but I ain't been paid, massa, suh, that is
no acreage in the
Mississippi lowlands
no bucks
what you say?
they's a fall yella nigger outside
with a white woman
renegades
they looks like niggers to me
a buck, one to a million
lousy bucks
and I can only get \$5
worth of gas in Roxbury**

Fernald Stories

I
constricting folds of material
bind the vagina and her
secretive sister
in deprivation of the labia majora
wearing similar restraints
binding breasts
bruised
by the air
I remember the beat
as hot air
dried cotton
brushes its abrasive countenance
against
my skin

II
they pulled Tee's teeth
she has only one left now
she is upset but why allow it
she is too grown to indulge in pouting
I don't allow lovers to pout
and because sexual fantasies
do not abound here, they got Cagee
high last night
she jerked herself off
and I am sure it's not the first time

III
little mother with your hitched step
how often did you fall prey
to that man
before they yanked your brain
pulled your tubes
cut out your teeth
folds of skin
hang down your torso
powdered and lotioned
you're the belle of the ball
whirling out
into
the dancing madness
you stop
where your brain leaves off

Back Off

the defendant is art
and the plaintiff the negro
yes, your honor, it is true
the negro can read and write
however the level of acculturation is
greatly affected
by the environment
in which the negro lives

well, negro, what have you to say?

I say, they will come a time
when all degrees will be taken
back and it shall not
fall on my head

Respects

I went to the graveyard
when I went home
there are trees there who were 90 odd years old
when I was born
I saw some graves
in which lay the
remains of my relations
I learned again
about the one
from Gainesville, Florida
and the spot she inhabits in the plot
my mother suggested that I go
though I had thought
of going there
myself
grandmothers, great aunts alike
are laid out
in zig-zag fashion
we drove to a spice bush not far
from where
my grandmother first coupled the night of
her wedding
and there seemed to be no one
to tell about buying the house
and the number of jobs
in the last 7 years
but min
death almost claimed her 10 years ago
and missed her elusive prey lately again
my mother suggested
we go see her after dinner,
so we drove
the bricks are
glazed in front
on the sidewalk
they shine like nickels and dimes
it's a spring-warm
midwestern night
the years have passed
quickly for some
it was only yesterday
and I haven't changed
my mother mentioned that she has
grown old and we all have to go
sometime

Boston City: November 1978

**her love
having been dispatched
safely home
she moved up the hill toward work
or some semblance
of ties to the mainstream**

**her breath wafted in
across town
through
the radiator's
barrier
of heat
causing her mind to rush forward
to daylight's
failing shadow
the lustre of the moon
and candlelight
disguise
the sleeping dogs
as the cat begins her prowl
lost long before she awakens
enfolded in slumbering arms
to be dispersed by the rising sun**

The Beer Apron

**the beer apron
started at her hip joint and worked
its way down
from human view
to her nest of vigilante harpie hair
she never combed
except to play
the greasy slit between her legs**

**she would lift it in times
when aging
became an ominous knock
upon her door
dropping it back
the point made**

**the apron covered her since
time immemorial
an inheritance from the bush
wild and pulsing with life
in glade greenery
she would poke on her pipe
and finger the musical key
of her existence
until shadows fell
and the river flowed into night**

7 November 1976

bloody racist whore
maddened by your people
I want a girl with a peaches
and cream complexion
and a full-time job

such attention is uncommon to me
so I scream
when you touch me
healthy hair and bad teeth
ain't nothin' to me because
I will find you a dentist

a poem for a feather
with hollow
neckbones and
protruding hips
I remember your lips so well

Grandmothers

return was the message she
seemed to recall
most clearly but
the other grandmother would say
nothing to her
child for she was too wise but
she would make her laugh and
the snuff would leak down the
corner of her mouth in
a giggle her
grandmother was a slave and
that's all she knew

return home because even
her home could be the best her
people were still there and
she would like to see them but
she would settle for graduation

she went to high school and
she was not a slow reader she
read the other grandmother
letters and a verse or two because
the other grandmother was dead and
she would not talk

the other grandmother had taught her that
women and vaginas were the same thing and
when she was dead she
was kept away from the other
grandmother but
she was there when
she graduated and
she came to college and told
those girls not to steal her money
then
she went home and
the other grandmother left



