A FEMINIST QUARTERLY

FIREWEED

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Issue 32

fire·weed *n* : a hardy perennial so called because it is the first growth to reappear in fire-scarred areas; a troublesome weed which spreads like wildfire invading clearings, bombsites, waste land and other disturbed areas.

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Marcia Masino

illustration from **Tea For Thirteen**

photo from **The Benediction**

Terry Galloway

Editorial

Over the past few years, the *Fireweed* collective has undergone many changes in its membership. Things are stabilizing. For this issue and the next we have reviewed manuscripts that have been arriving at *Fireweed* for the past two years. Some of the work included in this open issue is recent, some of it is not-so-recent, but all is relevant. There were hundreds of submissions and we have many still to review. Clare Cross, on a youth job skills program, has magnificently reorganized the office and is maintaining it, much to *Fireweed*'s advantage—this work in the past consumed the collective's editorial time and energy. To those who have waited and waited for a response to their submission and to those who have been patient when issues were months late, we apologize.

This issue is our first done on desktop. Our upcoming issue, entitled "Loosely About the Body," will introduce our new format, still perfect-bound but a larger size, to better integrate artwork with writing. Let us know what you think of these changes. The issue will feature two critical/historical essays on the reproductive rights movement and will include poetry, fiction, art and essays on the body, particularly on issues of control and autonomy.

Fireweed's issue on Jewish Women is underway. The guest editorial collective has extended the deadline for submissions to June 15th. They are looking for all types of written and visual material by Jewish women dealing with and reflecting upon their situations, as Jews, as lesbians, as women, as communists, as immigrants, as Holocaust survivors, as Sephardim, etc. The guest editorial collective will be including work on

identity, history, culture, religion, Israel, anti-Semitism, sexuality, class, community, and other topics pertaining to our experiences.

The deadline for our Sex & Sexuality issue is July 31st. We are looking for fiction, real life/wishful thinking confessions, poetry, photography, artwork, pornography, fantasy, reality, and discussion, history, reviews, interviews, theory, speculation, and exploration from autoerotic, bisexual, celibate, heterosexual, lesbian, sadomasochistic, transsexual perspectives—work that covers an entire spectrum of women's sexuality. We are interested in hearing how your sexuality interacts with physical ability, religion, class, race, culture, and work. We have a lot to learn from each other and hope that this exchange of information in *Fireweed*'s Sex & Sexuality will be a source of women's sexual empowerment.

Fireweed has been, and continues to be, committed to providing a forum for specific issues of communities of women through special theme issues and guest collectives. However, we are very excited by the diversity of writing we have received and are able to publish in this open issue. Perhaps we are optimistic to believe that women who have been often forgotten by the Women's Movement have found a voice that can not longer be ignored and demand their right to representation. We are aware that the diversity of writers here is partially due to the limited venues available for work that is not located in a white and liberal feminist framework, one that has found space in contemporary literary dialogue.

The writing in this issue of *Fireweed* is by women who are speaking to their situations, resisting, taking pride in their strengths, and naming their oppressors.

Goodbye depends

Camie Kim

In the end—which—just like an end—means everything and nothing and all the things in between—she no longer wanted to read my journal, to have me read out loud from it, would nod wearily at my prompting, would listen without comment, would ask questions out of politeness—at best. Or, perhaps, at worst, mercy.

I have often mistaken mercy for—more.

In the end I mistook my misery for melancholy. A survival tactic, I believe. To be "melancholy" was bearable. It came as a package, neat and organized, the way I like most things to be: lousy weather, cut-wrist music, pots of caffeine, shadows under my eyes. It was a hole that came pre-made, a few minor alterations to order. I fell into it—almost—gratefully. Not—quite—gracefully. Unwrapped, directions deciphered, one had only to assemble it. Assembly line hole. One hole fits all.

In the end I mistook motion for emotion. To be moving, even further away from her, meant that I was living and not just alive. But which is moving, the landscape or the train? Was I pulling out of the station or rooted with the tree? Goodbye depends—on so many things.

