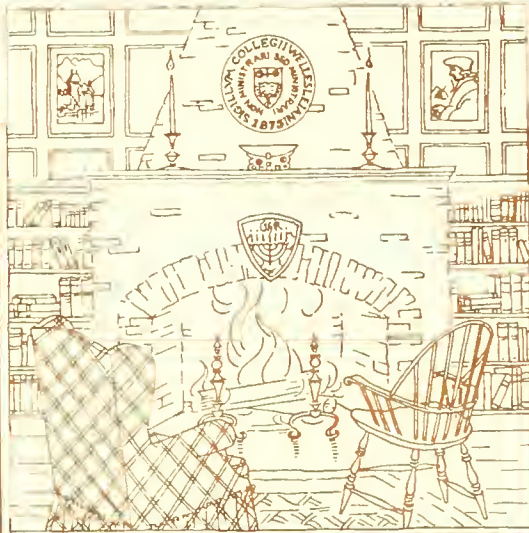





"AMICUS EST ALTER IDEM"



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Womansprouts II

an anthology of women's poetry
presented by the
Guilford College Women's Coalition
1977

Womansprouts II

Womansprouts celebrates its second year of publication and wishes to cite, as well as thank, the women whose work made it possible once more.

The Editorial Board:

Julia Blizin
Carter Delafield
Adele Moulx
Jenny Wiebler

Cover photograph:
Lyles Neal

Inside drawing:
Wendy Higgins

... and Linda Bruce, Genare Dempsey, Pat
Lenihan, Kathy Wickerman, Amy
Steerman, and Jenny Wiebler

i cast myself onstage with you
we've rehearsed every night
with double entendres and blunted swords
ersatz blood was sprinkled in the sawdust
our costumes held together by safety pins
you played maniac or martyr
depending on which mask was at hand
i learned my lines and my wounds by heart
expecting them both to be erasable

but even classical propriety allows violence offstage
suddenly i'm finding blood in unlikely places
you refuse to remove your masks between acts
the timing of my entrance is all wrong
and these wounds leave scars

the dress rehearsal never went this far
these scenes weren't scripted for the last minute softening of any heart
or the possibility of relief and mistaken identities
the climax is set like concrete
the willed suspension of disbelief collapses into madness
when the curtain won't close
and we're left posed opposite each other
with all our props and theatrics
and not one word to say

holly lu conant

That cat,
Who fell into the chimney two days ago, wakes
Still trapped in the bricked-in fireplace
That stands outdated behind the gas spaceheater.

The crazy lady upstairs,
Whose lover the Mad Marine Sergeant
Drops cats scrambling into the hole that used to be a flue,
Walks in hobnailed football shoes across the wooden floor.
She mutters crazy lady talk to her toilet
And the waterpipe's reply
Convulses along the center to the back of the ceiling
Where it subsides behind the stove
To nestle, napping, in the cesspool.

Death's cat-call wafts upward.
Tufts of hair like smoke catch in the molding soot
Scratching it screams itself to hoarseness
Screaming it scratches through dead leaves and bones
I sip on my glass of Amontillado
And silence the bells on the clock.

Libby Winchester

DAL AND THE PASSING

I remember those first times
I thought your name was Dao
Tao-the way
But that was just Lisa
Listening to Martha's pain
Transmitted through her
I cried
And we were off
Leaving earthly worries behind
What strikes me most
Is that so many who cared
Are women
Katie sent uncouneted
Intercessions to her God
You know she could
Martha, Martha there everyday
And crying in us every night
Me and Lisa, we tried
I remember you
The only time
You were so patient, so kind, so embarrassed
As me
You went when Lisa said
"Please" softly
You had said you were ready
I guess miracles are not
What we need
Reality is much easier
We all wept short hours
For your passing
But Martha says you're still here
Standing right behind her shoulder
I know
I feel it, too

Cathie Faint

Thoughts To Be...Lost

Kinky hair with thick lips
Pigments so deep so as my soul to enrich
Tanning scars of my inherited race
Lost in white hands, my past I embrace.

So, fiery red, white blue,
What say you is in store?
Break my spirit, work me
Still you mock me and keep me poor.

Scents of kinship so keen to smell
Why choose me to torment in hell?

Color stolen, with past rich gone
God's given beauty, my blackness
-you own.
Stop it, stop it, Let me shine
As other untainted stars my dreams
entwine.

Beverly L. Witt

95 degrees in the shade
when they walked into the
servicestation
(rural North Carolina)
full of tobacco
cans of oil
tins of sardines
packages of saltines
chewing tobacco
and cold Budweiser.
The man and his dog
both surly
both hot
ready to take on the world
and impatient to start.
Meeting with quiet hostility
(nobody 'round here likes long hair or mean dogs)
The hound started a fight immediately--
chased neighborhood canines
miles away
while the sullen young man
concealed his mirth
and bought his Budweiser.
The dog came back and
pissed on the door.
They walked out
smug.
Left in sweaty cameraderie
to retreat to shade
drink the beer
and write a loveletter.

Jane Taylor

This is for you, for your trembling moustache.
 This is for what was left when the lawnmower was done.
 This is for when you cut your hair and told your mother
 you loved her

this is for you
 this is for flunking a college creative writing class and
 this is for writing nine brilliant letters.
 this is for leaving school at the time of your father's nervous
 breakdown.

this is for leaving school just before you flunked out.
 this is for teaching me to like schizoid jazz.
 this is for lobbing the old tubestick.
 this is for your beady eyes.
 this is for your biker.
 this is for your poet.
 this is for your lover.

this is for telling me I was right when I said all men were shit.

this is for the underground paper you edited.
 this is for your house on the Main Line with the large lawn.
 this is for the lawnmower
 this is for the pain (take two)
 this is for the pain (take two)
 this is for showing that all men weren't shit.
 this is for being honorable.
 this is for being an honest dealer.
 this is for being shrewd
 this is for being suspicious
 this is for being patient.
 this is for waiting to have your breakdown until your father
 recovered from his.

this is for answering all nine of my letters
 this is for finding peace at Macdonald Land
 this is for finding hair in your food.
 this is for the finger that you lost valiantly, mowing the lawn.
 this is for what was left when the lawnmower was done.

tie a string around your finger
 try to pull yourself together.

ties of memory, like railroad tracks;
 hope we get steamed up about each other again some time.



Wendy Higgins
1977

THE NANTUCKET

"Born in Nantucket," reads the stone,
"In seventeen hundred and twenty-two."
And the waves of meadow grass blow
 in the wind
Just as the waves of the ocean do.
Did he listen, this inland colonial Friend,
When the pine trees sighed for what
 is no more?
Was his spirit attuned to catch the sound
Of the lapping of water upon a shore?

Dorothy Gardyne Dimmock '37

WHERE ARE THE VIOLINS?

two people stare hauntingly
into the shops' window
their eyes daring to say
what their lips dare not...

Suddenly-

she turns, a fear "gracing" her
cheek
twisting her handkerchief
she murmurs-"please go-now"
He glances (upward) of course,
not at her and

THIS IS IT

in come the violins, crashing
swelling to measures of "farewell"

and where are the violins when you
say you've had enough
or there's someone else
or, perhaps, I'm just not
exciting enough anymore.

Somehow, you're not Walter Pidgeon
and I'm not Greer Garson.

Oh! how Hollywood has lied to me.
I don't hear violins; I see no
misty rain falling.

This isn't Paris, you're not leaving
your wife for me, and I'm not
giving up a brilliant career as a brain
surgeon in Geneva...

we're simply saying
goodbye.

Jenny Reehling

woman would you want me?
under cumbersome bodies
my skin has rejected grace and thickened
lost the fragile threads of nerves
there have been trespassers in my womb
my mouth denies all entrances
pleasure has been anesthetized

woman take me to your bed and with your mouth
lift this shield from my breasts
smooth my cramped belly
loosen finger by finger my hand from its fist
my lips will open like wings
i swear you have quickened me

holly lu conant

Off the corners sparkle yellow.
At the center, if one sees it right
There is definitely a streak of blue.
Mostly one sees green.
A pale, lively green, that in
the shadows sinks into a
reverie of emerald.

It is crystal, surely not
the crystal of glass or stone
but crystal of essence.
It is, one could say, a
crystal of light and sound.
For certainly its greenness is
dependent on light.
The light of soft yellowness
that does not shine on life,
but gives life to life.
Gives back what gods have
taken away, and what man
refuses to find.

The edges are smooth,
as if the ages of timed weather
have worn it away,
But the smoothness is an
Illusion.

For if one looks closely
some of the edges are sharp.
These are the points from where
the light takes off, and zooms upward,
shimmering in a pale green
luster that disappears into the
density of air.
It is dense, this crystal of green.
Dense with the molecules of sound
which vibrate closely,
and resemble the solid.
Smoothly the sounds ripple
and tumble down over the edges
of the crystal, swirling round,
and dancing a ritual of magic.
The players of the dance

dressed in translucent veils, spun by
drunken Muses.

The crystal melts.
Unlike ice, there is no
pool, or ring,
only the melting memory
of sound.
The Debussy.

mew

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES IN A LAKE

The water ripples cause
a disturbance in my mind.
Each pebble thrown
perturbs me.
I like my life
smooth and placid,
like the surface of a lake.
I allow no one to enter
my life,
it should be free
of encumbrance.
Each trespasser opens
my mind to confusing
thoughts--Ideas
which make me aware
that I am not
all I should be.

Pamela Thompson

SUNDAY MORNING THREE POEMS

1

Sunday morning
it was about to rain on the baseball field

the clouds at seven are soft
like the inside of Grayce's leg.

My eyes, stroked the pink sky that purred
through the net at home base.

2

Ever since I saw John's photograph
I look at the Lake very hard.

Today it lay between
 a big red van
 and a little piece of blue paper.

3

Far away across the field
a tiny person and a tiny animal
punched my solitude.

Close-up
It was Diane.
Her henna hair and her striped cat
sang moist in the morning air.

Martha Zelt



WOMANSPROUTS

WOMANSPROUTS

an anthology of poetry

presented by the
Guilford College Women's Center

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WOMANSPROUTS was seeded, tended and brought forth by the following women: J.T. Reagan, Pat Lenihan, Amy Steerman, Julia Blizin, Carol Inglis, and Paula Swonguer.

We also thank all of the contributors, whose work made the idea possible.

editorial board:

Pat Lenihan
Carter Delafield
Julia Blizin
Beth Keiser

Cover photo by Lynn Saure
Inside drawing by Wendy Higgins

GILDED LILY

Falling in love
 is
 as embarrassing
 as falling anywhere else.

Funny
 the things
 you trip over
 in the dark.

Lovers are clumsy
(That's why they lie down.)

Adele Ortolani-Payne

CAVE FLICKERINGS

She'd hate to sound like an old film starlet
who, after fainting
looks up into his cool baby blues and says,
'I've never felt this way before!'
yet not a spoiled suburban child
with staturship clothes
or smooth lines for a harem
but a person with live feelings
he called it spontaneity
the most significant idiograph
in Chinese expression

she maybe thinks she's fooling herself
letting thoughts seep in
assuring her of the mysticism of this infatuation
some strain of divine chorus in her ears
did he feel it too?
some flowing sparks in their fingertips
reflected in their smiles
exchanged inside their music

at times depression infests
causing many to flee the scene of actuality
drives cross-country
perhaps not letting on
yet always seeking for a dream manifest
like every young freak
on the road to California
can she confess she's done it too?
induced hallucinations for a timeless year
hoping to short-circuit her way to heaven
instead cursed/blessed
with an insatiable thirst for poetry

that clay in her hands
one day a pot that will surely hold water
a poem that may touch the Infinite
and if that is confessed
nothing must turn to silence
she knows what it's like
to long for a flickering cave in which to meditate
(oh hear those monks' ghosts chant)
and she knows what it's like to yearn for him
but she'll never forget what the Chinese potter said
as he threw that superbly symmetrical vase
'...the Center, you see,
is where
there is no Motion.'

Cynthia Gray Underwood

TO MIMI, SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTHEAST

Woman of golden hair
Your arms reach out to encompass the universe.
Your soul is but a reflection of the moon,
And how I long to bathe in the pale light of your love.
Let the golden warmth of freedom extend from your body
My sister-love, take my hand as you travel among the stars
And teach me the meaning of eternal beauty.

Susan Thomas

DREAM AFTER TAI-CHI
(or, MY MIND IN MY DAN-CHEN)

I was a whale wallowing in air;
The great wild yonder was not my natural element;
I drifted there like a huge Disney balloon loosed from
The New Year's Parade.
Dirigible like, I lacked dynamic grace; had instead
A certain preposterous patience.
Waiting on the wind.
If I had sails I could tack; still I am afloat,
The world my nest strewn with a million eggs--
Fish-mother, bird-woman, hugely I hover, guard
(Half-asleep but vigilant) the future of my enigmatic race.

Racing, faster and faster, I am falling
Recovering myself with such concentration
The air cannot hold me. I am home.

Sleeker than any jet, more powerful than eagles,
the mighty Leviathan!
The waiting is over, the holding pattern done:
I've oceaned at last.
I used to dream of the sea; the closest
I could come was thinking I was a wedge-shaped rock,
immobile, hardly aware. Envyng
sleek seals, I waiting. Now rush past
colonies of them, whole schools of fellow-creatures.

China today, tomorrow the Horn; after that,
Who knows? The Virgin Islands perhaps,
Atlantis. . .

Most beautiful of all,
The vast deep between.

ABORIGINAL

The prairie grass and distant jungle line
haze slowly past the window frame,
swallowed heavily in the parching past
of dust, and sun, and droning voice.
I choke, then drift, co-mingling with the blur
of sense and thought
till suddenly I wake . . .

the sun is dulled by shadow over
shadow
the air hangs stifling
permeating
my nostrils flare wide -
flexible membrane of aborigine
sensitivity -
the odor of what is and what is past
enters coils about inside
and becomes part of me
sweat and dew oil my naked body
odors sweet
i move among thick vine and leaf
long dead senses breathe and swell

deeply i take in air
releasing musty stench of city rankness
long imbedded in my lungs
my skin tingles with harsh caress
of jungle touch
i listen to my feet upon the earth
feel surround embrace
the knowledge their bareness
encompasses with every step

heavy dark heat sweat
loud violent silence
savage greens greys browns
startling flash of color
animal presence -
all surge within me
 like lustful lover
and i take
 and hold
 and

become . . .

Carol Inglis

1 remember
the powerful excitement
that rushed the household
the night of the hurricane frenzy
the frantic rush of men with sandbags
 to save the yard, rescue the house, to fight
 the ravaging water
the lapping, grabbing, biting off
we watched the willow go
 --crashing.

Meg Morton

THE WEDDING WAS FORGED

after you draw up the documents & i
sell myself over to be Madness's wife
(which was the same night
i hunted for sparrow roosts in the bathroom
& vomited your rich-butter pancakes quietly
in the sink)
you have the nerve to not even send flowers
only lightly concealed laughter
which taps out from the telephones
in the halls if you think poetry is
skillfull lying or at least manipulative of reality
i hope you sent flowers to yourself

i am not laughing
i look the same today as in the bridal photo.
only my name has changed but
the new one gives me trouble i don't want it
to be remembered.

years later which means the same, almost, as now
they are telling me you rifled through my drawers
you got caught crying over old poems well okay
be still be calm
there is a cure, i know
we will find it. But first
the documents of betrayal must be memorized,
then written down
in order to forget.

Julia D. Blizin

There is a distant corner of my mind that
 plays your guitar
 constantly
and sometimes, like when you used to
play in the other room, the music
swells and I become aware of
 your fullness.

Your smile creeps in with your music
 overcoming my senses
 building and reaching
until you are complete within me
and in those moments I realize
that although I only knew your words
your essence is within me.

Nancy Van Arkel

UP THE RIVER

Down here in southern Illinois
 autumnal psychedelia
I laugh at the anxiety of the past
 on this rural, sodden afternoon

Interaction was once your theme
 all dealings seem easier now
cause of you, babe
 once the ceaseless prodder
taught me the way to survive
is simply
 not to give up

This town
 once a stop for Huck Finn
and runningslave Jim
 that rebel boy he learned to reveal his beliefs
float them on a raft
 for all the world to view

In three years who are we
 finally admitting out needs to drown in physical
feel how soft is the night
 once so brutal

And as I sit here inside
 this sodden, rural day
wondering if there really was
 freedom for slaves
when they got to Cairo
(knowing there wasn't)
I can't help but think
 there's a kind of lovelight
 binds us all

Cynthia Gray Underwood

ON A PAPERWEIGHT GIVEN TO MY MOTHER

Wrapped in rain and night
Memory rises, suffusing glass
To blue-black rock
To oldest hue
To slate sea under barest moon.
Star shapes, anemones dance almost
At the bottom of a blue without light.
Some such old rock, picked up
Was blown into glass
Made heavy, useful, pretty.