1980

the only solace
a child I had been seeing
since she was
a gangling kid
growing into a woman
I sometimes feel
that it's not
going to work out
that I'll always
be out there
begging for the love
of someone
besides my mother
father,
and my sister
like no one knows it's hurting
the crackers want their salt pork
I am hurting in a vacuum
wanting,
needing love
and understanding
bestofall

white people
who need so much
from me
who need
for me to take them
to the waters
I am not baptized
in blood
and cannot ask
for a witness
Yet death is not preferable
to life
I do want to live
want to love
some woman
who might know
when the pain is on me
that I need the blues
and a bottle of everlasting spirit
to take me
from the violence
of this stolen land
home

home

home

All Night Long

I tried and tried to put
disparaging thoughts
from my brain
from my life
I wasn't trying to cop out
I just couldn't stand
the pain, the violence
but sometimes a love
so fine
cannot
cover such a wound
so when it seeps out
this poison
it surprises
everyone
because I had been being
a good nigger
Love should have known
when I stopped combing my
hair
that the jig had up and quit
I will try to take
this pain to heart
but it cannot be carried
as a cross
the baptismal is not
clean
and I feel soiled
enough
from years of bed rest

I told people it was like
trusting Hayes to come through
and when it happened
I put our collective suffering
from my brain
looking to magic for the sign
As I lay lingering
I could not be blinded
all those young girls dying
so I rose and each blow
was aimed to cripple
but I rose
against this violence
violence not new
but old
precipitated
against my loved ones
and those I can't say
I knew
a violence so rich and good-tasting
it has hooked the black man too
ah this poison is too fine
to share
it's knocking you dead
while the buzzards
await your dying tremors
death is all around me
I must not be at its mercy
for today I shall
begin to sit up
with its malingering foulness
and I will sit up with it
till one of us is gone

Rum and Slavery

parfum from the oriental
occidental time changes
mid-sea
on the invisible line
running north and south
unable for so long
to write anything
but platitudes
yet much cannot be written now
and I wonder if ever
as big and tall
white women
push me and glower
a hatred they don't recognise
in their eyes
penetrated
me unlike rape
when wispy blonde on blonde
shoves her
tits against me
and gropes my behind
still glowering anyway

even if I turn
to wonder
why
a hatred old as the stolen
land
pushes its tide
at my shoreline
covering me
till I hack
and hew
from vain expectation
I can love my friends
my lover
my family

I don't want them
touched
by rum and slavery
but who remains
outside
this ultimate wisdom
which started
as a child's
first waking fear
which grows to adulthood's
first sleeping nightmare

hatred and race
rum and slavery
no god can
save you now
the burning eyes of darker faces
watch you
if you will
sleep at night
wake at day
the inescapable truth
of white sin and misdeed
sails into port
with its next shipment

Every Day

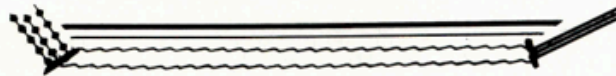
I shit and piss
and have sex
just like any white girl
you will meet
at any bar
I sweat and toil
my years away
hoping to enjoy my retirement
just like any white girl
on the job
I cry and fight
with my lover
just like any white girl
on her hearth and home
But I am not just like any white girl
because
I'm not working to have
what she got
to be who she is
to live in her house
I struggle to live for the beauty of a pansy
for a little black baby's song
for my lover's laugh
I struggle for the blaze of pink
across the evening sky
for some bar-b-cue ribs
I struggle for life and the pursuit of its happiness
I struggle to fill my house
with joy

Terrorist

**Am I so totally debauched
that I only express my life
my love in anguish
the anguish of one whose skin turns
its tactile side into an eye
Danger
to the sight and touch
the infinite space of hatred grows
and I falls forward
into its whereabouts
"Fire Bucket"
"Fire Bucket"
"take that bucket"
"and quench this flame"**

Gulf Stream

ah warm
warm
warm
baby you
you something good
good to the touch and the taste
and the smell
so real
like the sandbars underwater
how deep is your ocean
taking the plunge
deeper
deeper
into the warm
warm
warm
of you
you something good



Hold Of Our House

**I am safe
within the
hold of our
house
away from
the petty jealousy
which leads to violence
I get terrified in the large numbers
of Amerikan white men
who run me
to my secret cache
of angry dykes
Fear can turn to loathing
my resistance is weakened
by this virtue
till I am safe
safe within the hold of our house**

The Sniper on the Roof

**the sniper on the roof
peered
and moved from his perch
while you left your things
parked in the hallway
when it finally snowed
the gun didn't care
you were gone
so like you to leave
when it's still hot
as the lead leaves the barrel
so cold you make my bones ache upon contact
when you're hot
you're hot
a bullet with someone's name on it
Dead Dead Dead**