After all a broken heart was only a few—melancholy—lines in a B-movie. Only another package. With enough kitsch to make it fashionably cool: without you I'm nothing. Anything less would be too trite, and anything more too messy. I was determined to be anything but trite. And thank god I had outgrown messes. I mean—

Goodbye! Goodbye!

Book title: *What Every Woman Ought to Know About Love and Marriage* by

Dr. Joyce Brothers.

In the end or, rather, by the end, I had stopped looking at others or, rather, was scrupulously not looking at others. I had turned the switch off on that soul-light I so loved to scrutinize myself under. I had stopped offering packages—I mean gifts—to strangers and not-so-strangers who always shook their heads: no.

In the end I looked in her and she would shine me back: healthy strong whole. No. Not exactly. In the end I looked in her and the mirror was cracked, fractured face, jagged ends. . . .

In the end I thought I was strong—enough—and what else is strength—enough—but blind belief? She gave me that, at most.

Goodbye! Goodbye!

Although I know it really isn't. Although I know we're still friends. Although I know we'll keep in touch. Although I know we still love each other. Although it all—depends—

Whatever happened to those good old-fashioned, honest-for-life goodbyes? Those brutal, cleansing slammings of the door. A scream, a slap, a few torrid tears. (Very pretty, torrid tears.) In the movies they always mean it, don't they? Nothing depends. What satisfaction. How neat, how organized.

The End.

In the end I want to swallow you whole and cling to you, sobbing: don't—leave—me.

In the end I never want to see you again.

Goodbye! Goodbye!

Book title: *Emotions: Can You Trust Them?* by Dr. James Dobson.

But in the end we didn't have ends. We had—have—possibilities, options, choices, alternatives, decisions, decision, de—ci—sions:

A. We'll be lovers again someday, grow old together.

B. We'll be at least (I mean, at most, I mean, you know what I mean) be friends.

C. We don't need categories, labels, cubbyholes, ABC, ex-this, ex-that—what we have is—special—

In the end I don't want—special—I want a scream, a slap, a door slamming. I want to be able to say the things you are supposed to say—in the end—and mean them:

Goodbye.

In the end my journal was boring anyway. We didn't fight.We didn't argue. We both felt suitably guilty, tender, affectionate, caring—

In the end should have been our beginning.

In the end we had no secret lovers lurking in the wings to dash off to in moments of crisis in order to precipitate crisis. We took long, silent walks. We thought. We talked. We thought we talked.

Book title: *Going Ape: How to Stop Talking About Your Relationship and Start Enjoying It* by Dr. Julius Rosen.

In the end I didn't think of suicide or murder, affairs or therapy—somewhat the same, no?—meanness or madness. Maybe I didn't even

really think of us. Too busy congratulating myself on such a mess-free little end.

Such a tidy little end.

Goodbye! Goodbye!

Book title: *Love is Never Enough—How Couples Can Overcome Misunderstandings, Resolve Conflicts and Solve Relationship Problems Through Cognitive Therapy* by Aaron T. Beck, M.D.

And in the end my journal, wherein I recorded this particular end, was shoved away along with all my other journals, wherein I had recorded other particular ends, waiting to be discovered by some sympathetic, empathetic, hopeful mind with an eye for recognizing, nurturing, rewarding genius and with enough talent, skill, time, and energy to instigate—a beginning.

In the end was on the last page.

Because that's where ends always end up.

Book title: *How to Find the Love of Your Life—90 Days to a Permanent Relationship* by Ben Dominitz.

Tea For Thirteen

Candis J. Graham

It started off innocently enough, as things often do. Every nine months or so I get the urge to have some friends over. There's nothing profound about the nine months. It has nothing to do with birth or rebirth or gestation. It just works out that way, that's all.

I like to socialize, but women mostly get together for evening parties. They drink and dance and generally make merry under artificial light. Man-made light makes me drowsy, makes me want to fall into a soft bed and snuggle under a warm layer of bedclothes. Just thinking about it makes me yawn.