Frozen sea wings now moulded into unmoving water
Hold breathless still in this quiet parlor,
Where no calm, but dust and emptiness are its element,
A heavy elegance oppressive to the memory of cold sea.
Old is antique here—
And here is your memory of motherhood,
Bound, mute, flowering from my hand.

We have seen you sit here in the dark
Smoking chains, wreathes, stacatto fingers.
Now take this pattern, hold it in your lap,
And if it cannot still unnatural life to stone,
Then use it as a weapon against mirror, door, or us.
Break it.
Pour out the blackness
Of old, old sea
And free the wings of sea birds
Vibrant, loud, shining in dark borders,
Holding to no pattern
Holding not the center
Of cold pearl heart.

Donna Scarboro

MYSTICAL WANDERINGS

Is anyone listening?
As I climb the walls
of unexplored despair .
Only to discover
as I reach the peak ,
unexpected solutions ,
to unasked questions .
From uncaring deliverers
of Satanic messages .
But the answers , when applied
to soul searching dilemmas :
only produce more
infinitely intricate
rationally illogical ,
delusions to a star studded
yellow brick path
of decided direction .
As it rolls around
in valleys of unmeasured depth .
Only to withdraw
from its quest
at the sound ,
of birds singing
rivers raging
and humans searching .

Sarah Moses Taylor

TODAY THE SAD HILL

Today the sad hill, long in shadow dipped,
crawled into a cloud and was born again
feet first from a rip in the sky.
Once I was that trillium waiting rosebreathed
unspoken mid the conversation of this wood.
You broke me from my stem, gave me to myself.
I have unfolded as I should.
I listen to the praise of snail and bird;
later, the worms' despair, the cry against the light,
the after-image filling up the hungry eye, until
the struggle strangles song and moan alike.
I stay among the stones and know delight.

Heidi Stephan Yockey

Tiny hands jerking at a coarse
crescent, pumpkin stalk, a nose
nuzzling a yellow half squash.
The hands pricking the weightless silk
of the milkweed pod from the web
and letting it fly.
These hands winding the red propeller, croaked,
catching in a crack of the plane's
plastic nose. Inside, the rubber
band knotting its tiny strength.
Bent landing wires skimmed the water
puddles, missing Himalayan peaks.
The marbles balanced weight on dirty finger tips:
thump, stumbling against the muddy
treads to the eroded cup.
Fingers running, the jay's lost feather,
blue through white tip,
spring little spine.
Running to lie on the cool dooors
with sweating palms-
the majic in mahogany.

Laurie Hamilton

guess your nights are real appeasing
since you've found another lay
but you're blind to all her teasing
how you're minor in this play
i saw logic in your reasoning
'til you sold yourself this way

she's your prime time lover
you're her baby fantasy
and she'll love you like a hero
just to win back puberty
she's a woman with a strong hold
and she thrives on victories

now she's lyin' there beside you
and she's drawn away your cover
you're her naked virgin model
prey to change for 'mother' lover

i've been standing in this shadow
for so long without a sound
but i can't stay here much longer
i have new hopes to be crowned
usually ready to believe you
now it hurts to watch you drown.

Meg Morton



you ask politely if i'm tired
after a night that you've laid on my shoulders
like lead
and a hardfaced woman in me
 is ready to answer:
yes i am tired of you
i'm done with all the neatly wrapped emptiness
 you hand me
and i'm weary to sickness
with prying love loose with bloody fingers
i watch you turn your chair
 toward another listening woman
carefully arranged near me
so that you can rip her yes
across my skin
i drink another cup of tea
waiting for its warmth
to melt the chill pile
 of unsaid words in my mouth
my patience has turned the color of winter grass
but the shadows under your eyes
weaken me
in spite of the rules i've written out:
 hold yourself closest
 don't let your blood get them in winter
 love only to the edges
and i tell myself
that you have other names
 besides the one you'll whisper to her
so i wait with nothing like hope
to be let in to cradle you again
oh but next time
please lock your door more carefully

holly lu conant

You came to me
carefully holding out before you
the first
ice
of winter that
you collected from the foot-
stomped
puddle
at the bottom of the
sliding
board
in a park somewhere we
stopped there one day

You tried to break
it into the shape of
a north carolina map I asked
where were the outer banks so
you broke off
bits of the blue ridge
and held them briefly on wide fingers to the side.

I. Lindley

DEATH OF A WALNUT IN SUMMER

We walked through the wild fields
past the whitening fences standing
habitually, or lying down without pride.
We were taller in the treeless fields
than all the yellow weeds, taller than horizons,
taller than all except the sky and his inhabitants.
We found the tree and knew her,
knew her hatchet-ready side and killed her.
As she fell she sighed and the sun blinked off.
We gathered the walnuts, green difficult limes
refusing to be fruit. We killed a fruit tree:
the split walnuts were white
lobed, crude seeded hearts.

Heidi Stephan Yockey

NOVEMBER 26- 10: 00 P.M.

We stand in
front of St. Luke
carven from white
marble and the
church steeple
bright against
the night.
We ramble
endlessly leaping
from one subject
to another and
back again.
Our feet dance
on the pavement-
because we are cold,
of course.
Ten minutes ago
I was singing
"Alelulia"
and now I know why.
It is almost
Thanksgiving
and I am seeing
Peter.

Meg Brown

AN ACCIDENT OFF PADRE ISLAND (CORPUS CHRISTI
TEXAS)

A scream
the swing of the single light
the ominous sway of a house
suspended over shallow stench
fish kill and filth
In the black bubbles
a voice gurgles
down here lies your sister
air, water, flesh, moonlight.
No mother's hand reaches down
in the sudden rush
to salvage blood.
The men leave the gashed
and dripping catch.
I stand in a shiver
and hold close
the nearest survivor
of this panic stricken clan
out together
where moonlight
suspends
and sea mud
sucks down
what it can
to darkness.

Donna Scarboro

Me and my strawberry begonia
We's friends
...but sittin' up there
on the shelf
 sometimes...
 she gets forgotten.
I've forgot again.
To be a friend--
Take's time to care, you know.
 So we share a few words
and I take her to the porch
for the warmth of the sun's rays...
 now everybody's happy.
It's time
 to resolve
 to make time
for simple pleasures
 like that.

Pat Townsend

BROTHERHOOD

Who am I to judge my brothers?
Simply because fun excels their pride
In themselves and their color.
Although our lives are the same
Our Black destiny remains unexplained.
Our faces appear as jig-saw puzzles
Barely giving time for the pieces to fall into place.
Only our ups and downs account for the confusion
But to what do we owe the disarrangement fo our lives
Who am I to judge my brothers?
Are we not the same in color and background
Even our possession of pride brings our likenesses side
by side.
We both have degrees labeling our lives in classified ads
The importance of our dedication is marked "getting by"
We are paid for jobs and the wages are all the same
Place our checks side by side by side by no mistake do t
differ
Yet our personalities collide with emotions
Which cannot be erased
The scar is always there
Whether love or hate.

Beverly Witt

I have children
they are the words of my language
the unsettled birds of my branches.

A million zigzagged flights outlined
against the sky
A million different needs outlined
against a soul

I have children
they are birds which carry trailing
ribbons in their beaks
to swirl around Cinderella's skirt.

I. Lindley

my life has been spent waiting for Godot
in safe dark corners
and on irredescent winter days
the cold and the emptiness has expanded
like a balloon
blown up with time
sealed with my soul inside
plastic sunshine
existing solely for the pleasure of children
playing at grown-up
sustenance for their impish delight
at my expence

Nancy Van Arkel

APOSTROPHE TO NIGHT

O night, you have been so unjustly forgotten.
Poets glorify the emancipation of a new dawn
the wonder of a sunrise
the magnificance of that shining
burning
ball of yellow.

But you; my bleak darkness,
I will remember you.

I will remember your denied beauty
not as the shroud of day
but as the contentment I long for.
Not as the shadows of peril,
or incomprehensible mysteries
but as my companion,
my lover,
my little bit of too short
peace from the weariness that comes from the
golden shafts of daybreak.

Yes, you are as cold and threatening
as the most horrible nightmare-
But as versatile as the sea,
you are my relief as well.

O night you are the unique-
When I am lonely,
how you cradle me in your arms,
whispering the sounds I love to hear.
You are the shadow that make us
radiate our own beauty.
You can hush the artificial and
illuminate nature in it's own creation.

Stand with me, be always with me;
 Silent yet roaring,
 mysterious yet evident
We can obtain the purest happiness
 in one unity,
 and dwell eternally
 unharmed
 unchanged
 and unstructured
Yes, I will remember you.
 Never as bringing within your cloak fear
 or evil
but contrarily, as bringing my hope and
 the genesis of my daily life.

Jan Lecke

THE GHETTO

Taking care of business
Digging on all jive
Picking up on hip talk-
In the Ghetto, who survives?

Products of our compound
Distinguished by our name
Ghetto for my background
Any gain is game.

Punching out all windows
Forcing any lock
Crime, an occupation,
Requirement of our block.

Rat-infested bedrooms
Worms control our food
State inspectors on our back
Build up, tear down, Be Cool!

My family all in poverty
Deserving what we get
Life is just one big demand
The Ghetto has not met!!!

Beverly Witt

Sadness
 is a hole in the middle
Loneliness
 is a wind from no direction
And I
 am the shortness of perfection

Life
 flows freely for most
The earth
 is a lusty host
For those that want it

Close
 the faucet; stop the drop
Unwind the clock
Time stopped today
Because I want it that way

Sherri Wall

LOSING TIME WITH A DEAR FRIEND

I walk into a near empty room
and see before me a spotlighted chair
sitting on a raised platform, and
leaning against it, you
a most beautiful guitar of browns and tans
and lacquered flashes.

I feel you begging me to come
play with you awhile,
and I think of all I have to do for school
and I think of all I have to do for you
and myself

I walk over to the chair, pick up
your body with careful careful gentleness -
I sit down on the chair, lower my head
and begin to play the music of my soul
first softly
then defiantly saying goodbye to time's demands
for many hours
or one.

Playing with you, our spirits both pick up
and our shouting laughter fills the room
the corners alive with glee
and we play - devoid of pressure -
your warm open throat giving body
to my racing fingers.

As we both tire, we end our song
with a simple note of
"goodbye"
and resolution of the chord
"til tomorrow, my love."

Ruthanna Haines

I remembered you when he spoke
I thought of the sob that lived forever in your face.
how were you wounded?
what war behind your eyes could make that scar,
and soften stronger lips to pain?
soldier, is your self-seige over yet?
do shots still ring out now and then? across the
snowfields of your mind?
how could they wound you
(traitor thoughts & facts on my side
of your eyes I see)
it was a long war, I can see
and when he spoke, I needed then to see you -
to know that fire does not destroy the wood,
but rather, transforms to twenty - years old flames
leaving coals and ashes
reduced to nothing
(of the fires that burn him now,
the ashes are in you)
Soldier, you are home now
your children already playing with your boots.
Sad how they almost fit them
feet grow - the march will soon
begin
again.

Laurie Hamilton

ABOUT THE WORD MARRIAGE

- for a.f.s. -

why can't we be married together
like kelp, stone, and tide
instead of gods and forevers
which get you angry or nervous
and leave me reading hurting things

hand in hand we could make it
through winter in one pair of gloves,
tying shoelaces twice as fast
and tripping over too many thumbs

now, about the word "marriage"
think of it as sprouts of flowers
being bedded early in spring
and then
"marriage" is the warmth
to get them going
or it's fertilizer if you like
an eggplant, in italian

but in itself, only one more word
and if it worries you,
let's be twin carnations instead

Julia d. Blizin



Daisy



WOMANSPROUTS III

an anthology of women's writing
presented by the
Guilford College Women's Coalition

1979

Womansprouts celebrates its third year of publication and wishes to cite, as well as thank, the women whose work made it possible once more.

The Editorial Board:

Ellen O'Brien
Naomi Donovan
Jacqueline Ludel
Amy Steerman

Cover Photograph:

Caryl Kuser

... and Kathy Neckerman, Naomi Donovan, Amy Steerman, and Terry Hammond.

COMMENT

Womansprouts is an anthology of women's writings. Our purpose is to encourage self-expression by women. Our hope is that writing will become a process of self-discovery, giving to our contributors an alternative to acquiescent acceptance of roles and images defined for them by our society.

Womansprouts is imagined, designed, written, edited, and produced by women. It has been both a learning experience and a celebration of our ability and autonomy.

This is the first year Womansprouts has included essays as well as poetry and prose. We want to recognize the work done on topics relevant to women, and to facilitate exchange of ideas.

Thank you for celebrating this issue with us.

a.f.s. and k.m.n.

still water

sliding on the black plate
of sea, the boat holds us
like a cup. the sky is flat
as lacquer, empty of moon
and other ornament.
your skin shows no white,
your hair pure as enamel.
we are rocked in one cradle,
the water bending beneath us
in deep slumberous curves.
our thighs touch, and touch
again, without the choice
of movement. our bodies
are weak and swooning, governed
by larger tides. here, the scent
of salt, mundane as sweat,
rises from deeper mines,
and pours us together like
rare and ancient oils.
we breathe through veils,
our lungs limber as fishes.
we ride from crest to trough,
our bellies shivering
at the fall. when finally
we sink, drowning past
black palisades of weed
and shell, chambers open,
green as all light.
we become the sunken treasure.

holly lu conant '77

Kaleidoscope Woman

Kaleidoscope woman -
Do I know you
as you spin from change to change?
Were you the shy child
who built fires in the wood stove
and dreamed in your secret mossy place?
Did I see you spinning
into a teenager's agony;
saved by the Blood of the Lamb;
and whirling again in your pure white dress -
melted into motherhood?
Did I see every bond severed
and you lost somewhere in the mad images?
Kaleidoscope woman
Who are you now?
Free, yet not free -
as you spin to find new worlds,
new selves, new horizons.
Is the shy child on her mossy hill
still there?
Have you come full circle now?

Bonnie Pratt

Record River

the river's waters course black against rime crust in March;
fresh torrents cut clean banks in April,
and the banks bloom in May:
ring-spry trees break out in new tender greenery.
We listened to cannon reports echo across the waters
and against the hills on Patriot's Day,
and the dry July dust
when the golden June sun sink behind the Farmer's shoulder,
and heard the gush of spring charges crack winter's icy grip
made open as a musket shot splitting April.

Gwen Bikis

Grace Hartigan:

A Strong and Independent Painter

Grace Hartigan is an artist who believes in her art as her work and not as an expression of her feminine nature. She is a strong and independent painter and has enjoyed great acclaim as a vital member of the Abstract Expressionists of the 1950's. Her paintings are characteristically abstract and are included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the National Collection of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the eyes of many contemporary women painters, Hartigan is viewed as a successful woman artist who has been able to achieve in a male-dominated art world.

Her struggle to gain a reputation as a professional and serious painter, however, was not easy. At the age of twenty-eight, she had to declare her independence from both husband and son and support herself through unemployment compensation. Critically, she is all too often associated with Pollock and deKooning; her work is considered to be heavily influenced by their acclaimed masterpieces. This dominant shadow from the New York School continues to plague her as she struggles to create work that speaks primarily of her own sensibility. Commenting on a recent book on the New York School, Hartigan remarked, "I might as well have died when Abstract Expressionism ended."¹ Undaunted by the absence of serious critical response, however, Hartigan continues to paint prolifically while also serving in her position as director of the Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute. She refuses to suggest that possible sexism may lie behind her absence in standard Art History texts; she insists that one must continue to work and compete in order to be taken seriously as a working artist. According to Hartigan:

I think it is denying yourself a great amount of human experience to cut yourself off from our fellow human beings who are men. I don't think you can fight that (sexism) by isolating yourself. To fight you have to get in there and fight. You fight by joining and proving. You have to do the very greatest possible work you possibly can and you have to be around men and have them learn to respect you and see your work and know what it's like. You just can not make a special private club out of being a woman.²

Hartigan's professional confidence can only be seriously analyzed through observations of her work, her painted expression of her own artistic consciousness.

Hartigan's "New England October" is an interpretation of the relationship between man and nature. "I was interested in how to present an inner emotional state, in abstraction but related to nature,"³ explains Hartigan. The painting is a mass of yellows and blacks and seems to express the feeling of a brisk fall day. The style is expressionistic; the forms seem to derive from emotions and sensations rather than objects. The activity is centered in the top half of the painting while a cool field of yellow leads the viewer into a swirl of colorful impressions. The lines are chaotic and appear random, for they both outline and interrupt form. The brushstrokes are hard and dynamic, evoking a thick textural quality within the painted surface. Massive painted forms loom in the foreground as the painter manipulates modern ideas of surface projection. Hartigan's use of color is immaculate: vivid reds highlight rich browns. White provides a moment of respite before crashing into harsh and powerful blacks. The artist's vision is suggestive of underlying physical realities, of emotional turbulence, of vibrant celebration.