On Black Women Dying

In the spring
of 1971
a black woman
was found
dead from maceration
beaten to a pulp
in a cornfield
outside
Martinsville, Indiana
she was a native of
Connersville
and a distant relative of my father
In the spring of 1979
13 black women
were found
strangled
in vacant lots . . .
around the corner from home . . .
in her apartment . . .
in Boston, Massachusetts
not all were natives of the
Greater Boston area
nor known relatives
of my family . . .
however . . .
it was July 11, 1963
that summer
the height of woman hood
first dominates
a woman's mind and body
when strength
and speed,
they're rites of passage,
beat pulsing
in our breasts
sweet warm
summer nights
when
a bullet . . .
a knife . . .
a silk stocking with its series of knots
grazed the life
of a black woman
on her way
to the store . . .
nevertheless . . .

in the fall of 1978,
the klan began
its "open recruitment"
in the Boston City schools
and it was 1955
that a team of *white professionals*
interviewed colored children
from the Wayne County school system
as to whether their mammas and daddies
was for integration
or segregation
well, what I'm trying to get at
is that in the last 30 odd years
of my life span
there has occurred
a series of events
which have culminated
in the death and near dying
of Black women
across the continent of Amerika
and the police
the FBI

the presidents and their committees
have told us
there is no connection
between these deaths
and the violence
done to us, women
We have been reminded
shall be reminded
many times . . .
will you and I become
another unrelated statistic
in these series of events

R C Cola

the only vision I ever had
was a car full of white boys
bearing down on me
and when it happened
I didn't think to throw
the can of mountain dew
I just threw it
but if that isn't enough
I had another vision
of kissing a hand so black
it was blue and red

and that having happened
she headed west again
to her husband and child
black b -d woman
seer
spokeswoman
of my present, future and past . . .
damnation and hellfire
I'm alive
ain't that vision enough

Kentuck 1972

restless
sleepless
homeless
all things less than
the bittersweet promise
made by flying nomads
who come and go
from my bed
screaming
all the while
Sappho's working for you

The Nigger's Ease

I wrote this for the nigger's ease
my ease
For I am the nigger
the nigger inside me don't want to die
so she go outside and sit on men twice her size
she take the money and run
she be a scholar, cheat — your sister even
I wrote this for the nigger's ease
the big greasy dyke who molests you
in the shadows
at your local YWCA
Nigger she want to run rampant over you
Nigger she wants to kill her a white man
Nigger she want to call you by your name
Nigger Nigger Nigger
could you ever die

Sci Fi

i wrote about cunts because it seemed
I never got any
yes sugar, I wanted to fuck you
and didn't give a damn about Beethoven or your
mind
so why didn't you zip me off to bed
i couldn't talk standing up
and I'd've come three times under your weight
if you'd've sucked under my arms
give me liquor
give me dope
give me your heart
take my hands
ground zero ready for launching
I spun up and up to the seventh planet
goddess help me
she was never there
why did I sit with my finger
your finger up my hole
your nails were biting me
your bones were in my flesh
what is this anyway
science fiction

A Book

**someone wrote a book
with just
those two
in mind
and when
those two
are seen
everyone can know
or anticipate
their
every move
were it not
for that
book
no one would
know
and were it not for their knowing
would anyone
ever care**

Just the Urge

**lurking deep inside me
the urge to kill
I can remember when I
didn't notice it
then one day
the drum
of someplace distant
rang
and it was the
urge to kill
to obliterate
and destroy
and it was directed
every person
can be the target
of that irresistible
"ole black magic"
that urge to kill
is it news
that cole porter was black
everyone knows beethoven is
that
urge to kill
suffering will put up her cot
next to you
and stay till you get up and move
but relax baby
it's just the urge**

I'm Not

**I'm not leftist
I'm not feminist
I'm murderous with passion and rage
I am not defenseless
though it's taken for that
I'm not an innocent
just murderous with passion and rage
jesus has not kept me near the cross
nor have i found salvation
pretty is a fallen child
spattered in its driveway
it makes me
not leftist defenseless feminist
it makes me murderous with passion and rage**

Enough

Sides when we were kids
since then
when or how often
has what you
had
been enough
hmmn?
damn white folks
always bringing out
wider screen t.v.'s
and smaller cadillacs
to dangle
like those English participles
in front
of our poor black
face
and you don't get no kind
of respect
from anybody
less you done shoved your
big ole hips and behind
into a pair
of \$75 jeans
and tipped out on your
toes in alligator espadrilles

after all the money
you spend trying
to look
like New York
and Hollywood
can you honestly
tell me
you have enough
if you do
you must be doing
well childe
because I'm lucky
if I see some new socks
and being thrifty
still isn't enough
I seen you sashaying
down tremont street
swinging your calvin klein
label on those 3 inch heels
baby you looking good
it makes me smile
to see you looking so good
but
I can't help but
wonder
if you gots enough