Late morning brunches were popular for a while, but that didn't last. Such a shame, I think. I like mornings best, especially sunny mornings. The day is young and filled with promise. I liked going to brunches, but I could never put on a brunch myself. Just think of the work involved. I'd have to cook eggs, not merely scrambled but Benedict or Florentine, and sausages, salmon patties, hot rolls, and fried potatoes. Freshly squeezed orange juice is compulsory. Then there's the piles of dirty dishes and cutlery and pots and pans to wash and dry! Disaster City. Where's the fun in that?

I figured I'd found the perfect solution when I came up with the idea of a tea party. Consider the advantages. Fifteen minutes of preparation is all it takes, twenty at the most. I put out a few pickles and some olives, make a plateful of sandwiches, and pour boiling water over the tea bags. Nothing to it. At my first tea party a couple of women asked for coffee, but I told them I didn't have any coffee and that was that.

The best part is, there aren't any dishes to wash up afterwards, just a few

mugs and spoons. Not to forget daylight. A tea party is held in daylight. Even if the tea party lingers into the late afternoon, when the promise of a day is fading, it's still naturally light.

There's another advantage to tea parties. You drink tea instead of alcohol. It's not a big deal. I have a beer sometimes. But alcohol and cigarettes, that stuff hurts women and I'm not in favour of anything that hurts women, that's all. A tea party is perfect, though, because no one expects alcohol. Cigarettes—well, those that use them smoke almost everywhere.

A tea party is a womanly thing. Imagine sitting graciously with a tea cup in one hand (although I use mugs) and a sandwich in the other hand and a dainty napkin across the lap. It brings to mind ladies having cosy conversations, don't you think?

Not that my friends are ladies. No. Most of them wear trousers, and they all work to support themselves. Except Maureen. She doesn't work. She and her two daughters live on social assistance. She doesn't get alimony