Painted twenty-one years later, "I Remember Lascaux" expresses Hartigan's gradual move to representationalism. The painting is based upon the theme of the caves of Lascaux, an example of the artist's recent focus upon themes in all her paintings. A large deer occupies the center of the canvas and is surrounded by renderings of other animals that seem to rest in a variety of contorted postures along the painting's border. Hartigan boldly outlines her forms allowing the paint to drip from the images, a technique that is both modern and primitive. The colors are primary and flat interacting vibrantly in contrast and tone. Pale blues rest upon mottled blue-greens, and harsh browns intermingle with the burnt sienna of the background. The flowing eyes of a large and briskly painted lion observe all from the sidelines.

Hartigan's vibrant abstract forms of the fifties appear to have become gradually more controlled as her use of color softens. This new emphasis upon themes detracts from the original stylistic luminosity and power in her large works. Her recent experiments in watercolor collage, however, are very successful for the images appear to be more effective on a smaller scale. When dominating six foot canvases the images detract from the artist's expressionistic treatment of abstract color and form. An amazingly energetic woman, Hartigan is not one to rest upon a given style for the duration of her career. She is open to change and exploration; she refuses to let her art die with the end of Abstract Expressionism.

Sarah M. Taylor

¹Conversation with Sarah Taylor, Baltimore, December 28, 1978.

²Sarah Taylor, "Interview with Grace Hartigan," Washington Women's Art Center News, February 1979, p. 10.

³Karen Peterson and J.J. Wilson, Women Artists: The Twentieth Century, (80 35mm slides and accompanying text) (Hagerstown: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 13

ice age

even underground, in wide
pipes wrapped in roots,
water freezes when still.
with motion gone, it changes
state, toughens, refuses warmth.
it contains itself, and yields
nothing to light. too deep
for hands or breath to call
a current, the water recoils
from grace. above ice,
i open empty taps, priming
them like veins.
walking the house's length,
i check for cracks,
a weakness in design.
cold sucks my skin.
my breath whitens,
will not blend with air.
i find swollen ice
about one pipe's throat,
and stopping by it,
chill climbs in me
like veins. silence
almost tempts, seems
warm as sleep.
choosing a surer shelter,
i turn back inside.
at my desk, after noon,
i am taken from trance
by water spilling loose
from open taps.
i fill the kettle,
and quicken back
to work, my blood
humming like a cat's.

holly lu conant '77

PERSONA

SELF

SHA

A mask--		Lurk
Behind which		Declining
I hide/discard		Cooperate w
Whatever does not conform	Or enunciate itself to	
To the pushing,		Except throu
Molding,		Actio
Of peers ...		In spite
Or play		Such
At assimilating		Vegetating,
Correctness		To lazine
While doing		And will
What they would		"Rotting," be
Laugh or Languish		Snappish in r
At ...		(Ho
Or suffer,		Squabb
Imprisoned within		Causing for ye
Parts I have been cast	The same struggles-	
And long since outgrown -	Manipulating/taking	
ie. The Teenage Princess	What others can/will	
Who is no longer a teenager	And even flirting/flaunt	
And long ago		Revengefu
Fell from		To en
The Graces of Daughterdom.	Others in their own gar	
Game-playing		Selfishnes

Tamara Frank

Psychological Implications of Contemporary Women's
Literature:
A Neophyte's Perspective

Life for both sexes -- and I look at them, shouldering their way along the pavement -- is arduous, difficult, a perpetual struggle. It calls for gigantic courage and strength. More than anything perhaps, creatures of illusion as we are, it calls for confidence in oneself. Without self-confidence, we are as babes in the cradle.¹

Virginia Woolf

Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how language has trapped us as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see -- and therefore live -- afresh.²

Adrienne Rich

We are living in a time when women, and men, are profoundly affected by the awakening consciousness of women to their roles in society. They are discovering the limits they place on themselves and allow others to place on them. The woman writer has not dealt with her self-denial and subjugation by men without becoming angry at it. I think this anger is good, being indicative of the fact that women are developing self-respect which makes them resent the assumptions keeping them in a secondary place in society. But women must go beyond this externally directed anger and take a step to change their own lives. Anger

at our enslavement must be combined with out increasing knowledge of our potential to give rise to self-confidence. With this confidence, women will change their roles by defining values for themselves and creating lifestyles which reflect those values.

According to Rich, a woman goes to literature, "looking for her way of being in the world, since she too has been putting words and images together; she is looking eagerly for guides, maps, possibilities."³ In the following paper, I want to examine a few examples in the spectrum of contemporary women's literature to illustrate how it sometimes succeeds and sometimes does not succeed at providing fertile, potential models of women who are confident in their ability to shape their lives. I will take a look at the characters in the fiction and the speakers in the poems of Doris Lessing, Diane Wakoski, Virginia Woolf, Anais Nin and Adrienne Rich. In my opinion, the first two authors fail to provide creative solutions to the problems of women in contemporary society. Virginia Woolf explains what elements are necessary for creative work and the last two authors succeed at illuminating for women new ways of being.

Doris Lessing and Diane Wakoski are examples of authors whose characters do not exhibit confidence in themselves to shape a world in which they live by their values. The woman that they bring to mind is the one who lives passively; while she is developing awareness of her role, she lacks the motivation to redefine it, to accept self-determination and create anew.

Doris Lessing's protagonist in her novel, Summer Before the Dark, is forced to live independently of her family for a summer. During this time, she realizes that she has played the role of nurturer all her life and not fulfilled her own desires. She says,

Men's attention is stimulated by
signals no more complicated than what

leads the gosling; and for all her adult life, her sexual life, let's say from twelve onwards, she has been conforming, twitching like a puppet to those strings ...⁴

By the end of the story, Kate has relieved herself of living by the definitions of her husband and the expectations of male-dominated society. But one is left with the question, what will she do instead? Her self-awareness takes her nowhere but to an anger for wasting her life and a determination not to do it anymore. She will not accept the responsibility to change the environment which has forced her to waste it, for she is pessimistic about creating a place of any kind in which personal choices are respected above the norms of the group. Her cynical attitude about a man in the novel who believes in political reform is necessary to end the "anarchy" in society is illustrative of her view that no group can incorporate all the ideas of its individuals. Of Philip she thinks,

Just as, when the last generation had stepped as one man onto the scene, identical in voice and vision, they did not see themselves as a repetition of the one before -- not in appearance or in belief, but in conformity with each other -- so, now, Philip: he saw himself as new, freshly minted by history.⁵

The feeling I get from Lessing is that there is no hope for creating an environment in which individuals are respected as such; therefore, all an individual can do is live as best as they can within the environment that happens to prevail. Her character Kate refuses to take responsibility for creating a world in which she would want to live actively. Her sense of identity never gains importance to anv-

one but herself.

Diane Wakoski seems to suffer from this same separation from her environment. The speaker in her poems is rightfully angry at being unable to communicate her feelings to half the people who encompass her. Wakoski attempts to embody all women in her speaker, and her struggle is with men, who totally shape her environment. The men do not understand women, they are unaffected by emotion, and they are deceitful and unfaithful. Her anger is clearly expressed in the dedication of her collection, The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems, to "all those men who betrayed me at one time or another, in hopes that they will fall off their motorcycles and break their necks."⁶

Wakoski is alienated from men, but her only solution is to beg them to have more empathy for women. She wants "someone to rescue me."⁷ This rescue, of course, should come without a loss of the mysterious otherness of men. Wakoski considers the separation of the sexes to be vital to fulfilled existence.

If self and other
were the same,
there would be no concept of communication;
if man and woman were the same,
there would be no fucking,
no hunger,
no coming together at night
in warm beds with cool pillows.⁸

Wakoski expresses no desire to incorporate male and female elements into her ideology. Instead of attempting to look at the situation through a male perspective, she categorizes men and expects change from them, but just enough so that her needs, which seem endless, ("And I want it all,/ A man who is everything."⁹) are met. Although Wakoski sees tension between other and self as inevitable, she says

that we need each other to complete ourselves. Wakoski identifies completeness as an incorporation of the self and the other, but she denies her ability to achieve this completeness by discovering the "other," the hidden possibilities, within oneself. She says, "How lonely is this desert I call life."¹⁰

I could not live and define life as being lonely. There must be potential for making one's own life complete by depending on one's own power. I feel that the more we learn about the self from within (and this takes confidence that the self has complete potential), the better chance we have at communicating with others. We cannot understand in others what we do not see in ourselves. Life may be a continuous struggle against loneliness, but I believe that what we are missing is part of ourselves. The struggle for this knowledge, while difficult, is perhaps the most rich and rewarding one.

Virginia Woolf is probably the first author who made clear to me that fusion between the images of self and other empowers a piece of literature to speak to anyone of either gender. Literature which suggests a communication between opposing forces sparks ideas and broadens the mind to new possibilities within ourselves. Woolf deals with the idea of the androgynous mind which does not categorize and therefore set limitations on the sexes. She feels that effective communication is that which does not restrain people, but opens avenues for them to live in new ways.

It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman. And fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed to death... Some collaboration

has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. The whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect wholeness.¹¹

Woolf stresses her feeling that the responsibility for fusing the images of self and other lies with the individual, who must seek that part of herself which is feared or not understood in the other. This self-responsibility, refused by the characters of Lessing and Wakoski, I see in the characters of Anais Nin and Adrienne Rich. These two authors have the underlying philosophy that the self is complete but that we lack total knowledge of it. Other people, while enriching the experience of knowing oneself, do not complete the self for us. A feeling of completeness comes with awareness of the self, and a feeling of freedom, with the confidence and determination to create one's own life as it is wanted.

Nin's protagonists, Sabina in The Spy in the House of Love and Djuna in The Four-Chambered Heart, are examples of women whose expanding consciousness includes an acceptance of the responsibility to create one's own life experiences. In Sabina's moment of self-realization, she sees not only how she has been unfulfilled but also how she has created her own unhappiness. Sabina has been picturing the female as her mother, a person who is nurturing and giving by denial of her needs. The man, symbolized by her father, is unemotional and insensitive but successful at getting what he wants. At first, Sabina's idea of male and female oppose each other. Eventually, however, she sees both the male need for "multiplicity of experience"¹² and the female need for deep love as being within herself. When she accepts both these elements guiltlessly, she can go on to

fulfill those needs by being the determiner of her own lifestyle. This involves risking positive affirmation of herself by others, but Sabina will take that risk. She now knows that only honest, active living holds the possibility of finding wholeness of self and unity with others.

...One of Beethoven's Quartets began to tell Sabina what Djuna could not, of what they both knew for absolute certainty: the continuity of existence and of the chain of summits, of elevations by which such continuity is reached.¹³

A positive attitude toward being a whole person in communication with others is also present in Nin's character, Djuna. She rejects the idea that pain is the only outcome of the attempt of fusion with a male. In trying to find happiness through a relationship with a man, Djuna is hurt by the lack of empathic communication but gains a sense that there is more, a wholeness in herself which she seeks to understand. She thinks that

Rango was doomed and would never be whole again, that he was corrupted in his love of pain... suddenly in touching the bottom of the abysmal loneliness in which both relationships left her, she felt the presence of god again, as she had felt him as a child, or still another time when she had been close to death.¹⁴

Reliance on the other to complete the self is impossible, and it is no wonder that those authors who attempt this become disheartened. It is those writers who seek personal wholeness first who catch glimpses of finding unity with others.

This hope for personal wholeness which reaches to other human beings is expressed even in the title of

Adrienne Rich's latest collection of poems, The Dream of a Common Language. While Rich is painfully aware of opposing forces within the human realm, she exudes confidence in herself and determination to create a place for herself where her individuality meshes harmoniously with others. In her poetry, Rich struggles to understand the source of the alienation of human beings. She demonstrates that the lack of empathy which results in alienation is not due to an inherent difference in the sexes, but to a lacking which is in us all, men and women. In her poem, "A Woman Dead in Her Forties," the speaker examines her inability to connect intimately with a close woman friend about the thing which horrifies them - the woman's death. Her indifference is the result of an unwillingness to explore her own feelings and fears.

We stayed mute and disloyal
because we were afraid
I would have touched my fingers
to where your breasts had been
but we never did such things¹⁵

Rich acknowledges the fact that self-examination is a painful process. But without taking steps to see all sides of ourselves, we are left feeling incomplete and alienated. The first step in discovering our wholeness is dropping the confining definitions we have assumed for ourselves and others. This is a difficult and lonely task, but one which provides us with the freedom to redefine ourselves, to communicate more honestly with others and to create new ways of being.

No one who survives to speak
new language, has avoided this:
the cutting-away of an old force that held her
rooted to an old ground
the pitch of utter loneliness
where she herself and all creation
seem equally dispersed, weightless, her being
to which no echo comes or can ever come.¹⁶

No matter how ugly things look to Rich, and her suffering compassionately incorporates the suffering of all oppressed people, she continually faces and fights the emptiness of human existence by working to understand herself and others. She passionately desires a complete knowledge of herself and a use of that knowledge to find unity with others. Rich conveys her confidence that this unity can be found.

In her poem, "Natural Resources", Rich says,

There are words I cannot choose again:
humanism androgyny

Such words have no shame in them, no diffidence
before the raging stoic grandmothers:¹⁷

These concepts apply to the individual, and Rich sees a need to look beyond self-respect to recognition of the worth of all people. In a process which is continual and expanding, Rich seeks connections between the ideas of individuals, and between the ideas of past and present. The end to self-awareness is not only self-improvement, but also the acceptance of responsibility for creating a world in which the goal is the improvement of the condition of all. Expecting one's individuality to be valued requires respect for all individuals.

In summary, the vision of women in literature who are creating a world in which they want to live depends on self-love and compassion for others. The writer must have a dream for the way she wants her life and the life of all humans to be, and also a confidence in her ability to determine her life. With acceptance of her responsibility to herself, a woman can find wholeness within herself and thus give freely to others. If women's literature conveys a dream, a hope for connection, then it contains rich possibilities for all women and all people.

NOTES

1 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, quoted in The Feminist Papers, ed. Alice S. Rossi. (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), p. 632.

2 Adrienne Rich, "When we Dead Awaken," in Woman as Writer, ed. Jeanette L. Webber and Joan Gruman. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), p. 124.

3 Ibid., p. 127.

4 Doris Lessing, The Summer Before the Dark. (New York: Bantam Books, 1974)p. 186.

5 Ibid., p. 194.

6 Diane Wakoski, The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 5

7 _____ . "Overweight Poem" in Smudging. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1973), p. 74.

8 _____ . "To a Friend who Cannot Accept My Judgement of Him" in Smudging, p. 43.

9 _____ . "Overweight Poem" in Smudging, p. 74.

10 _____ . "The Mariachis - A Glimpse" in Smudging, p. 136.

11 Rossi, p. 651-652.

12 Anais Nin, A Spy in the House of Love. (London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1954), p. 44.

13 Ibid., p. 139.

14 Anais Nin, The Four-Chambered Heart. (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1959), p. 131.

15 Adrienne Rich, "A Woman Dead in Her Forties,"
in Dream of a Common Language. (New York: W.W.
Norton and Company, 1978), p. 58.

16 Adrienne Rich, "Transcendental Etude,"
p. 75.

17 Adrienne Rich, "Natural Resources,"
p. 66.

Joan Curcio

K-Mart, Saturday Night

Saturday night, they came to do their shopping:
Down from the mountains of Shenandoah, Elkton, Monte
From raggedy shacks off rutted country roads,
Drab trailer camps humped up against looming mountain
This odd breed, I'd never seen the like
"They're the re-udnecks," Mandy told me

Gunning into K-Mart's parking lot
In hopped-up '54 Chevys,
Dusty pickup trucks,
Ancient paint-flaked sedans.
The rednecks climbed out
Into the warm, neon-lit night

The men,
With slicked hair and flared sideburns
T-shirts, tight jeans, tattooed arms
Penny loafers or sharp-toed cowboy boots
Camels dangling from tight lips
Weathered skin and calloused hands;
They were stringy and tough as old, overcooked chick

Their women,
Bulky, oddly bloated
With swollen ankles and ponderous breasts
Bleached beehive hair,
Faded cotton print dresses
or sweatshirts, shorts, and sandals
Chipped red toenail paint.
They dragged behind them a gaggle of kids

"Momma, kin ah bah some cay-undy?"
"Now you all hush, an' you might git some"

They'd buy work-shirts, deodorant
Sweat socks and cigarettes
Nail polish and motor oil
Chewing tobacco,

ers for the kids
hang around, laughing and joking,
ing Pabst in the parking lot.

se country folks," Mandy warned,
're some mean people -
git drunk, an' they could cut you up.
have lots of kids,
they're too poor to dress any better
e at home call them white niggers."

ometimes at dusk,
the shadow of the moutains falls hard on the cornfield
erosene lamps shine in the shack windows,
ld overalled men,
but already weatherbeaten,
and laugh on their sagging porches,
g banjos and fiddles

passed by at dusk
lamplight shines on the burnished wood
and daddy's old gi-tar,
bluegrass sounds and resounds in the piney hollows;
rass rains and rings down from the mountains-
raggedy shacks off rutted country roads,
rab trailer camps humped up against looming mountains.
n the ringing twilight, the rednecks were as kin to me

Gwen Bikis

Progress

The Yadkin's muddy now.