Keys

"go back and follow the stars to the end"
wherever that may be
for it is lost
to me
in time
the old ways
I have learned the woods
she was buried
and I have cast stones
and placed the corn
where it will not grow
left the drink for her
parched lips
and placed the smoke
to set her free
into the breasts of trees

On the Record

**I've let it all
get out of hand more than once
done let my temper
get the best of me
called everybody
all kinds of motherfucker
I done chased
really nice women
all over the place
trying find out if
I could get some
and now well
now
I'm embarrassed
not shamed
just blushing
because I know
how I can be
when I get riled**

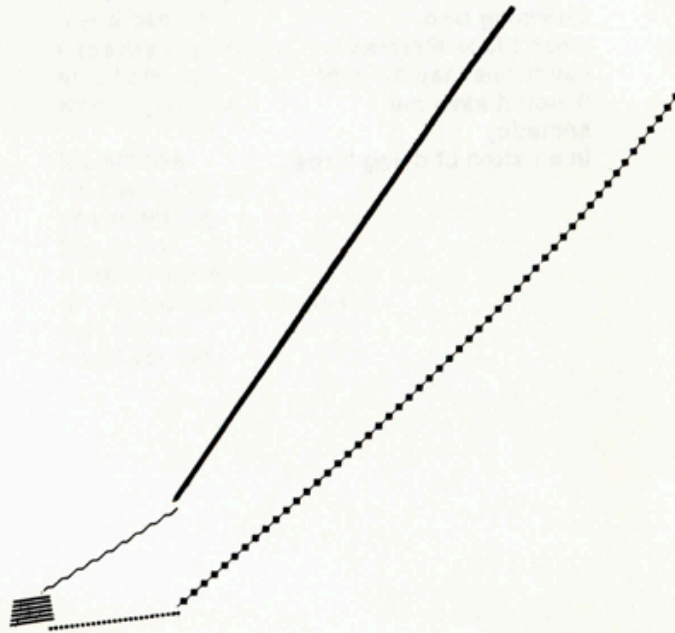
**It's not like
I'm asking for it
or something
this is just
a statement of fact
on the record so to speak
that I know
how I can be**

Dying Birds

Because Gram could speak
a little Yiddish
they thought it grand
when I took
German
I saw a German drown a dying bird
back then
and I told him he was a Nazi
it was a sneaking suspicion
I'd had
now it's hard to be sure
having heard the third world nations
express their hopes
it's difficult to be exact
in pointing out who is to be the
drowning bird
when I took German
I suppose they thought
it would save me
someday
in a nation of dying birds

Dancing

**I've already spoken
to the family
regarding my weakness
for sweets
and my desire
to save myself
from hypertension
alcoholism
drug addiction
and sexual oppression
are you familial?
should we dance?**



Dream of the European

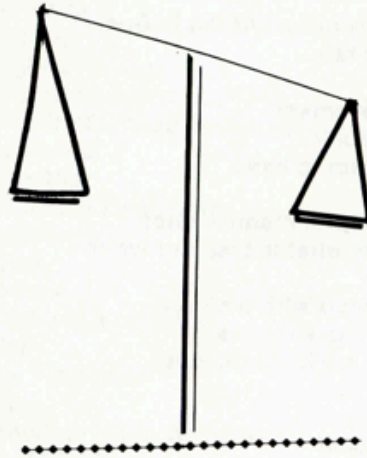
in the last five years
I have finished with
the dream of the European
peace is now the dream
of the Amerikan
which I come seeking
I wish the sun
to mark me with her
finger
the sky's light
shall splinter the nights
of wondering
the european is set to rest
at home
make way for the emerging Amerikan

Science and Math

what does 49 mean to you
will you count the days
of labor
seek the days it takes to free
your mind
will you divide it by 7
make it 7 more
what are the meanings of 49
to you
inside the bent stick
there is a shelter
but what of 49

Trust

**I loved you
best because
you did not
judge me by
the European standard
but took me as I was**



Distinction

my friend was talking to this girl
and she said
"say sister, you black. . ."
and the girl, she said,
"I'm not black, I'm spanish"
see my friend forgot
the distinction
"spanish surname"
"spanish speaking"
I told her
"you got to watch out
those people ain't black"
you know just plain old american negro
niggers
yeah I know that they do some talking
about the white man
but don't call them Negro
Nigger
or Black
it isn't sporting
the friendly fellowship
of pan afrikanism
"the discovery of spain in afrika
is a myth
in culture it is called Afrika in Spain"
I can't really tell
what is up
with this movement
toward ethnicity
waiting as I am to have
my bonds
struck in cultural manumission
who is to say what is black or white
culture
I am concerned with the races
as they are shown to me
can you tell me if the devil is
a 'race' man
is there gipsy
about your soul
does the ground speak truly
underfoot