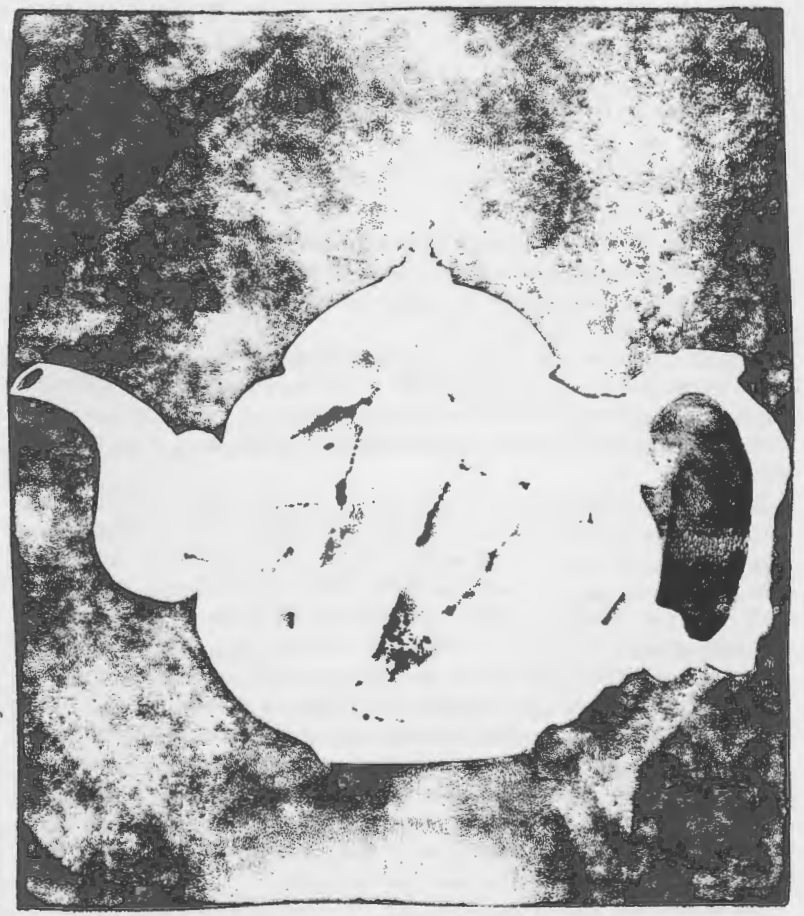

illustration **Wendy Clouthier**

from her ex. That's what she calls him, her X, like he was a cross to bear. She makes me laugh. I guess Maureen doesn't qualify as a lady, either. I mean, a lady doesn't live on social assistance, which is welfare when you get right down to it. Welfare means poor, dirt poor. It's not lady-like at all.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not one of those feminists. I know a few and I agree with some of that stuff. But they go too far, don't you think? Take that equal pay business. My Aunt Susan's got a real thing about that one. But I don't buy it. Equal pay? What's equal? I've worked at the same job for ten years now and I work damned hard. My boss, he arrived two years ago and he does nothing all day long. Not a tap of work. He talks to the guys down the hall and takes three-hour lunches, comes in late, leaves early. On Fridays he usually doesn't bother to come in at all. Not that I miss him. But I work hard and do a full day of work and he makes three times as much as I do.

My Aunt Susan never shuts up about that stuff. I told her, men have got to make more money than women. They've got their pride. She didn't like that. She's a feminist. She's the one that told me to stop calling them "libbers." She says that's a put down, and she expects more from an intelligent woman like me. I like it when she calls me a woman.

She's not a lady, either. She works as a cleaner in a high-rise building, downtown. I mean, cleaning offices is not lady-like behaviour.

We argue a lot, Aunt Susan and me. She's almost twice my age, so you can imagine she can out talk me most of the time. She's been around a lot longer. When I said men have got to make more money because of their pride, she said the cost of groceries and rent is the same for women and men.

"But that's different. I mean, men have got to work to support their families."

"Elizabeth, you amaze me. You think I work because I love my job? For the good of my health maybe? I work because I need to work. Most of us work because we need to, to support ourselves. You, of all people, should know that. I don't see a man paying your bills. Look at your friends. Lesbians don't have men supporting them. Of course, a lot of straight women don't either. Look at me. And look at your friend Maureen. I don't see her husband supporting her and the kids."

What could I say? She's got an answer for everything, my Aunt Susan does. But I'm a fighter and I keep trying. So I said, "I don't believe in abortion."

That's all I said, but she shrieked.

"Elizabeth! No one's asking you to believe. The issue is choice. You've got to have a choice. But," she said in her most serious voice, "the real issue isn't abortion or equal pay, it's choice in everything!"

I've learned to stop talking when she uses her most serious voice. The next step is for her to start yelling at me, and I hate it when people yell, don't you? She takes this feminist stuff too seriously. The best thing to do is to change the subject. So I invited her to my third tea party. That took her mind off choice. But she couldn't come. I was disappointed. She's one of

my favourite people.

I couldn't change the date because I'd already invited all sorts of women to the tea party. It was on October 31st, which was a Saturday. Halloween and, wouldn't you know it, a total of twelve women came. Which makes thirteen, including me. The number didn't mean much to me at first. Not until long after Karen arrived, carrying that paper bag. There were five women present by that time, sitting in my living room with mugs of tea, all talking merrily. But the room got quiet when Karen walked in.

She wasn't one of my friends. She was new in town and Maureen invited her to come so she could meet some lesbians. Not that I minded. I like to meet new women and introduce them around so they get to know other women. But Karen became the centre of attention at my party.

I started to worry when she took six candles out of the paper bag. Two blue, two white, and two red. As she took them out, she announced it was Hallowmas. "It's a sacred time for women," she said.

I raised my eyebrows at that. "What's sacred about Halloween?"

"Hallowmas is the women's new year," Karen said.

I started to feel funny. What was going on? I'd planned a friendly tea party. I mean, this Hallowmas business sounded like feminist stuff. They go in for that kind of thing, have you noticed?

Karen placed the candles in a circle on my glass coffee table, two blue, two white, and two red. But in the circle they went blue, white, red, blue, white, red.