Ugly little brick boxes dot the land
where Grandpa used to grow sweet corn
and tobacco full of fat worms.

(We were supposed to pinch their heads off,
but I cheated.)

Once we built dams to catch tadpoles
in the branch down the hill;
gathered brown eggs from reluctant hens
up in the hayloft;
entered the dark smokehouse on a dare,
taking the chance
that somebody would shut the door.

Now

the springhouse behind the barn
(nearest thing to heaven on a hot day)
sits roofless, covered with honeysuckle,
crouched like an unkempt old woman.
Rusted machinery layin'
just a bunch of cripples
with their memories of wheat threshin' time;
and the black iron washpot
made the transition
from little boys' dirty overalls
to chicken stew
to a pile of shriveled green cookin' apples
so rotten that only the core is left.
Grandma still lives in the main house.
I wonder how it feels to be flesh and blood
in a land of ghosts.

Bonnie Pratt



Womansprouts

IV



7/23/74 KATEY BRANCH

ACID ETCHING ARTIST PROOF

Womansprouts IV

an anthology of Guilford
College women's writing

presented by the Guilford
College Women's Center

1980

Our aim in publishing *Womansprouts* is to encourage self-expression in women. Thanks for helping in the celebration.

L.V.

The Editorial Board:

Jane Caris

Naomi Donovan

Sarah Malino

Ellen O'Brien

Leslie Vloedman

cover design: Katey Branch

... and Kris Beeler, Meg Breeden, Rachel Brink, Sabine Clark, Tracy Davis, Amy Evans, Naomi Donovan, Kathy Neckerman, and Leslie Vloedman.

womenchildren
faces are bank slates
not yet marked
by rivers of youth
ebbing slowly away
currents of discovery
run round their eyes
curiosity
not yet vanquished
hopes still fresh

dipping toes
into stormy waters
of time
spinning wrecklessly
on the border
the womenchildren
teetering crazily
on the edge

smashing clocks
defiant rebellion
the inevitable ignored

womenchildren dance
until the river
dries their skin

Caroline Harding

Tender Years

Grandma told me, "Never let them boys get up under that dress. After you give 'em that, you ain't got no more to give 'em."

But that was later.
After training bras replaced t-shirts.
After I finished playing hopscotch.

No more,
"Apple on a stick, make me sick
Make my heart go two-forty six."

Mama used to say, "Scrub your neck good girl and be sure to get them naps back there in that kitchen."

But that was long before my "too grown" years in senior high.
During the time when I wore shorts for protection from the dirty boys who peeped.
I nearly broke my neck trying to grab my blouse when my brother walked in the bathroom.

"What you tryin' to hide for? I see pancakes every morning at breakfast!"

My feelings were hurt and he said he was sorry.

Then I had my first date
and I remembered what Grandma told me.

Michelle Adams

My Grandma has a natural frown
The corners of her mouth go down
Joining the lines that frame her chin
Which touching bottom sprout up again
Up to her nose which wrinkles
Then
She smiles
Mouth corners slide up
Along the lines
Puffing her cheeks
And also mine.
Today mine puff much lonelier.
Hers so drawn that she no longer foreshadows me.
Leslie G. Vloedman

Being Alive

I'm on the edge of the bluff,
entwined among the leathery roots
that cling to the eroding soil.

I'm growing with the dandelions,
killing off the tender wild flowers
that long have been extinct.

I'm running with the falling rocks
they pick up speed and bring others
with them, only to hit the bottom.

I'm talking with the wind,
in a deep hollow voice,
frightening young children
long after the ghost stories have been told.
Kris Beeler

THE RAIN WITCH

*You, witch! All day hanging
green like a low squatting
frog in spring rain.*

*Trees shimmer emerald
in your water globe.*

*You — who yesterday
radared white and flat
over Texas, have sprung
your potions in full-blown
skirts.*

*Outside the cross-stitched
cafe window, behind your
slanted April fingers,
pine needles dip and fatten
in mist.*

*In turreted boughs you
spin the world
the shade of trees
in a nursery book.*

*At three I didn't know they
were pictured tidily pasted
to a page, and I could
slide in with the
ease of icing
sweetly running the birthday cakes.
You, witch, were there —
dripping promises like
rain from your fingers.*

*You sang
how mothers would be constant
as bulbs on a Christmas tree,
then left me diving
in sea green skirts
to hunt the one I lost
at four.*

Witch, I am tired of this
fairy tale, worn to the gills
from chasing you in trees
and rain
and music.

You slip like an eel
or a snip of song,
then laugh from a cloud
at my empty hands.

You, green goddess, pour
through the window
onto my table,
try to become the
theme of this poem.

I tell you, my theme is
steady
and real as nickles that
patter on hard formica.
My song is in my lovely
wet hair, my two strong
feet in their squishy sneakers.
I sing it loud to
drown you out.

Witch, come one drop closer
and I'll swish you into a
killing present.
I'll turn your hair strands
into coins and
drink you down
in a hundred coffees.
Then I'll mail you
under my toe,
you throbbing
little frog!

Kate McIver

*Shudders are not shivers,
Nor quiverings,
Nor quickenings.
Shudders are for a bodyless leg.
Where is it now —
Tagged and frozen in the technician's bin?
Gone, in ashes, polluting the Chesapeake?
Shudders are for an arterial wall
That came undone,
Turning words into
Creaking, fumbling searches.
Shudders are for each day that disappeared
When a piece of honed metal bored
Through the plastic bubble
Whirling over the rice paddy.
They are seizures of disbelief and desperation,
And, all the while, the certainty that
What comes shall be as wracked and wretched
As what has come before.
Shudders are
All that would let you see me;
All that would make you run from me;
All that I know
Of eyeless heads, fingers used as tourniquets,
Palms that strike with more terror than pain,
Words that are malignant, that metastasize, that eat their way
Into a self and teach it how
To shudder.*

Jacqueline Ludel

QUESTION THE CAUSE?

*Pope's sham their catholicizing
While children of three start idolizing
As elders lecture on moralizing
Breath tubes of life keep capsizing
Manufacturers think of advertising
While government continues their minimizing
Which the population finds vulgarizing
And armies begin their mobilizing
How can one question the cause of uprising?*

Lynn A. Summerill

THE FINAL HOMECOMING

*Through cadavers land
I run
Strange equinox
Vanishing sun
black to gray
Zero to none
Bugle dirges,
Welcome my Son.*

Lynn A. Summerill

MOON CHILD

Full Moon:

*Dance, run through the snow
Its dark but the moonlight
will guard you.
Fun; fast, faster
Snow crunches beneath your feet
Crumbling like the Spinx of Egypt
So unfrequently does the sense of life
Consume you.
The wind gives you life
and offers you so much as it
Slaps your face and mangles your hair.*

No Moon:

*moon child
crying alone in the follow
of a tree,
Bring forth your dark days
Sullen, uncaring
Passing by in a blur
Existing like wispy brush strokes
whose gaps between colors are scattered
Yearning for people, but more
for solitude and death.
Will you ever overcome the obstacles
Which stand in your path to happiness?*

Lynn A. Summerill

canning season

*clustered jars of clove and fruit
their gold rim lids sparkle and
grip thickened glass mouths
of stodgy shapes whose
transparent skins reveal
the stripped remains of
pulp and flesh*

patti ferguson

diamond eyes

*shine and shine your black light
through my brain
piercing the cells and leaving them
crisp, deflated —
empty of what little scraps
had collected there*

*i met another once
in the spring
he had your eyes
they were set in gold rings
that leered at me
from velvet beds*

*those deadly gems sparkle
and trap my mind
still i fight gilded circles
and try to forget
your gaze of stone.*

patti ferguson

elements of the season

*mornings now, saltless mist lines
the stripped hedges, settling
just above the earth. vines
and rocks are slick as gems,
and as easily lost in this
twilight vagueness about edges.
between branches, a wheel of web
is spun with light and water,
spiders retreated from the recreation.
the white hairs on my arm
catch the damp, wear it close
as skin. i breathe inside
clouds, where air and water fuse,
and imagine myself amphibian.*

water

*once sun has drawn up
the fluid chill, the lines
of branch and bark come clear,
sharp as pins. steady colors
swell with light: citrus
sorrel, bright beads of winterberry.
dogs sprawl in the timothy
grass, seeds huddled like insects
in their fur. kneeling between
the garden's narrow tracts,
i turn over clotted earth,
breathing through the heavy
brothy scent. onions are
uncovered, in waxy gold or
purple globes, color remembered
even in darkness.*

earth

past noon, light falls
at a sharper angle, vivid
as beaten brass. it slides
down branches, touches sparks
off from glass, to stop
at the hump of trimmings
and dark weeds i have kept
separate from grass. i strike
matches, wood to wood.
the lip of sulphur catches, opens
flame through the scaly leaves.
orange twists like a lizard.
as smoke starts up, i stand
nearer, stretching out my arms,
to harvest heat before winter.

fire

the sun drops down, light swaying
like a pendulum. everything
is longer in its shadow. lustrous
rooms open between trees, the space
persuasive of sprites and other
airish creatures. the sky's
last blue spirals off like
a gas. then, spreading down
over trees and hedges, thick
as salt, come birds, thousands
pouring south. they are more
shadows, black leaves crackling
on each branch, less flesh
than voice. at the startle
of my arms thrown up
like wings, they rise up unrested,
in a wide canopy of flight,
leaving me to breathe the air
which lies closest to the ground.

air

holly lu conant rees

It begins again.

*Horizons nearing, sliding on rails greased by the remains of
slaughtered might-have-beens*

*(the splintered head of a lover, his sweet words now foamy
spittle upon the track;*

the babe but a bloody embryonic smear;

*a gathering of those beloved, smashed in grotesque disarray,
the bowels of a friend here, the heart
of another there).*

*Silently the horizons come, from left, right, yesterdays,
tomorrows.*

I am sinking within the hollow they form;

The walls grow steeper; the walls grow smoother.

Horizons speeding together, on rails that never twist or turn,

*Riding the steel spines that point, all point, to an
unforgiving center*

Above my head, above my descending head.

The light is fading within the hollow.

Muffled and disembodied voices call me to action,

To reverse the inexorable, the converging horizons.

*The words, freely translated, are best understood as the
opening of the switch on each track:*

You are alone.

Once sealed within by the drawstring of horizons that have me

There shall be only this:

*Fury bent into a coil of confusion, wound tightly around a
core of dead dreams.*

Jacqueline Lucif

Naked

*I try to get lost in this land of nakedness
where all is revealed
and vulnerable; for all to reject.
My bare, happy feet parade independently
choosing their own path,
creative and original.
When I look up to see, the familiar crowds me
and chokes my being.
I scream inside
from frustration, and anger
There is no more mystery, no more concealed secrets
tucked away in hidden cubby holes.
Even I can no longer maintain my mystical facade.
Yet I stay.
Because I, with my vague identity,
crave to surround my existence
with the familiar.*

Sabine Clark

Fresh Figs

*the vulva of the vegetable world
kept within a fleshy shell
revealing when penetrated
the succulently vibrant
membranes of brilliant red
an ecstasy to taste
refreshment to eyes and thoughts
joy to tongue and mouth
Satisfaction to stomach and expectations.*
Katey Branch

Attempts 2 & 3 combined

He hit the wall and people came
as I cut deeper, cried & ran
The night freed me from the shoebox
Locked inside the closet
I ran through the
lost valleys of fiction
and met freedom
under the stars of darkness
Lights like New York disappeared
leaving me in Solid Park.
not like
water color black that washes away.

The bloody battlefields of the past
with Stinlung, rotting sunwashed corpses
didn't block or scare me
as I skipped over them
like I was playing jump rope.
The ovens where millions burned
I found comforting
Little nigger babies left unwanted along
the roadside I
rearranged
into a hopscotch board.

An old man's skull
took the place of a stove
I made it up to 5 and missed,

An old man's skull
took the place of a stone
I made it up to 5 and missed,
stepping on one of the squirming things
Then someone grabbed my arm
and put me on a chessboard
along with the king, knights and castles
I entered the dark ages,
reversing in time
I was stopped again just as I was
about to find the true origin of life
when white ghosts with sterilized hands
bandaged, stinged and sewed
and placed me back into that
dreaded shoebox of the living
cramped, heated, ugly
It was then I felt the hell
fear consumed my mind
My skeleton immobilized
constricted, bound in white cloth
how I wished
it was
a
shroud.

Lynn A. Summerill

Nursing Home Blues

Aching bones moaning,
crying to be relieved of their anguish.
Piss lingers in the air,
the smell of those already "relieved".
Nurses tease constantly shitting Nancy,
— and she only replies, "But, I can't help it".
Little Miss Mac cleaning and dusting away
traces of her slaving past.
— and down the hall Cary never stops repeating,
"Take me to my room honey".
Mr. Edwards lies helplessly in bed, for
it's hard to walk with no legs.
Zeke will stay away from drugs now.
The wheelchair has become a part of his body
— and Robert shakes uncontrollably ever since the
car smash.
But they all wake up morning feeding,
All except Ida who, like many, never wants to
SEE THE LIGHT!

Michelle Adams

A Lullaby

We're sitting alone,
the house is so very silent.
I hear a childhood song singing in my memory
My bare feet tap to the beat.

Tenderly I squeeze your hand
to the rhythm inside my head.
As if sitting on a dock my legs swing,
I break the stillness of the water.

I sway back and forth,
shoulders filled with this lullaby.
My head rocks,
song runs through my hair,
spilling on to the floor.

The tempo increases,
and the current pulls me under.
I am afraid to share this song.

I sing the sparkling words in the
hope that you will understand,
they fill the silent house.

Kris Beeler

climbing

through a corridor full with light
loose and clean as water falling,
you lead me. your fingertips
are sealed to the green threads
trembling in my wrist, the answer
of pulse to pulse. your face
is stranger to me now
than the exotic alphabet
enameled on these walls, the mosaic
fragments of wings and bright
islands. looking back,
once, your eyes are dizzy
as prisms, their vaulted centers
regardless of any hue
i could name. I trust to
the fingers knotted against
my wrist, needful of a warmth
still human. the marble floor
slants, light sliding down
in flat bars. the damascene
tiles are blurred by green
tissue. we are descending,
your fingers no firmer
on my wrist, your skin
braided in shadow. you had
promised heights, a sharp
map of cloud and sea. candles
shiver in high arched corners,
threatening the end of light.

we are between more narrow
walls, ground smooth
by darkness. a river pulses
below our feet. i am certain
only of the five coins
laid on my wrist.
then, before i speak,
you reach the deep chamber
you had craved. with vision
returned from a source
more radical than light,
i see stone hanging thin
as lace above us. a shifting
lake gleams, colors stark
as opals showing through
the surface. this is surely
the center. far from speech,
i gather in your hand,
my fingers returning
to your veins the price
of passage. your skin
is less alien than
my own, and welcome.
i could not have come alone.

holly lu conant rees



ROMANS PROUTS V



WOMANS PROUTS V

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*presented by the Guilford
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self-expression in women.

Thanks for helping in the
celebration.

The Editorial Board:

Wendy Barkley

Jane Bengel

Janice Lynch

Beth Shriro

Ellen O'Brien

... and Meg Braeden, Leslie
Vloedman, Sabine Clark, Kri
Beeler, Rachel Brink, Laura
Street, Beth Shriro, Nancy
Wittpenn, and Wendy Barkley
art: Katy Branch

reading

in narrow light she stands,
still as soil. outside the
blunt circle, black lies dead
as cloth across the attending
room. her eyes refuse
such defended dark, sight
guttering and painful.
silence, also black,
is banked long and low
against walls and tables.
the pale pages ordered
before her lose form,
deny the grace she imagines
language can claim. from this,
she must fashion speech.
breath hangs like fluid
in her lungs. waiting
no longer, she begins,
hopeful of a second genesis.
reading, her mouth richens,
is drenched with sudden
intricate flavors. her skin
flares in the luxury of light,
her eyes vivid as orchids.
the voice she hears owns
the pulse of lust and nerves,
its timbre recognized
in the frail vibration
of an eyelid. the darkness
having been unmade,
she views the faces
she has shaped,
the landscapes evolved
from blindness.
when it is done, she leans
against the hot altar,
raptured as anyone.
the words have been created,
and so create.