Where You From

where I'm from
people take as much pride
in being from
where you're from
as anybody else
disgusting as the concept is
we take pride
in being from
are you ready
I know you're waiting
Amerika
that's right
there's little else
unless you look to
archetype and fantasy
I mean
I think it's cool
in Cincinnati
I have grooved in Chicago
and been low down in Naptown
and Gary
as well as been
pensive in Denver
and thoughtful in Montreal
I have also known terror in 17
of this country's United States and discomfort in most
parts of Canada
but despite that
the place where I was born
my grandparents
were raised
is somewhere
in the middle of a country
in Amerika
and where I'm from,
well, people
take as much pride in being from
where you're from

The Earth's Poor Relations

All these maladjustment problems
add up
to one thing
work will get you money
but I seems
to find
that this
this receipt
of pay
isn't enough
because you know
how the fighting starts
and worrying
about not going to have
enough to get by
so we try and stick
together
even though
we always feudin
about
what is totally unrelated
that need for not 10's or 20's
but thousands

You look at me
and I at you
when the folks
tell us
how cousin allie
made do on \$40
a month

but that was 40 or more years ago
now she gets by on \$400
and then they says
what about Andrew Young or Cicely Tyson
they making baskets of dough,
even millions
but the folks they don't see
that I ain't never
going to be that kind of
star and ain't never going to have to
worry about no
president
giving me no walking papers
but the folks
they always got a way, an idea
for us
I could have gone and graduated
but I didn't and
being a writer's
not the only reason
but, they say,
haven't I heard about
them white philanthropist mens
who open up bank accounts and offices

just to give niggers like me
the chance to print up my own words
but the folks don't know that
you gots to pay somebody
just to learn to ask right or
you gots to screw and I ain't talking messing
it's about your whole body and mind
and I don't whore for art or money
and I don't like giving them any more
than I have to to survive
but some how the fights
they break out and we cry
the animals howl along in tune
and my mind can only reach towards
thousands because
the millions would cost us too much

Hiss

**I think you know
surely you must
realize
how bad I want you baby
singly I think you know
how to bring it on yourself
but I can bring it on you, too
together that is I think you
realize
I add the shudder to the sigh
religion to the moan
I think you
realize
together we will bring it
on home**

Hay Ride

**Toned down
or refined with history
we cannot be coerced
into being
what we are not
indifferent
or denied what
we are
different
we cannot be coerced
into joining
that hay ride
borne for hell**

Smiles

**Most of the time
early on
there were no smiles
for just anyone
and in the South
the only road
is tough on black ass
the difference in the
North
being there don't have to be smiles
all the time
but the parallel between the two
comes
from what happens when the
smiles are absent**

I Many

**I am a person
who has large breasts
a broad flat behind
and singing knees
I am a person
who is a black amerikan
who takes pride in her tribe
I am a person
who writes poetry
paints pictures with water colors
I am a person
who falls victim to men
gets beat up by whites and blacks
now the picture is developed
tell
who I am**

Family Shadow

**one quarter note outside the drawn beat
chicken scratches on paper
of no substance
outside the family circle
surrounded by the absence
of cigarettes and booze
but not the reefer
the ankle chains' clang
turn into twinkling bells
outside the family circle
rational thought and violence
reason and the fist
created this
reds fade into yellows
or yellows into reds
marks on the skin of animal
plant and rock
the secret colored story
outside the family circle**

Telephone Call

no rest for
the wicked
they say
girl
how come you never home
when I call you
are you working
I am
if you ever
called me
you would know
not that
you anything special
to me
that is
you would know



Untitled Sonnet

**You got to know my name
because I want you
to say it
every night
you go to sleep**

**and you gots to
know it's me
when you close your eyes
and reach
out in the darkness
against what ain't there
you gots to know my name**

**because I'm a get you
sucker in the dark
late at night
so
if you should die
before you wake
you should know my name**

Hunt

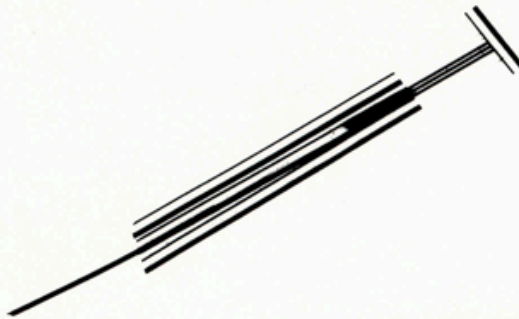
**you are my treasure
and I am yourn
and in the life
a treasure
is rare to find
rarer to keep
I say
are you my treasure
repeat you are my treasure
and I yourn**