Holly Lu Conant Rees

Rosh Hashonna: 1980

*there is something strange about this new year
that hasn't found christ yet
like me*

*but still we are born again yearly
yearly handed our 5740th second chances
and cryptically
if not ineptly told
be good
if you can't be good
be careful
if you can't be careful
name it after . . .*

*hitler really blew my mother away
screaming through the radio
and still she knew he was killing her too
and how could she ever be a child
when she couldn't even be a person
and that was all she really wanted*

*so i went to the sphinx and asked
for her sixth through eighteenth birthdays
and for the left bank
and for bobby sherman
for my birthday*

*and mom told me
all about mrs. abrahamson
whose childhood burned away
with guiltless beauty
and raging abandon
and a smell worse than cooking jews*

*i cannot accept the stenchd horror
though it's already there
inside me
stillborn but stillkicking
—amatterofgeneticsyousee—
suffocatingme
scorchingme
everytime i pray for amnesia
or anesthesia
but it won't go away*

*it's welded
 melted
 emblazoned
born into me
like it must have been born
into jesus
or susan b. anthony
or harry s. truman
or bobby sherman*

*so i attend the yearly rebrandings
in this inescapably semitic soul
with this incurable 3rd degree burn
only i feel as immortal as silver
with cords of childhoods before i sleep
and cords of childhoods before i sleep
and cords and cords and cords and cords
and cords of childhoods before i sleep*

Heidi E. Hirschman

*soothing stories to be told
candle lights burn bright
myself to reassure
and the tree outside
transforming shadows to threats
beckons me to come and play
my childhood renewed
scraped knees once
now scraped hearts
as the tree expels me
from its branches angry
on the concrete I lie
confused
and I awake in my bed
in a betraying sweat
and the tree outside
transforming threats to shadows
projections into my future
I lie wondering
who will
beckon me to come and play
and tell me soothing stories
by candlelight*

Wendy Barkley

AUTUMN IS STUCK IN HER MOUTH

*It's the season of crows
(they have little competition:
small kites of birds
drawn by dim mind,
wind exploded leaves
in brief flight).*

*They caw across cerulean sky,
great wings
ink out color.*

*A thousand speechless autumns
gleaned by gilded tongues
blot out the poet's rhyme.
She stands by wintergreening field,
dry leaves
stuck in her mouth.*

*Watch the shadow
of crows.*

Jane Godard Caris

Revelations

*always a revelation
until next Tuesday,
when life once again
falls apart*

*at the seams of the sun
there may lie our sought-after simple truths
now, perhaps forever, hidden
by clouds produced by our own inner humidity*

C. Solow

Tomorrow

*Today, I know not,
how deep the wound
you inflicted
really was,
for the pain
is now gone
and the impression
you left is nothing,
but a scar.*

Charlotte Jeanette Warren

The Gift
(to my grandfather)

A little, blue car
you gave me at Christmas.
I zigged & zagged & hit the chair,
Dad screamed, you smiled.

A funny, green dog
you gave me one day.
Together on the floor,
we played with the stuffed thing.

A beautiful pearl necklace
you up and gave me.
It was your daughter's (dead now)
but you gave it to me.

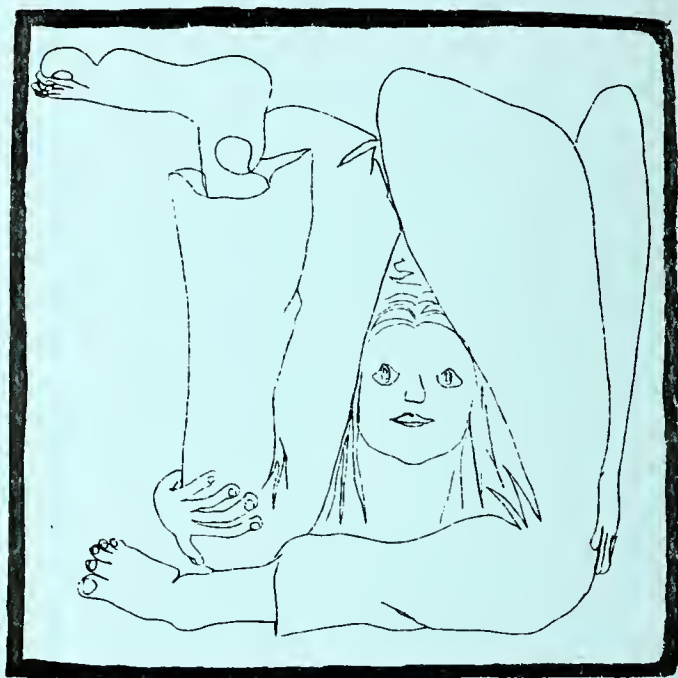
An eternal diamond watch
you gave me at 16.
Sparkling like your eyes
but not your smile.
I was a woman then.

With all your gifts
I grew like you.
perceiving much you never knew
Quite a woman I wanted to be.

With all your good deeds
you never guessed
that I saw your sadness
and heard your prayers.

With all that you gave
and all that I took
I became that woman
but a woman like you.

Lisa Stout



Self Defense

*I
pull out his eye
only
i
can stick it
back in empty sockets*

*I
paste on lips
Elmer
is
transparent*

*I push my finger
in — out
of belly flesh
only to
discover
dirt lying
under
my nails*

*Like a
corroded hole*

*I
plug him
up with cork*

*it
is necessary
for he
drips
poison.*

Lynn A. Summerill

COMING ROUND

*Flying at fifty over canals
I know are really inside me,
my mind loose in my body flapping
its grey wings, inside the un-
pressurized compartment baggage
expands. The little tubes
unscrew their caps. They come undone.
The bright oils worm out slow
crimson, magenta. An accidental
art, these random bursts
of color. Older I get,
thinner the air.*

*Once a month my breasts remember
milk. Like Pavlov's bitch:
the noon bell rang, I soaked
my blouse. Girl students round me
giggled, uneasy; their nipples stirred.
At home my babies pucker, scream.
I hear them from the hallway, drop
briefcase and bra, my two pretenses.
We fumble and close. Let down my milk
like any cow.*

Sweet classicists,
teach me about the screaming.
When the hymen breaks — *O Hymenaeae!*
Women in chorus raise the cry.
When the child's head crowns bloody —
Women in chorus raise the cry.
When the soul cleaves the body —
Women in chorus raise the cry.

We are membranes. We burst,
our screams in every woman's throat.
Our pleasures tear us like dogs.
Why Evoke. Evoke.

The colors are blending now.
The woman in my dream bends
over my crib. She is dark and young
and daughters. Her rosy nipple
tickles. I have drunk so long
of the thick salt milk of men —
How can it be my tongue remembers
these thin blue jets so fine they sting?

Ann Deagon
(first published in *Southern Poetry Review* 1980)

*My anger
comes out
in untidy
passionate
rolls of
thunder*

*Sharp
Piercing
bits & pieces
chipped off
my statue*

*My softness
becoming
stoney in the green-
ness of a graveyard*

Laura Street

*our common child
stirred my empty womb last night
waking with sealed eyes
and damp sides, palm pressed
stiff to our common corpse
I listened to the furious kicks
and felt the foreign wails.*

*morning sickness of solitude
I wanted to retch
the green ghost of a parting,
heave it in the pre-dawn
and walk out normally empty
as the sun cracked a common cloud.*

*the common child of distance
grows too heavy for this pelvis
pushes bones and organs
till I am a swollen sickness
takes heart for lung for stomach
to a trembling tissue*

*it begs the abortion
of catholic minds, hands the knife
for its never ending
(will keep there still,
chilled child in empty womb)
it reeks of mortality
and ages me as well, blue legs
bulbous breasts
twenty months of morning sickness*

Janice Lynch

love

*he offered her his life
when he offered her his love
and like a dummy she took it*

*She hid the popper
and the problems
She hid her love
and concealed her hurt
She hid the whips
which bruised her heart*

*The welts grew
outward
and when the sick sores
started to show
He put bandaids on them
But his bandaids grew thin
as the air of truth
excruciated the wounds*

*Only clothes
kept her intact
the paint made her look
together*

*But when the clothes came off
her soul like salt
spilled out of the shaker
the scattered parts were
collected and by a quick gesture
of a man who held a broom,
thrown away.*

Lynn A. Summerill

Your Disdainful Pack

*the sun could shatter
and splatter terrific
fire-shards
 in piercing technicolour
rainbow-screams
all over your bland pillow
and you would throw up your hands
 play catch with your soul
 and turn your disdainful back
on the only miracle
 this side of the beginning
of your fire-shard-smile*

Heidi E. Hirschman

PREACHER TOM

*His face folds, prunelike:
 from tears down-running
 before time dried him,
 from convolutions aged
 in prune-black skin.
His face glows, like hand-rubbed wood,
like an aged burl-ebony pipe:
 the mute, gnarled bowl . . .
 the fire within . . .
 the smoke-raw wisdom rising . . .*

Paula S. Jordan

A True Descendant

You are an innocent.

A Rubens child.

*When the exquisite tension comes
your face remains
vulnerable as a child's.*

*After centuries of
twisted reason
blaming the snake,
your face bears witness
to the Garden
stripped bare of all
but discovery.*

Jane Godard Caris



Womansprouts

VI

The Guilford College Women's Center
Presents

Womansprouts VI

A Collection of Guilford College Women's Writing

1982

lettering: Ivie McCullough

Womansprouts gives Guilford College Women a chance to express themselves creatively. We thank all those who shared in this celebration.

The Editorial Board:

Kris Beeler
Jingyi Farr
Charity James
Ellen O'Brien

Production:

Vendy Barkley
Meg Breedon

Stricken

My cat died one year ago.
120 miles away, I awoke
with a start. A beginning.
Loudly, I lived the sound
of a raging, echoing screech
of agony and rejection.

My head began to spin with the animal.
Instinct overtook my lower brain lobes:
"Survival," it whispered. "Kill to live."
I shook the sound out through my ears
and now, at times, I have trouble hearing.

But my body still knows the truth
when it's weak and sick.
At times I feel skinless;
then I get dizzy.
The earth always shifts
and I can't stand still.

Yet I have to keep on going.
I must get him back.
He's here somewhere,
in this world, crying.
My animal. My cat.

Mary K. Covington

RACHEL

There were clouds that night
and the air was cold
and I opened the door for sunshine
and found it
in her quiet sullen tones
she was accompanied by the music
of the years when music meant something
She was quiet for some time
and the notes of her guitar
played gently through her door into mine
She stopped
and unaware of her silent listener
She left
And I felt the cold once more
and I closed my door
and I closed my eyes
for it was dark anyway

—Beth DuRocher

HUMANIMALS

She saw him goose-winding behind her gandering
Hiss hiss hiss his
in two-stepped mating dance
philandering a trifle with plain ducks and malabars
squawking at strangers, dancing flat-footed in the midnight m
but knew within her curvy goosy bosom
all smooth and jutting as an Edwardian dame's
that ganders do philander on the path
but life-long loving is their highest art

The vestal virgins dominate the world speaking
animus unto animus
they control
the nobility the gentry the clerks the sharks the narks
with an effortless valency of grace
they lift their skirts a fraction so as to pass with ease
up the great staircase into the porticos
of power and patronage
I know their kind and once I aped their game
but then
the monster came
and elated
me so now ! moult and splutter like a fool
ish girl
and the vestals have none of me
though they bow graciously as they pass me carrying
the lamps
their brows are white
and smooth
and heavy
and I'm as feckless as a cassowary

The man you see isn't the man you know
The man you know is a toad in a barrel
but that's all right because there's room for you in there
too.

Toadmen and women belong together, the bright stones in their
foreheads gleam concurrently, they have no further to go, they
have arrived at the fortunate conclusion
that two's not two and one is not alone.

I would like to jump in the barrel
with you
most sacred and honored
most enlightened
toad
me too
with you
at one
and the barrel shall roll into eternity
while I gaze in the glowing stone that tells me
you are truly you
and I am one too.

—Charity James

Abortion

It rained again today.
It rained,
And I stayed inside and cried—
Again.
All day long.
The tears fell in tattered silence,
Falling, like a gentle stream of babies' bodies
Onto a withered rose.

—Guilford Student

Absence

Yesterday

The earth moved, and I with it.

Today,

A clock marks the hours

And rain colors my world.

He was real, wasn't he?

—Guilford Student

Elegy

Mama . . . Mama . . . Mama . . .
I hear you now. I feel you now.
Somewhere in the pit of my stomach
you fall . . .
Rising and falling I breathe you in
and push you out.

Our cord has been cut and tied
to my knotted belly,
So that I've become attached to myself,
feeding my body
through your gristle.

You have left me a handle on the inside
to carry me through;
Something to hold on to, a knot of love.
A life cut off
and safely bleeding in my own blood,
I hold you.

Mary K. Covington

Secrets of Daughters

Our eyes reflect a common bond.
After many years of ignorance
I realize you have always been naked.
Now
I shed the last
of that which shrouds me.

Often I ran from your candor.
It haunted of ageless, feminine philosophies—
 We must deny our passions,
 think in silence,
 and smile through the biting darkness.
We often run from what will inevitably
become a part of us;
secrets of daughters,
necessities of survival.

Proud Juventas*
winces at the sight of imperfection,
scoffs at wisdom,
until,
slowing long enough to view herself,
finds the lines of both
etched across her face.

*—Goddess of youth.

Laurie Scull

Dear Students

Finally, finally I begin to understand what fuels the posturing within my classrooms: you want surface and I want substance; you want stance and I want grace; you want approximation and I want precision. No wonder we come to frothy anger over such as whether spelling "counts" or whether a due date specifies a day or an epoch. The arguments degenerate into grudges. Indeed they should. There can only be ill will when the talk revolves around attendance policies but the actual debate spirals outward from unspoken disagreements about lyricism and meaning.

And so we all pretend. You pretend interest and I pretend to believe you. I pretend respect for your work and you pretend to believe me. We circle around, warily and gracelessly, trying desperately not to attend to what the grotesque dance reveals. The pas de deux entails nothing more than simultaneous appearances on the same stage. There is no flow or flux or complementarity. Not even the music binds us. I hear cacophony when you hear presto and you hear formlessness when I hear adagio. You can't abide emphasis on the subtlety of finger or toe position and I can't understand how gyratory bravura can possibly please you. Mostly, you want to watch; you want to linger listlessly near the wings but you also want me to note a casual crossing of your feet as if it were an incipient entrechat. Mostly, I want you to come downstage, to feel the heat of the lights, to be engulfed

the sound swirling up from the pit, and to notice what happens when you move a limb, just one limb, as if everything, anything depended on the elegance of your gesture. Yes, I want you to know what effort, what intensity, what involvement and even preoccupation I mean.

But we dissemble. We become a corps de folie and there is no let. There is only the bickering over costumes. Once outfitted, we congratulate ourselves for having overcome the petty disputes. And never do we admit that, once in costume, there isn't anything really for us to do together. We know nothing of the lift, the turn or stance. Our bickering leaves bruises that will certainly heal. Our willingness — perhaps eagerness — to ignore what has happened will cripple us: the tendons will tear, the cartilage will shred, the ligaments will strain as we take off the costumes. We'll hobble about and you will never tell me that what you really wanted was spectacle and I will never tell you that what I really wanted was engagement. Worse, we will stiffly curtsy and bow; you will confirm my role; I will certify yours; we will both affirm pretense; the arguments will be easily forgotten and the genuine debate will never be joined. We will have conspiratorially agreed that what truly matters is nothing, that really nothing truly matters.

Jacqueline Ludel
Nov. 1981

uncreative movements
moving
within my skull
pressing
for a chance to scream
and yet otherwise quiet
stealing a note of music
from next door
a tock
from the incessant sounds of a clock
on a desk that creaks
to express oneself isn't healthy
but it is all we have
said the mute
for we have no sounds of our own
and he was told
you can hear the
sounds of mistrust
and fear when seen in the eyes of another
you can feel the non-stop
shaking of a friend's hand
you can smile to tell them
you understand
So what is sound

—Beth DuRocher

The River

It flows,

It flows.

Its steadiness of force reassures the doubter,
Its unaware majesty humbles the competitor,
Its foreverness invigorates those with tired minds.

It flows, it flows.

Steady yet a constancy of change,
Swirls sediment and ripples of life,
Movement of the primal, and now and the then.

It flows, it flows.

It is for us and of us,
It is an animal of flux and feeling,
Its existence meshes with those of its kind.

It flows, it flows.

A healer of cause and desire,
A lover of the hopeless and wandering,
A thing of inherent design, a thing of the interior.

It flows.

Brenda Esch
June 1, 1981

The Social Function

uncle sym sneaks a squeeze
of my breast embracing me
on the receiving line
of my sister's wedding

pigs in blankets and
fried zucchini swirl by
i, an appetizer in the flesh
smile and go with the flow
in line and kiss his
robust revlon wife

the bouquets have wilted
and now i write a poem
of the aftertaste of insult
women/maids of honor absorb
during cocktails and on
the dance floor

receiving skin gifts
not requested but
accepted within the
bounds of propriety

—Carol B. Solow

FOR DADDY

Our baby moves—
Ever so slightly,
In my warm cocoon
Also called a womb.