Fun

How's about a good time
no stress or strain
just some fun
you and me
no people
to stare down their noses
or up ours
no more close proximity
to drudgery or noise
some fun
some good food and drink
and anything else
we'll need to party
some good time
how's about it

Morphine

the dream
she came
and we were in the grotto
outside lexington
and she came in
and we
we
were in the yard
and in the dream
she started walking toward me
and I knew her
I thought she was going to
kill me
but she shot me up
and I
I
was so high
well I yelled
to come back
because it was o.k.
but the dream
she's so high
I just went
to sleep



Burden of Proof

**It is too important
for us to be afraid
fear of white men with knives
must dissipate
chats with the handful of
our leaders
isn't making it
you have to come to us
you have to tell us
that the terrorist is under control
and we can now leave our homes
you must take care of him
for he is one of your own
it is not up to us
the burden must fall to you
for he is your brother**

Blues

I got the blues
and when I get the blues
I can't stand
brand spanking new
I want to be around
these blues
till they go home

I got the blues
and when I gets
these blues
I want to fall
down on my knees
howling drunk
and wrap around these blues
till they leave home

I got them
and they ain't going away
till I done cried and sang
cursed and prayed

Gone away
gone away
like the chigger
in the rain
I got them
low down
nigger blues

English to Roman to Afrika

**persnickety
an english
therefore roman
syntax
the per of course
of Afrika
casts dreams
of weed burnt**

Summer Time

wow it's so hot
even though
let's try and
create a breeze
you know
kick up a storm
bring up a wind
to echo off the walls

because it's hot
let's try and
cool every square inch
of skin between you
here
and me there
with the rushes from the lungs
the waving of fingers above the face

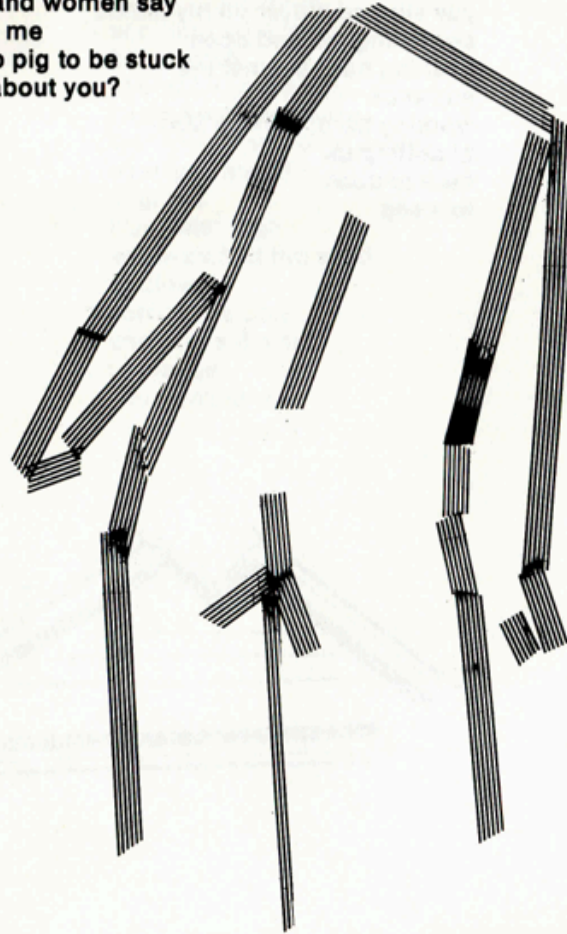
it is so hot
let's try and send
chills down our spines
you know
embrace into a cold sweat
do it till the crow dithers

Question Marks Mystery

**To place my hands upon your
shoulders
is what I feel
me or
your answer to the touch
is my breath upon your neck
huff of puff
or a sigh from your reply
to cover me with your
reaching legs and arms
am I tumbling in my sleep
or rocking to midnight's love?**

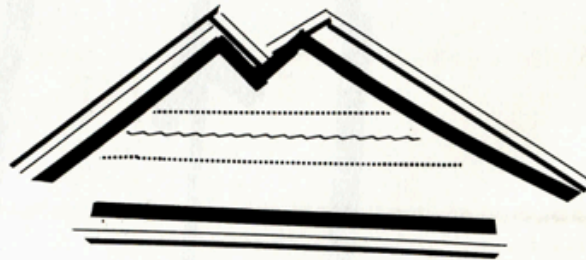
To the Undecided Woman

**all the men I ever had any truck with
were faggots
but I know one thing
men like to stick it in
believe me
I've read
a whole lot of books
and that's what both
men and women say
as for me
I'm no pig to be stuck
how about you?**



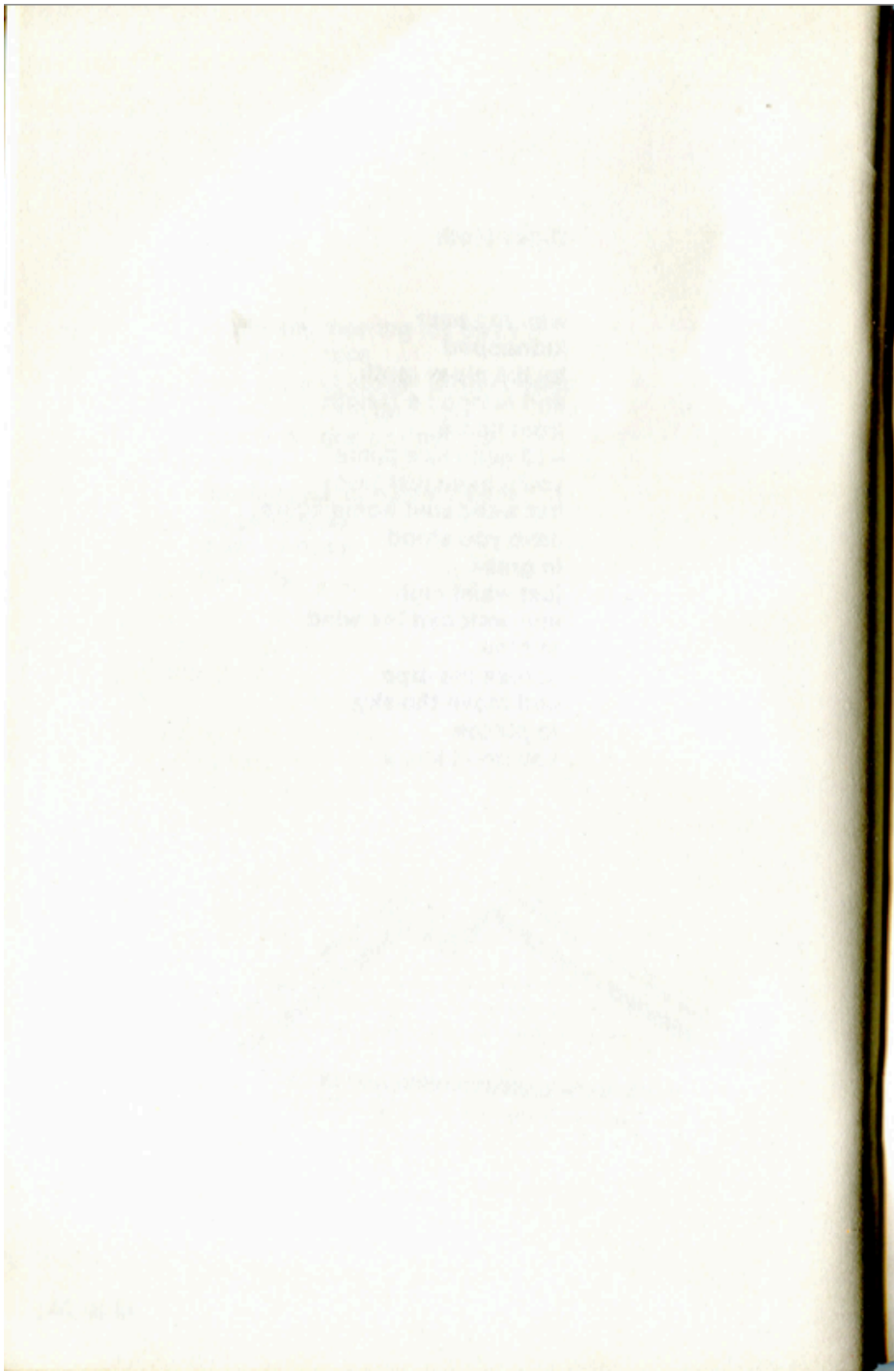
To Dido

**while engineering my entry
into your cave
you slipped closer on my hands
stretching out and open
pushing hard against the
entrance
working hard, moving slow
at getting us
here to doze
to sleep**



Gipsy Moth

was you ever
kidnapped
by the gipsy moth
and hopped a freight
from home
and gone to a place
you'd been just twice
but wandered home again
have you stood
in grass
just waist high
and watched the wind
to blow
across the dips
and move the sky
to places
you don't know