My mother said he would feel
like fluttering butterflies,
But she was wrong
for the very first time.

Our baby feels sometimes like a
Rumbling earthquake—
With my skin stretching
instead of cracking.

And then,

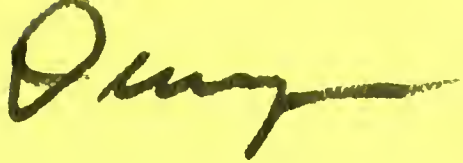
I'll feel his foot
kick into my very being
letting me know
That we're not alone and never will be again.

When our baby moves—
Despite the tremors and the twinges,
I feel high.
I feel like a fluttering butterfly.

Peggy Schaefer Thornberry
February, 1981.

Womansprouts VII

etry
enter



The Guilford College Women's Center

presents

Womansprouts VII

An Anthology of
Guilford College Women's Writing

1983

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Womansprouts is published to encourage creative expression of women in the Guilford Community. We thank all those who shared their time and talent.

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For Michele

How do I follow the sister
Who forbids touch?
Scorns approach —
She has become
An abandoned road
No one follows where she goes.
The loneliness —
It is not hidden
It protrudes from her eyes
Until they are not blue.
She is black —
I feel the cold
Like the North Sea in January.
She is strong enough
Not to drown —
But she does not breathe.
At night I listen
Praying movement or a cough.
She does not breathe
And men do not travel;
She is my sister
In the dark,
By my side.

— Janice Lynch
January 4, 1983

Another Time

In my box
I keep your letters
Paper emotions
The faded pastels of another time,
Another person.

I lift one
Perhaps catch
Part of your essence.
To feel again
What I felt another time.

Rub the crispness
On my cheek
Tears
Ruin the perfect of smoothness
Blurs my handwriting
Like my memories of
Another time.

— Anonymous

The sensuous in me
Cries out longingly
Feline, seductive
It snakes out
Arousing others
Then return
Saving itself.

— Christy Gaines

Phoning Home

A birth in coiled cord,
airless within blue
and wrapping wire.
Kicking through walls of
pungent darkness,
I groped between spasms
of forced
and hated
release.

Momma!
These feeble breaths
are outside of you.
 I am here.
 I am alive.
 I have a voice.
There is no need to keep
screaming.

— Laurie Scull

Like shafts of wheat gone wild

Chartres cathedral leaps
from ripened fields,
keeping company
with clouds.

A woman unbends
from binding sheaves.
Her rainbow shape,
colored by imagination,
rises, turning
toward the twin spires.

Her skirt assumes the grace
of columns.

— Jane Godard Caris

ICY PANES

Peaceful darkness
constant black
stilly staring
mind is blank
slowly spilling
icy clear
cleansing mind
recalling dear.

— Amy Allison

Woman With Child

Take this out of me!
this growth, this tissue
constantly haunting me, weakening me, sickening me
Created out of love
and uncontrolled lust
With illusions of immunity
from the laws of nature
acting within my body . . .

And now,
Regret, and guilt, and anger, and shame, and sorrow
for the unborn child,
Our child
that will never be . . .

I can feel you inside me now
Taking from me — life sustaining life
My body is your home.
You are so much a part of me,
yet you are separate, unique.
We cannot make you again.

At times I feel love for you
for the you who might have been
with curls and wondering eyes
and tiny fingers wrapped around mine.
I feel you needing me
My body readily provides.

I speak to you
though I know you will never hear all this.
I believe you are a "you" — a someone.
Or does life begin as an "it"
and later turn into a someone?

How can one discontinue life
and then ask to be pardoned?

— Anonymous

Crystal

He watched her as she carefully placed each crystal animal in the glass case. Her delicate hands reached into the shelves, moving and turning the pieces until they caught the afternoon sun at just the right angle, reflecting it onto the mirrors which lined the back of the case. She had spent many hours arranging the shelves, and dusting the crystal into a state of perfect clarity. Each piece was important to her.

Once his curiosity led him to open the case early one morning, before the light touched it. He pulled out a crystal deer and let its cool fragility rest in his coarse palm. Its smooth curves and tiny points felt odd against his thumb. He placed it back in the case, checking its position to be certain she wouldn't notice. When the afternoon light filled the room, she rose from her chair and walked to the case. She opened it, moved the deer and closed the case softly. She turned and looked at him. "Please . . . don't touch it", she said quietly, and left the room without waiting for a response.

In the Fall, her sister Emily came and stood on the porch, without ringing the bell. He noticed her shadow moving on the wall, and went to the door. "Hello", Emily said, and walked inside, pulling her coat around her full bosom. He remained in the den for the rest of the day, trying to tune out their constant, quiet chatter. It was disturbing to him and only caused him to listen more closely. They interrupted his solitude at about three, bursting into the room with their peculiar, silent excitement. Emily had brought a crystal, a stallion with long, prancing legs. They opened the case and watched the shadows change behind its swinging door.

At dinner, he was silent, listening to them speak about the stallion, and how Emily had run across it at an auction in an old estate. Emily spent a great deal of time describing the room where the horse was discovered, and the people who were in the room, and the woman who owned the room, until he felt his stomach wrapping into coils of impatience. "Excuse me, I have some work to attend to", he said quickly, and went to the den, closing the door behind him. He sat in his chair and stared at the case and the horse, thinking of rooms and horses he had known — a wooden horse that rocked back and forth in an attic room. He couldn't reach the light switch, so he rocked in the dark, feeling the wooden handles in his small clenched fists, licking the salty

ars which ran down his cheeks. "Horsey-Horsey", he whispered
he rocked in the darkness.

Emily didn't go home that night or for many nights to come.
Sometimes he would watch the sisters as they sat in the garden.
They would sit very close together, sometimes holding each other's
hand, and often laughing. But when he opened the door, they would
abruptly stand up and smile as if they had been discovered in the
midst of a childhood adventure. In his presence, their conversation
was stilted, accented by Emily's staccato giggle. He wished Emily
would go away. He wanted to make love to her the way they had
before Emily came. Now, when he was alone with her at night, she
often turned away from him, murmuring that Emily might hear, as
their love was now a sin, because of Emily's presence. He forced
himself upon her one night after staring at her sleeping curves
and the fall of her smooth body, never giving her enough time to
wake from her sleep, holding his hand against her frightened cries.
He said nothing the next day, and kept close to Emily, being
careful not to meet his eyes. He silenced his apology.

She and Emily came into the den one day with white cloths
tapped around their hands. The cloths reminded him of an Indian
death dance he had seen in a movie — flocks of Indian women, draped
in white shrouds, mourning for the death of their great leader.
He shuddered as she walked toward him, Emily following. Emily
had taken to dressing her in ribbons, and they glistened in the
light as she walked toward the case. "It needs a different
light", she said, as she began to slide the case off the shelf.
Emily stood behind her, trying to decide where to hold the case,
moving like a pantomime artist in a balancing act. He watched their
bizarre antics, wondering what had gone wrong in their upbringing
to cause such peculiarities.

They moved the case to the kitchen where they could stare at
it all day, (and away from him he assumed). It was a fixture for
their eyes during the now quiet dinners. He thought he recognized
a code in the way they tapped their forks to their plates. It
sounded like a code he had learned as a young boy, playing army
games with his friends, but he couldn't remember it any longer.
He couldn't remember the sequence, and it disturbed him. One night
when he could stand it no longer he asked, "Are you using a code?"
They looked at each other and held their forks still. They didn't
answer him, but from that time on, their forks scraped casually
and normally across their plates.

They spent hours in the kitchen each day, cleaning and arranging the animals in the case. One day a box came to the house. Emily squealed and held the box tightly as she signed the postman's sheet. The postman raised his eyes and slowly tipped his hat as she slammed the door in his face. "It's the lights", she whispered, and ran off to the kitchen. By nighttime, the case was aglow with tiny white lights that lit the animals and threw their shadows against the glass walls. They said nothing when he came in to look at it, and turned off the lights after several moments, saying something about its being "special". He was enraged by their attitude, but kept his anger inside him, walking off into a dark corner of his den.

He formed a habit of waking in the middle of the night to turn the lights on. He walked quietly down the stairs, felt his way to the kitchen, and finally to the case. He loved the way the animals sparkled in the darkness, especially the stallion. He kept himself from opening the case, despising the thought of their silent, accusing gaze, but just once he slid his nails into the crack of the small, glass door and removed the stallion. It slid easily through his fingers and shattered against the table.

He was with the horse the next morning, sitting in the corner of his den, cradling the pieces. Horsey. Horsey. She came and he did not want her there. He wanted to be alone. He wanted her to go away, with Emily, but this time she would not go. She touched his face, he stared at the stallion, caressing its broken body. Horsey. Horsey.

At first she visited often. He pleaded with her to get him out, pressing his hand against the glass that separated them. He asked her to bring the horse. She pieced it together and brought it the next time, passing it through a hole in the glass. When she came again, he was sitting in the corner, holding the horse in his hand. She called to him but he didn't respond. He looked up once, saw her hand, pressed against the glass. A film of moisture surrounded her fingers. This disturbed him and he returned his gaze to the stallion. After what may have been hours, she moved away from the glass, and walked down the hall. He watched the door close behind her.

PYGMALION

The weakness of the artist herein lies:
The beauty of this world cannot compare
with such perfection as his fantasies
Create in all the splendor of his skill.
How can a mortal, fading dafodill
Compete with marble-lovely peonies?
And how could earthly woman be as fair
As she, reflected from the artist's eyes?

The artist soon will find his passion spent
Creating cold perfection — unfulfilled
In living expectations. Dreams are killed
through lack of consummation.

Different

Should the marble maiden come to life:
The artist might embrace his longed-for mate
And, sadly, realize a human fate —
Too flawed to complement a perfect wife.
— Iris B. Velvin

His Eyes Crumbled

I want to tell you the way
the man's eyes crumpled under
the purple weight of skin
that had lost the art of sleep.
How heavy the lids, he could
not carry them much further
than my side. Hand them to me
with the dampness of tears
that men do not mean to shed.

Look, he is my father always
though I deny time frequently
or lay blame to lovers who did
not kiss gently enough or leave
enough roses, or who wore ties
that clashed with the room.
Look, he is always my father.

And how am I to grab the handle
of the heaviness he hands me?
Is there enough in this arm
that will not drag him to dust?
How am I to erase the purple
of his hours, leave it at least
white, at least to sleep?

I want to tell you the way
it feels to be under this man's
eyes when they do not see
very far beyond himself. When
it seems that I am such a blankness
beside all that purple shadow.
Look, he is always my father.

And how am I to grab his mind
with the force he always held mine?
The smallest daughter and the one
who could not coordinate hand and
eye and baseball bat and brought
such shame to girl's league softball —
I am to grow big as heaven and
reach down with words he gave me:
Don't let the bastards get you down.

Look, he is my father all ways
and I will grab him with the last
strength, the strongest word,
the quickest breath to give him life.
And how am I to grab his mind?
I want to tell you the way
I may cry for a thousand hours.

— Janice Lynch

These days, the evil eyed monster
Is hard to keep at bay.
The blue razor days
And suffocating nights
Are taking their toll.
He tries to comfort me
With cold grey hands
And soft dark words
His rough growl
Coaxing gently
Like a mother.
Trying to lull me into his arms.
When the time comes, my fight will be weakened.
Some part of me
Seeks her fortune with him.
They whisper and giggle like lovers.
She confides my weaknesses to him.
Betraying me, like a jealous lover.
She will be my downfall, my road to the end.
And he will be the end.

— Christy Gaines

This house is different somehow.
I feel evil; or hate.
Nothing is familiar
I am a guest and everything is theirs.
I long to belong, but know it is too
late.
Too late
to come back and be young again.
I cannot seem to hold onto anything that's
real.
It's so cluttered — not with memories.
The last time we were together we quarreled.
I wonder if the hurt has gone away.
I think not.
I felt the tenseness when I entered.
There are hushed secrets behind
closed doors
and I am alone.
I'm afraid to venture behind those doors.
Afraid of what I might find.

- B. R.

Hooking Up

How can we cast out such bait
Our selves, our souls, all we possess?
How can we, casting, bear to look on its smallness?

A nakedness, this worm without a head
Tastes as it squirms but does not see although it feels
Us lance ourselves onto the barb;
Such rusted sharpness, and we know
It tears still more to yank it out.
There is no way left out but through.

The awful last-minute vacillation,
My God how —

The chill, the numbness, no control.
We bleed, somehow it matters less, sinking
Down and helpless don't even writhe
It only serves their purposes.

— Constance Irving

Entertaining Myself

I read my books and theorize
about the way the world has been
and what it may be in the future

While you lean over the figures on your desk
charting them on maps, trying them over
and over again
Seeing if they overlap

You seem so content to study fossils and rocks
While I sit in my room reading my books of theory,
glancing at the clock
Wondering when you will emerge from what seems to me
to be dust and rubble

— Anonymous

ROMANSPROUTS VIII



WOMANSPROUTS VIII

An anthology of Guilford
College Women's Writing

Presented by

The Guilford College Women's Center

1984

Womansprouts celebrates its eighth year of publication and wishes to cite, as well as thank, the women whose work made it possible once more.

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COSMIC

If nothing moved,
the earth wouldn't.
It would be a ½ black-240 &
a ½ burnt black cinder,
there would be no wind caused by temp change—fire and
ice ununified.
Hence, the cause of the earth,
the course of its rotations
is evergyrating.

Too long is resistance against the plan—
against the way things ought to be—
and a lesson to what I was fearing this morning,
the beautiful spring Sunday a.m.
that it will all pass too soon.
But it passes at its dictated rate.
Who is to say when too soon is?
Am I trying to speak above God?

—Charlotte DeGroot—
Spring '83

Here's something Charlotte wrote last spring and gave to me to keep. I thought she'd appreciate it being shared, so I'm sending this to *Woman Sprouts* as her contribution. Thanks.

Rachel Rivera

The Secret

I just can't reveal it yet
There's too much at stake
So it hides beneath with the rest of the unseen
waiting to be forgotten
or released
As I grow older my secrets collect
I fear sometimes that they will band together
And start a bloody revolution within me
What will it take to beat down the rebels
Until they submit,
exhausted and stripped of feeling
I keep waiting for enough time to go by
When it will be safe to unshackle the door
When the buried can no longer haunt me
It hurts, but even hurt must be measured
Some secrets scrape away at the inside
Others emerge, teeth and jaws ready for the lunge
For which should I brace myself?

Cynthia Sears

Child

I must confess there is a grievous love in my heart.
I love a little girl.

My vantage point is somewhat removed from her. She is at play. As distant as I am I feel it is safe to watch her; I watch and smile as I please.

The little girl knows me. She knows that I watch her and that my smile comes from her, but she is mostly silent when I am smiling at her.

I have smiled and watched too much, I think. This little girl, like all the little people, cannot fathom a prolonged interest in anything. Sometimes she grows suspicious.

Sometimes when the little girl's suspicions are roused, she asks me: why do you watch me? I shrug my shoulders and my face flushes red in answer. The little girl has always found this amusing. Always she has turned away and continued her activity. As quickly as her suspicions are roused they vanish.

As scrutinous as my gaze is, the little girl keeps secrets from me. She likes to have secrets. Little girls are apt to like secrets and be able to keep them: the beginnings of youth are an exceedingly stable time. There is innocence, naivete, and something of a mystique we who are grown are incapable of understanding because we have lost it. The something wards off all the evil forces. The something allows the little girl to hold her secrets within herself. It is not often, but only once in a while that she offers to share her secrets with me. And even at these times I am doubtful she needs to reveal her secrets. I tend to think she pities me.

Though I want to frown when she is being secretive, I cannot. She is a little girl and nothing other when she keeps her secrets. I smile. I smile away it seems.

I smile especially when she runs to me, or beckons me;

and I become the wise and practical adult who must guide her. Each time she comes to me I try and aspire to the position of God. Surely, I think to myself, I only look silly. The little girl often laughs at my attempts to aid her. She never resents me; is only ever amused. I have to wonder at these times; from where does this little girl's wisdom come? That she can laugh at me? Her need for me at these times does not last long. Her interest is soon consumed elsewhere. I am forgotten and forgotten, I retreat, and though I am forgotten I always tell myself I will guide her more firmly, and not appear so silly, the next time.

I have seen the little girl cry often. I try to comfort her when she cries, but I cannot. Her tears seem to spring from some well of youth and secrets that is incomprehensible to me. She will let me try to comfort her though she knows my efforts are to no avail. She seems to know that her tears will always halt and that she will be able to go on; to go on discovering more of whatever it is that makes all little girls smile, or makes them cry.