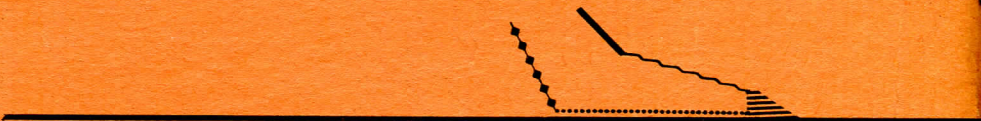
PART I

One on Me	"eh yah" say
Scream	not enough tears shed
Half Step to B Flat	gentle put down
Hambone	so she pulled that
Shiteaters	let's talk about shit
Urban Guerrilla	down the path
Reeter	it is every poor child's dream
Red Bone of Narcissus	night
June 21, Warren Street	live in Amerika
Fernald Stories	I
Back Off	the defendant is art
Respects	I went to the graveyard
Boston City: November 1978	her love
The Beer Apron	the beer apron
7 November 1976	bloody racist whore
Grandmothers	return was the message she
1980	the only solace
Rum and Slavery	parfum from the oriental
All Night Long	I tried and tried to put
Every Day	I shit and piss
Terrorist	Am I so totally debauched
Gulf Stream	ah warm
Hold Of Our House	I am safe
The Sniper on the Roof	the sniper on the roof
R C Cola	the only vision I ever had
On Black Women Dying	In the spring
Kentuck 1972	restless
The Nigger's Ease	I wrote this for the nigger's ease
Sci Fi	i wrote about cunts because it seemed
A Book	someone wrote a book
Just the Urge	lurking deep inside me
I'm Not	I'm not leftist

PART II

Distinction	my friend was talking to this girl
Fun	How's about a good time
To the Undecided Woman	all the men I ever had any truck with
Keys	"go back and follow the stars to the end"
On the Record	I've let it all
Morphine	the dream
The Earth's Poor Relations	All these maladjusted problems
Enough	Sides when we were kids
Dying Birds	Because Gram could speak
Dancing	I've already spoken
I Many	I am a person
Family Shadow	one quarter note outside the drawn beat
Dream of the European	in the last five years
Science and Math	what does 49 mean to you
Trust	I loved you
Burden of Proof	it is too important
Blues	I got the blues
Telephone Call	no rest for
Untitled Sonnet	You got to know my name
Hunt	you are my treasure
Where You From	where I'm from
Hay Ride	Toned down
Smiles	Most of the time
English to Roman to Afrika	persnickety
Summer Time	wow it's so hot
Question Marks Mystery	to place my hands upon your
To Dido	while engineering my entry
Hiss	I thinks you know
Gypsy Moth	was you ever





Afterward

My task is to explain the publishing history of *Twenty-five Years of Malcontent* (1976) and *A Distant Footstep on the Plain* (1981). Well it is short and brief. There was money in the mid-seventies and Good Gay Poets were establishing a political beachhead in Boston, Massachusetts. I was young and writing everyday and these poems mark my transition as a lesbian who marked her “coming out” in 1971 in the political environment of Lexington, Kentucky, to a black lesbian feminist in Boston, Massachusetts in 1976. Publishing for me was a political act and it continues to be political act.

Before publishing my first work, I did poetry readings with Normal X. We were the X Poetry Collective. We did not last too long because of a racial incident at our last reading that ended with a fight with some racial purists, a splinter group who came to the Charles Street Meeting House where I worked as a-gay-and-lesbian-youth advocate. I believe Good Gay Poets rather liked what I identify as my “black red neck” ways.

After publishing my first book I became involved with the Combahee River Collective. We met at the Women’s Center in Central Square, Cambridge. In retrospect, all we spoke about was *ubuntu*; or if you will, cosmopolitanism. I was more a black lesbian separatist during the period that preceded my self-publishing my second book. I was rather rough-spoken in those days. However I will say this about publishing and a black lesbian identity. It was not an easy life; especially after the death of Terri Lynn Jewell, who had just begun to break the publishing barrier with Crossing Press. I was working on a manuscript at that time that I hoped would express the value of living life as a black lesbian, indeed the ethics of living life on one’s own terms. I am not the first to take note of these things and write so that *sawubona – I see you (in Zulu.)*

Pat Parker and Audre Lorde were two black lesbian feminists whose work I read and admired for its bravery; I count them as my sister soldiers. Cheryl Clarke’s work, which was published later than Parker and Lorde, introduced a black lesbian aesthetic that is as sensual as it is physical. She’s a sentinel as well.

Black lesbian identity is political and will remain political as long as corrective rape is practiced on black lesbian women who live on the African continent. Therefore it is incumbent upon me to publish my poetry because a poem will find its way to my sister soldiers as they lie quietly waiting for danger to pass. It has the capacity to buoy one when she thinks she may perish; it gives her strength to move on.

Stephania Byrd
March 2012

Stephania Byrd Bibliography

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