Her favorite activity is playing in the sandbox. I can watch her for hours on end while she is at play in the sandbox. But it scares me. . . I imagine that she is swallowed up. I imagine her plummeting to depths that cause her eyes to lose their child's glow, her mouth its youthful readiness to express. . . How do I go on with what I've imagined? I see myself standing over a turbulent sandbox, waiting for my little girl to emerge. I am frantic. I imagine she does emerge, but not as my little girl, but as my little girl become a woman. I imagine myself utterly frenzied, unable to contain my sadness. I imagine the taste of salt in my mouth from imaginary tears. If the little girl who was swallowed up by sand were to ever emerge a woman I would have to relinquish my smile and my gaze. I know instinctively that I cannot watch the woman.

I imagine, too, that I can only watch for hours and no longer. Sand and time are depths somehow intertwined. Oh, how I must confess the love in my heart grieves me.

Tracey Clark

Fertilized

My dog died.
She was buried under the
chestnut tree.

The chestnut tree stands beside
the big red fence in my backyard.
The chestnut tree shades my dog.

She ate purina dog chow,
I eat chestnuts.
Chestnuts that are
fertilized with
purina dog...chow...chow...chow.

By: Robin C. Cochran

Encounter

Widowed, she drove cross country
with three children,
Back to the town of her youth.

At a country store they stopped where
two old men sat dozing on the porch.

She looked intently at one of them,

“Are you Jake Smith?”

He lifted bleary eyes,

“Yes, I be him.”

She preened coquettishly,

“You don’t know who I am?”

He tried to focus,

“No...no.”

“Emma—Emma Johnson, I was —

You don’t remember?”

He shook his head,

not speaking.

She sighed, “We used to know
each other well . . .

Look—these are my children.”

His eyes followed the direction she pointed,

he nodded,

then fell asleep again.

Fran Jeffers

Broken Silence

Last night
I woke up
hot
and smelling
of salt

I listened
to my heart
beat
and my thighs
quivered
spasmodically

Was the door locked?
Were the windows shut tight?
Had I forgotten and left a light burning?

MLW

In the Morning, Like the Night

In the morning, we take the lovers' position:
My back within your side
And your legs, coiled like steel
Over my thighs
Trap me to you.

I have seen the nights when the pillow
Is thrust against your chest,
Arms clenched like a fighter
And you trade women
For something to clutch.

I have seen the nights when your grip
Is a vice, until my back is burnt
Against you. And I move
In the slow scream
Of separation.

Janice Lynch

Spinner Dolphin

In the early fall of 1975, she left the sea forever. She had been in open ocean, swimming with others of her kind, now diving, now feeding, now leaping clear of the water and spinning on the long axis of her body— flipper over flipper, flukes rotating, in that peculiar and wondrous fashion of her species. For reasons known only to them, a shoal of yellowfin swam in the depths beneath her. For reasons known to us all, a purse seine was lowered under and around her; the tuna came up with the net, their hundreds writhing and flopping and slithering and gasping so that they seemed one huge, breathing, boiling, seething lump enclosed in the mesh. And she too was trapped, entangled in the ropes. Her struggle to free herself, to reach the surface again for precious breath, must have been awesome: seven and a half years later, the marks of the mesh could still be seen along the sides and belly of her body.

She was hauled aboard, already dead, and she dropped, somehow unnoticed, into the tuna boat's hold. At dockside in Puerto Rico, her frozen body was discovered and claimed by an agent of the National Marine Fisheries Service and then sent to the Smithsonian.

In the early fall of 1975, my students had not yet entered high school. Perhaps they already knew that cetaceans—dolphins and porpoises and whales—are mammals. It's likely that they knew little more about the creatures. In the early fall of 1975, I was still trying to comprehend what I had witnessed the previous May: a 53-foot, 60,000 pound finback whale had washed up on a beach near my home. I had watched the Smithsonian team dismantle the carcass. My fascination with cetaceans took hold sometime in the midst of that spectacle.

Seven and a half years later, we all met in a small, green-tiled room in Greensboro, North Carolina. The frozen spinner dolphin arrived by air, a priceless gift from the Smithsonian to the biology students in my course on Cetology. We immersed the specimen in cool water and while it thawed, we measured: the maximum girth was 28 inches; the flukes spanned little more than a foot; she was 4½ feet long, only a juvenile. We probed the blowhole; rubbed our fingers over each of the 155 conical, threateningly sharp

little teeth; felt her mass and considered her fate as we hoisted and pulled and turned her 96 pounds.

And then the dissection began. My students, so familiar with preserved laboratory specimens, were surprised by the blood and the secretions and the softness of the tissues. And despite six weeks of readings and discussions and films about cetaceans, they were taken aback by the reality. Yes, it was a mammal. Yes, there were intestines weighing 4 pounds, having a length of nearly 40 feet. Yes, the heart and lungs were unmistakable, so like those of the rat or the cat or us. There's the one ounce gall bladder. Look at the little ovaries and the Fallopian tubes and the uterus and the bladder. But it was an extraordinary mammal. Look at the telescoped skull with the nasal passages way up on top. Check out the larynx with its odd, elongated pieces of cartilage where we have a voice box. Hey, the esophagus and trachea really are completely separated. Inside each flipper, there are bones like those in my hand. Just try to cut through those tendons that lash the swimming muscles to the vertebrae and the flukes.

There is a realm of knowledge, of fact, of information. And then there is a realm of experience, of seeing, of trusting what your fingertips tell you. So often, I find myself trapped in one realm or the other, unable to let knowledge and experience mix, perhaps afraid to let creativity and imagination bubble up from the froth of facts and feelings. I watched my students. I asked them questions. I answered theirs. I guided their knives and their hands. But mostly, I felt myself tugged this way and that. My mind registered anatomy and called up physiology and tried to grapple with evolution. And all the while, I mourned for that little dolphin; for that day seven and a half years ago when she struggled and lost; for the mummification of our sensibilities that allows us to maul and shatter and befoul our world without even the hint of a sigh or a tear. And I remembered, as I always seem to when confronted with a cetacean, that when knowledge and experience mingle, wisdom—woeful, wonderful, sad, joyous wisdom—is in the air.

Jacqueline Ludel

I am the rock that waits.

I see a thousand years go by before me. A thousand men
grow

from beasts

to barbarians

to killers.

I feel the blood that is shed on me, as it runs through my
cracks and crevices.

I am the rock that waits.

I wait for a time of peace—when a man can grow

from beasts

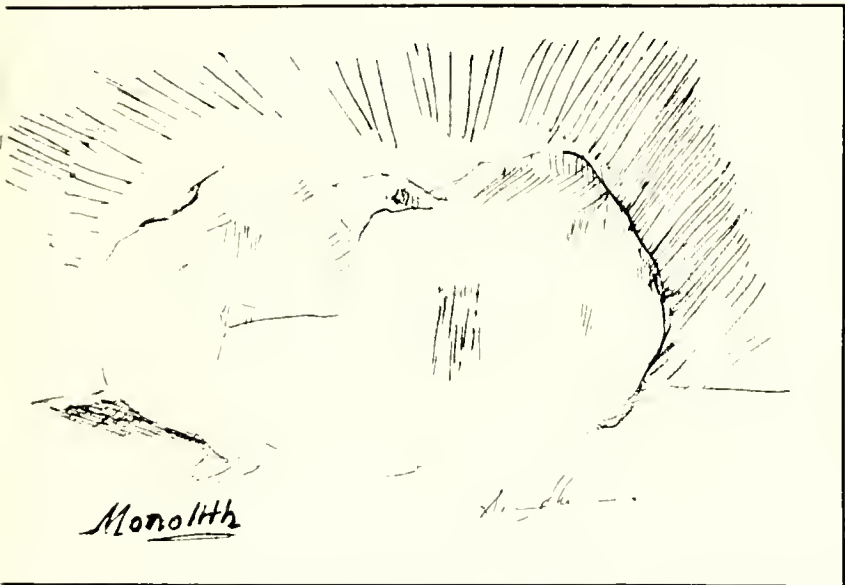
to caring man.

And clean my cracks and crevices from the blood of innocent
man

that is shed on me.

I am the rock that waits in vain.

Sharon J. Moore



Nightdream

In dreams
I run desperately
Through golf woods
patches of astroturf
and stretches of wild
cruel thistle fields

I search almost despairingly
for one bright room
There are large windows
letting in the warm golden sunlight
diffusing it into swimming fish
rainbow colored,
and the sink is full of dirty dishes

When I get there I will be busy
When the sun sets I will wait
I run waiting

MLW

Limbs

White limbs,
stretch against the sky.
Cold winds will not
snatch through you much longer.
Soon warm days will clothe you verdent,
the growing intensity of the sun
calling the sap to rise.

I would not long for you then
if I were you.
There is a grace and beauty
in the finely formed branches,
intricately intertwined,
lacing the face of sky.
Let the fragile elegance live
before it dies into summer.

Nancy Taylor



A Stroll through the Park

But the fog rolled
so sweetly
through the trees
and the street lamps
that my breasts felt like raindrops
and my knees
like exposed tree roots.
Slowly, I danced
through the trees
Silently, approached a lamppost
from the shadows.
In a yellow haze I let vengeance drip.
I will rain upon mine enemies
Envelope, and suffocate them.
'I am a temple of the Holy Ghost.'
So the fog rolls
so sweetly
through the trees
and raindrops
drip from fir trees
and sparkle in silver webs of abuse.

MLW

Don't Buy Me A Rose

You give to me a flower dead
that no longer shines for all to see
a flower no more as the others are still
waking up with the sun in the usual way
unlike the ones in a vase on the table
or those in the photograph hung on a wall.
Here in this withering flower is found
simple beauty of spring
that lies in the knowing
of life just begun in a farmer's field
or a lover's one day walk in the park
spiraling kites flying high across fields
and the stillness of new morning dew.
You bring to me a withering flower
and give me a reason to smile.

Sarah Radborn

Labeled

Your husband is dead.
You are labeled.
You are sealed,
asexual by a world that
cares only for the fleshier
parts of a woman's mind.
Stop.
Breathe.
Choke.
Think.
All of it is unimportant to the
freeway freaks and road hogs of
this planet.
Take a dive into death,
because your breasts now sag.
Limp along in an empty pool,
because the blood from the time-
clock in your body drips no more.

"Grandma, are those old age spots contagious?"

"Grandma, do I have to wait that long. . .you know. . .
that long to understand the last space?"

"Grandma, if the old age on your skin means Grandma,
what should I call the old age spots?"

Robin C. Cochran

Childlike

Quietly I shudder.
Afraid of the world outside
My own.

Here.
I am protected
By wings of childhood
Enclosing me in a small,
Yet curious world.

Birds.
White birds flutter
To taste a bit of my clothing.

Birds.
Black vultures flapping
Pecking out my eyes, my tongue.

Leave me here,
Where I can play
With white birds
In my own curious world.
Alone.

You may go now.
I am all right.
Go.

Barbara Ruby



The Time Before

I

Dust shrouds tabletops and chairs.
Skylight barely penetrates
The heavy, velvet curtains.
Sounds do not attempt to invade
This chasm in time.
People have not been here
In twenty years or so.

II

I step in.
Discovering a world
So unlike the present.
Laying white gloves on top
Of the grand piano,
A puff of dust
Blows into air.

III

My mind drifts back
To the days of
Cotillions and picnics on the lawn.
The girls,
In white linen dresses
With flowers in straw hats.
The sunlight heavy on their skin.

IV

Why people hold on
To a time
That was so long ago.
I will never understand,
Why nothing else seems
To be as important
As before.

Barbara Ruby



Jc Mar. 84

The Battle

My self is a whirl
of never ending emotions,
A cloud of unknowing.
Heart and mind
do battle for supremacy.
And my life is torn in two.
I collide with truth
then run and hide
Belying its existence.

Jennifer Williamson

Womansprouts 9

Womansprouts 9

Egalitarian Editorial Staff: Lori Axelson

Martha Barnett

Martha Clark

Tracey Clark

Amy Zubl

Big Help (this wouldn't have
appeared without these fine folks):

Leah Gear

Liz Humes

Jenni McInnes

Phil Polo

Womansprouts 9

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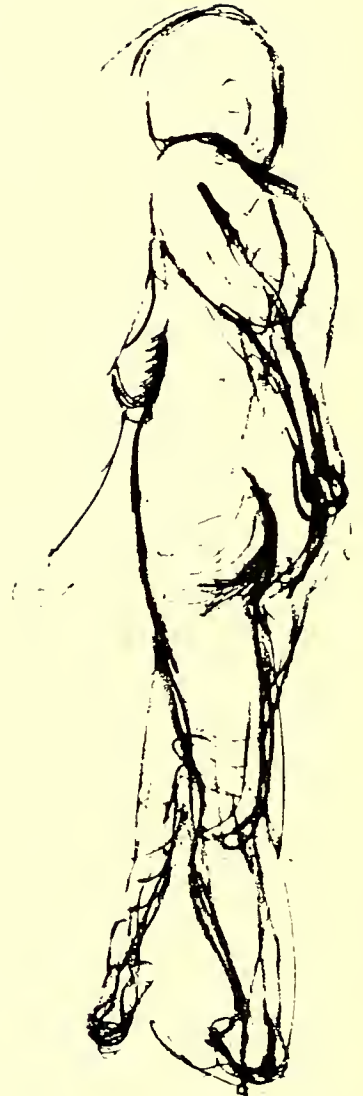
This Poem

this poem just
fell out
from between the
Muse's legs; its
afterbirth still soppy
& stringy

it fights
for its survival like
baby alligators
devoured by their daddys
while mute
& becomes formless again

but this fire I will kindle
this infant I will
nurse, at least until
it earns the chance
to speak for its
Mother.

Phil Polo



Leah Green

"To be 'one' is to know oneself as 'two' ".

– Gertrude Stein

We'd sat at dinner
for more than an hour
exchanging bits and pieces with
mutual friends, the people we call our Family
the whole of whose lives is hidden.
I grew tired
and I looked into your eyes,
just to see if I knew you still.

I have known many women
to tell me that it is only other women
that can look into their souls.

I looked into your eyes
just to see if I knew you still.
Or if I had transgressed
to one who was your Sister,
distanced from you, because,
all families have their spaces.

I was asking you to respond to the thoughts
I had laid bared for you,
when I looked into your eyes.
Just to see if you'd discarded me like a lover
or retained me like yourself.

Tracey Clark

Cold.
Breath crystallizes into the air,
Woolly mittens, big hat,
 clumsy jacket, cold feet.
Do you smell the pine?
There's a worn down brick foundation
Boasting two separate stone entrances.
Overgrown weeds shroud a plaque,
 "United Methodist Church, 1721".
White tombstones with black smears.
Cover names and dates.
 Katy Beauchamp
 1782-1795
A cold Sunday afternoon,
Strolling through tears and tombstones.

Barbara Ruby

Q1. 2011

Q1. 2011



In the bus station:

a slim Negro with hard lines in his face sweeps the floor
he's given up trying to read people from their erepe impressions
he tries, instead, to keep up with the shuffling of dust
from different cities
he'll tell you, with a smile
that his pay cheques are hidden in the corn of his broom.

a machine that whirs grudgingly against a wall
half empty of treats
a fat woman goes to it, apparently without thinking
she deposits two quarters, shining
part of her change from the Buy-Rite in her neighborhood
open 24 hours, welfare cheques cashed
she's worried for her mother
sick in the next city
chooses peanut M and M's as a before boarding snack.

a man, aged, wearing soiled clothes
a professed alcoholic
he was here the last time
here, and in every bus station you're sure to meet
he speaks only when he's not spoken to
learned not to trust people other than by feel
goes by a thousand names.

and you and I.
we are here, the violent colours thrown onto this drab canvas.
you and I are silent;
but do you remember Michael,
who in his youthful vigour wanted to be a sociologist?
as a project one time he dirtied his clothes and tousled his hair
and pretending to ignore
recorded one derelict's impressions of his life
the man's name was Everett,
but don't you think Michael stripped the man of even that?

and you and I.
you turn to me and tell me that you are uncomfortable here
it is times like this, you tell me, that you realize
that you are overprivileged and that there is no justice in it.

and you and I.
we bought a sandwich for you, on our way here
from a specialty shop
the owner knows you by name if you are regular
the sandwich is good but you can't eat it
you masticate a thousand plus a thousand hungry bitter eyes.

and you and I.
here only to arrive to a wonderful home in our wonderful city
only to on our way to the cinema step over a body, smelling, on a grate
the woman who serves us coffee in the place we like to go afterward
she knows the names to all the foreign films we've forgotten we've seen.

I grab a hold of your arm, you are growing frantic
ask you a hard question: would you give up those clothes you are wearing,
and that smell in your hair?
'Do you think that man would tell us if he was Everett?'
I tell you that we are not chosen and that neither are they
you tell me that our powerful insights are impotent
that if ever there was the prospect of living inside a discarded Mason jar,
it exists here.

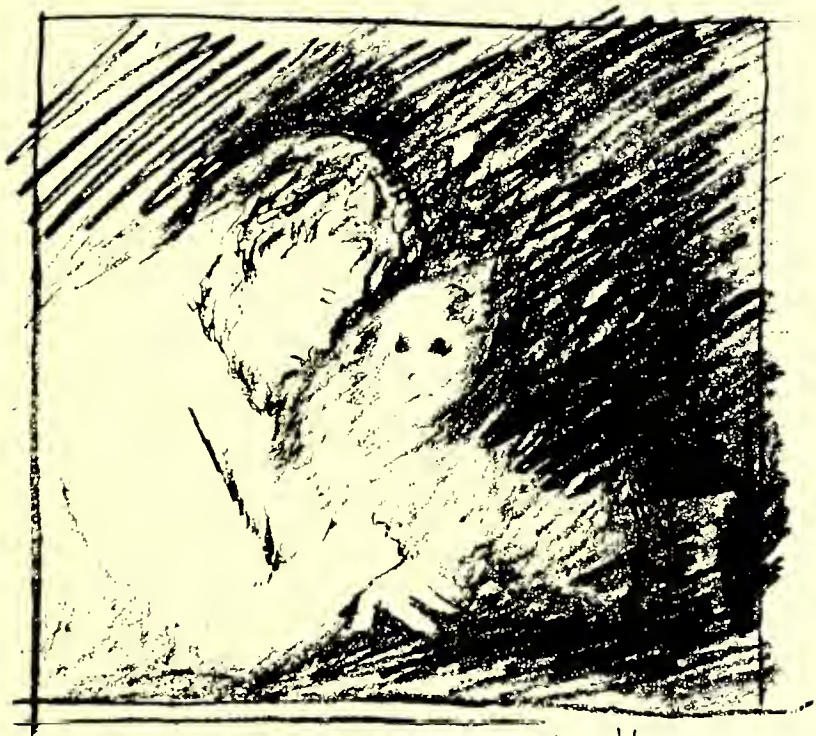
My mother dreamed a black garden

My mother dreamed
a black garden
where leaves
rattled against
her touch —

She feared the night
after that till
Carlo came and
my father split her blue eyes
each in two —

Now she sleeps
when it is day.

Demetra E. Gates



Liz Humes



Genni McInnis

Why must the children die so young,
When they are just beginning to dance
 in the sun?
Why must their existences be limited on
 earth,
When they just have begun and sprung
 from birth?
Why must they get sick and cry in pain,
When they have so much life and love to
 gain?
Why must the children be prevented to grow,
When they just are beginning to find what
 they know?
Why must the children die so soon,
and blow away like drifting sand from a
 dune?

Jenni McInnes



Liz Humes
JUNE 84

UNDONE

I thumb through books;
 disconnected thoughts
 get lost between pages.
My hair falls over my shoulder
 caressing, soft — unintentional —
 another thought lost
 another page turned
Voices, noises fall and rise
 through the hall
 up, down the stairs
Empty sounds — undirected —
 a truck roars by outside
 like the sudden need that
 races across my skin.

 Restless moments
creep between my movements;
 slow-growing ivy — unnoticed —
 till vines trail across the desk
And leaves, dried, drop to the floor
 crushed and kicked aside
 by a foot — unawares —

Laura Collins



Nat. Green

She knows the gentle touch, affection,
which soothes
the awakening pangs of age
growing in her curious heart.
Discovering her subtle powers
she playfully surrenders
what she would soon retrieve
in earnest,
had she not paid for it
with blood.
Her body betrays
the genius of its own imagination
by exercising a will
made potent by naive passion.
So easily she spends herself,
led groping in the dark
like a child,
for something she is not prepared to find.
The years which have perfected her youth
vainly hasten to procure wisdom
that she might reclaim innocence;
but her womb swells with promises
which she cannot hope to keep.

Martha J. Barnett

BOY PULLS GUN ON ORTHODONTIST TO HAVE BRACES REMOVED

A young girl's cunt was raped last night
set high upon a trash bin
behind the YMCA.
It was only right that she get
what he knew she wanted,
how she walked in that tight red skirt.
And in that moment of first touch
when she grabbed his balls with all her strength
a more passionate caress had ever he felt?
Excitement grew in his heart
located deep inside the crotch of his pants
full of desire and love for an act.
As her skirt rose high upon hips
unfamiliar to another's touch
there came a cry, an asking in his ears.
Taken, she lay under pelvic attack
with arched back
spread legs
with tears in her eyes.
As the morning came
so a story, in print
of a young girl raped in a trash bin
behind the YMCA.
Every detail was pushed to its graphic peak
the whole story told.
Except for the part that spoke
of how a young girl's soul
was beaten until it no longer breathed.

Steve Rubinstein

“ A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER”

I weep . . .

The interior of my closet is blurred with my tears.
The music I have heard for all the years I can remember pulls my heart down.
Christmas stirs more than tinsel and snow and sunlight.
The sunlight forces me to look past December, but all I see is a long ago
December when I held you in my arms and said “hello.”

The ground is cold.
It seeps through the bones of my feet and I fight it from reaching my heart.
I remember when I thought it would burst with joy and love.
And now with all this joy and love available through the flick of a switch,
I want to cry out “I’m not ready!”
Just as I wasn’t when you left.

I called about a Santa Claus suit, but I’d rather spend \$8 on you.
Christmas will come, “ready or not.”
I will find the love again.
Perhaps it never left, but is wrapped up tight, holding the butterfly I must
be ready to set free.
Do cocoons open up when soggy with salt water?
How many times do I have to set the butterfly free?
And when do they return?

Christmas.

Fa la la la la.

Let's all go away.

Unplug the radios and the memories.

Warm up the earth and fill the swimming pools with water.

Put the coats in the warehouse and have a sale on bathing suits and beach towels.

I want to empty sand out of my purse and not out of my eyes.

Rub lotion on your nose and watch you grow tall, together.

I divide myself into fifths.

A part for each of you.

Then it was fourths . . . then thirds . . . and now seconds.

There doesn't seem to be enough of me now though, for just one,
and Christmas is shredding me to bits.

Maybe if I wrestle the box to the floor and plug in the tiny lights,
I'll be able to have you all near.

The cotton-cheeked Santa you made will still smile.

The rocking horse will still twinkle.

And the Angel will always be cherubic.

Spring will arrive soon . . .

Joyce Don



1927

A drain water
falls
through,
clogs,
waterlogs.
A hard hole
hit
hard.
Fake gentleness of
water
and of
man.
Let him play in the bath —
Let him writhe in the tub.
You are a
Woman-drain.
I was a
Woman-drain,
once.
Now, I'm a
Well.

Brigitte Galford

Truth in New York City

I always scratch for:

the cause
& the meaning

the cause
& the meaning

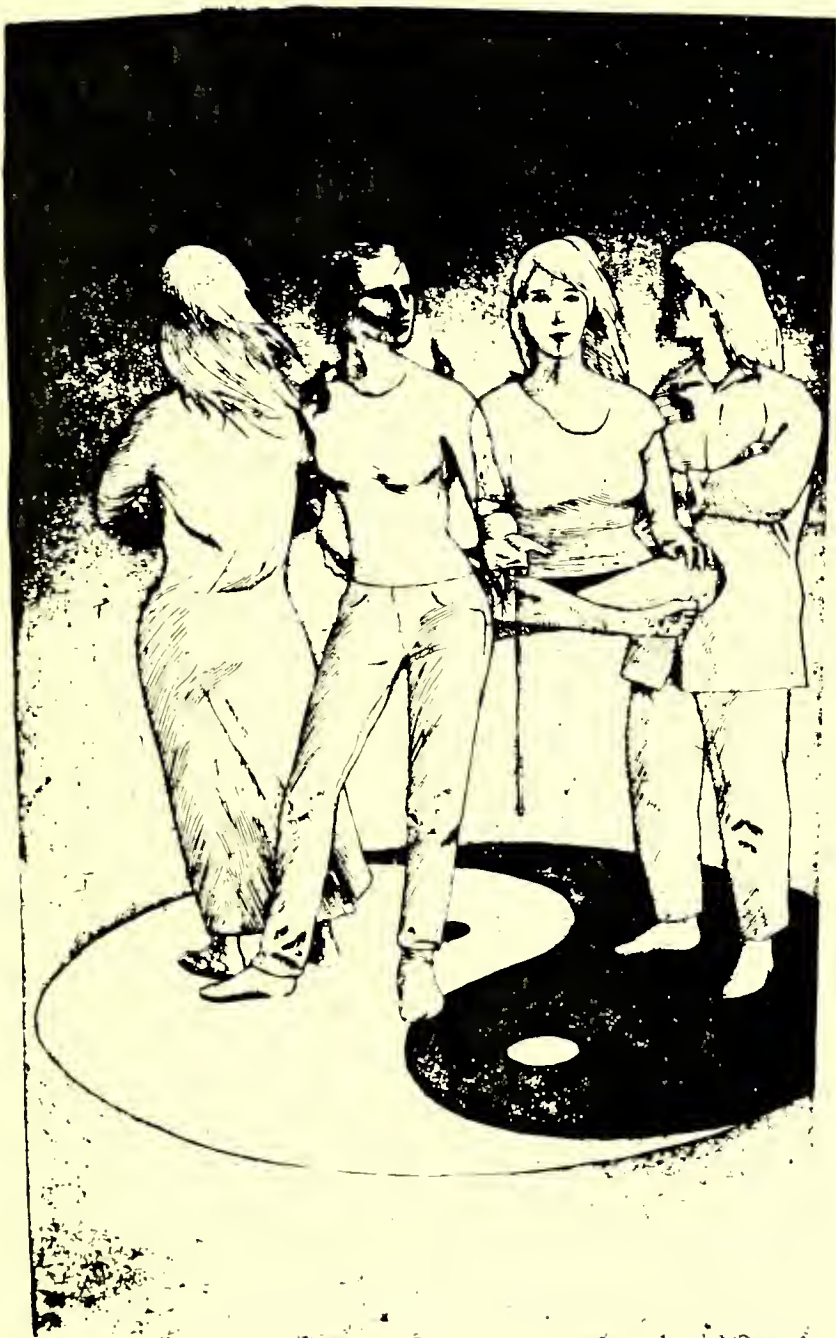
both escaping
captivity
where I keep
my different-colored
animals locked up
as thoughts;

I was just walking away, cutting through the blackness

I get my earring & hair ripped out
my ribs pummelled & cracked
two black eyes, & a gun in my ear
New York City jail for an overnight stay (how nice!)
fifteen cops to help me with everything

no cause
no goddamn meaning.

Phil Polo



The 4 senses

Robert Rearing



Liz Humes

I Ain't No Church Goer

I ain't no church goer today
Not that I'm one of them free thinkin' types
I heard 'bout in them Commie countries.
Lord knows my Ma made me
A believer in the fear of God real quick
As she would take to switching me
For cursing his name or not attending
Reverend Sparks' sermon every Sunday.

I remember we men folks
Would sneak out of the house just before sunset
On Saturday evening and set to drinking some
Of Old Man Shifflet's shine.
Me and Joe never did get to drink none but we'd
A good time listening to our kinfolks talking
'bout how their Old Ladies were in bed.

I thought it funny how after 'bout a year
Of marriage, Johnny began talkin'
'bout how his Old Lady made a good
Church man out of him by not givin'
Him any unless he curbed his habits.

I remember on Sundays
You'd see those Old Ladies
Draggin' them swollen-headed men
To God's house. The Preacher got
To dealing out his guilt sermons
On the fall of Adam—
The Old Ladies mus' a got us by
Something more dear to us than our ribs,
I thought.

Later, Reverend Sparks would make it to our house
For dinner and start to eating a big chicken breast
While I eyed my gibblets
And thanked the Good Lord.

Bernie Dickenson

There's a place we haven't come to yet, but which each of us recognizes as lurking around a corner. Just exactly where each of us loosens her reins. On self, and on people held close already.

I do not seek to dislodge any of those people dear to you. I have no urge to betray you.

Adrienne Rich: 'The friend I can trust is the one who will let me have my death'. For me to write this; if you were to persecute me I would trust you still. For me to write this; if I were to bring about your death you could trust me still.

Watching you as you are silent and thinking. You want to speak but you do not. You are holding in what you want to speak, it seems, because you are worried about what the confidence might bring to us (or 'for' us).

We are a fragile pair. The most heartfelt of our thoughts and emotions we mask.

You watch me closely these days. You have been surprised by my resiliency. You seem to have been pleasantly startled to see that your investing a measure of hope in me was not in vain. It is your way to be determined to aid causes, despite their chances for success, or failure. I have coped.

(I have gone through some changes. I want less and less for my life to be a martyrdom.)

You watch me and I see you enamoured with me the way you were those first few days. The beginning of things are always so memorable. Nothing runs the course of a straight line. Everything is fragmented. We snatch at bits that are like treats on a silver platter, served at a large party. There's a quality of 'verging onto' that fills us.

Sometimes as you watch me I sense you see us as an unreality for you. I think this unreality is part of what makes you hesitate about speaking openly and honestly with me, in your own voice.

You seem worried you would not be able to articulate what it was you were feeling in a fresh way. Some way that might convince us that we are not true to the patterns each of us has formed.

I think now of M.E.'s advice — an aphorism really — that to say what we feel most of us are reduced to being children. That we must demand like children. That our language is ineffective and the genuineness of what children express is lost with age.

How ironic that when a child speaks to someone taller than s/he if there is division by age it becomes something more. Inequality in every way. I don't feel this is accurate.

You worry about speaking and disturbing the equality which exists between us in silence.

Our fears. We should try and articulate them. It seems we are coming to an emotional bridge neither of us are going to cross because the bridge is so long. Where we would be hesitant we perceive in the crossing that we commit too much.

If our fears were like that of the children within us maybe we could find some words and a series of bridges to lodge our feelings in a sticky place.

Adrienne Rich: "To mutilate privacy with a single foolish syllable is to throw away the search for the one necessary word."

Tracy Clark

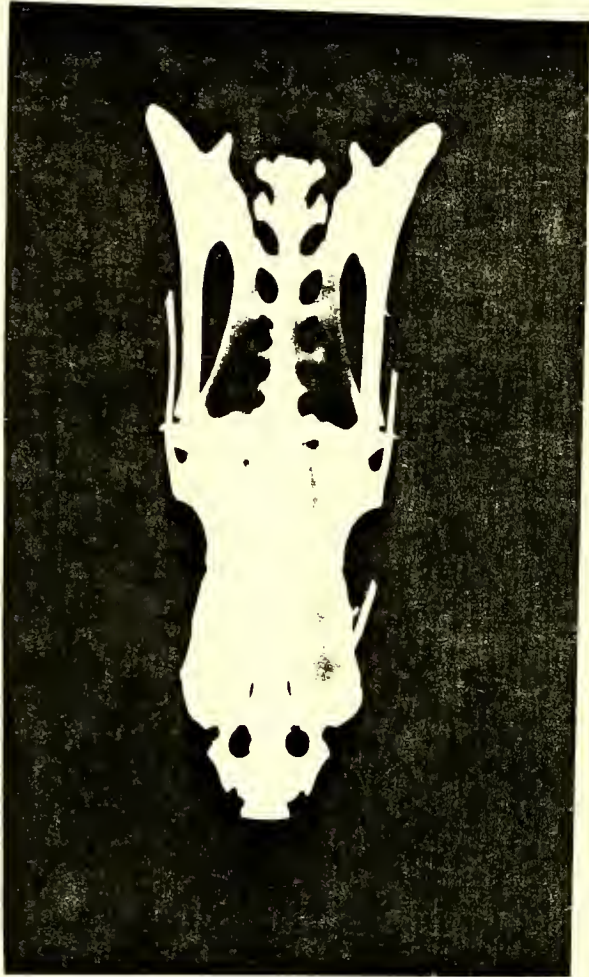


Nick Green

Lament of a Housewife

It is winter there.
Diamonds wink,
Infallible,
At the tips
Of onyx branches.
She looks on
From her ridiculous
Kitchen, complete
With automated
Dishwasher, disposal
And wife,
Two children,
Her masterworks,
Lie asleep in matching
Brass beds.
They are storing energy
To make demands
She never asked for.
She does not know them
Anymore than she knows
The man who works,
Eats, makes love
In perfect precision.
The man whose eggs
Will never be done right.

Amy Ardison



Carol Neukirk

When I am gone
everything will be changed
but nothing will be different.
No one will know my passing
but those who know my presence;
I will be nowhere
but everywhere I ever was,
touch no one,
but will feel everyone I ever touched.
No longer will I become —
but will be.
I will know nothing
but everything I ever knew.
When I am gone
I will take with me my wrongs
and will no longer be wronged,
will find no peace
but the peace found after me.
No joy will I know
but the joy I ever gave and felt.
When I am gone
I will know you always
as I ever did;
you will not know me,
but as you never did before.

Martha Barnett





Figure Study

Leah Cramer



'11 Lady in Candlelight G.M.



41 Girl with Doll Jennie McSweeney

Woodcuts

Jennie McSweeney

442 C1^{NC} 6078
03/18/09 35725

Group

11

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