"Are the candles important?" I asked politely, trying to make the best of it.

She lit the candles, one by one. "The red is most important. It represents death. This is the time of death, the coming of winter."

Death. Death! Disaster City. My tea party was going to be ruined, I mean completely ruined, by this woman with her death candles.

She lit the last candle. "Blue is for friendship. White is for peace. This combination of blue and white and red is for success." She took some incense from the paper bag and set it in an empty ashtray.

I was wondering what else she had in that paper bag.

A knock at the door interrupted the silence. Two more women entered. One of them said, "Hey Karen, how are you? Haven't seen you in a long time. I hear you moved here. What's with the candles? You still into that?"

Karen smiled. I liked her smile. I just thought she was weird, that's all.

"So we can join energy," she said to them, "to celebrate Hallowmas."

"Would you like some tea," I asked the newcomers. I turned to the seated women. "Would anyone like tea?" I learned that in Home Ec, to say would you like some tea, not, would you like some *more* tea. *More* sounds greedy or something.

Four more women arrived, together, all at once. Everyone started talking. I fled to the kitchen. Wouldn't you know it. Karen followed me.

I took four mugs from the cupboard. We were thirteen now. I knew because I have fifteen mugs, so if more than fifteen women came then I'd have to borrow mugs from the woman across the hall.

"Do you have comfrey tea?"

This woman was one surprise after another. What is comfrey tea? "No," I said. "I have Red Rose."

"It doesn't matter. The ceremony is what's important."

The ceremony? She must be a feminist, though I didn't know what candles and ceremonies and comfrey tea had to do with it. It looked like I was going to find out, whether I wanted to or not. Don't get me wrong, I have an open mind. I try new things. This was weird, that's all. I don't like weird things.

"Do you know my Aunt Susan?"

"No, I don't know many women here yet."

Karen helped me carry the teapot and mugs to the living room. She poured while I handed out the mugs. She had good-looking hair, reddish and curly, sticking out all over. I liked her hands. I notice hands. Hers had long fingers. She held my teapot with both hands, her long fingers circling the roundness, as if it were a work of art. I got it for thirteen ninety-five in the basement of Zellers. Maybe I'd buy some comfrey tea for the next tea party. Not because she liked it or anything. I like to try new things.

I looked over at Maureen. She was sitting back, watching Karen too. She looked flabbergasted, like I felt. Maureen and I agree about all that feminist stuff. She looked at me and rolled her eyes to the ceiling.

"Shall we begin? Is everyone comfortable?" The room got quiet and everyone looked at Karen. "This is not a true ceremony. The tradition of witches places ceremonies outside. But we can still have a celebration for Hallowmas indoors."

She was a witch! And I thought she was a feminist. Aunt Susan never said anything about witches. I'd remember something like that. I would have to ask Aunt Susan about witches.

"Everyone gather close to the coffee table, in a circle, and join hands." Karen lit the incense and the rest of us followed her instructions. We edged forward, toward those six flickering flames. I managed to seat myself beside Karen. I needed to be close by, to keep an eye on her.

She took my hand and held it in a firm grip. I like a firm grip, not someone hanging on to my hand like it was a dead fish. I find assertive women very attractive. This one was assertive with a capital "A." She had taken over my tea party and turned it into a Hallowmas celebration!

She told us to close our eyes and empty our minds, completely empty our minds. No one's ever told me to empty my mind and I didn't know how to begin. I tried. I really did. I must have an awfully full mind, because I couldn't get it empty.

I wondered if any of the other women had the same problem. I opened my eyes and looked around the circle, quickly, then closed them again. Was Maureen sitting there with a completely empty mind? Since I couldn't get my mind empty, I thought about Karen's hand and wondered who gave her the ring on her second finger. It was cutting into my hand ever so slightly.

She told us to open our eyes and concentrate on a candle flame. That

wasn't difficult. I didn't mind watching the flame grow and shrink. It was fascinating. Until I noticed that my candle was blue and remembered that blue represents friendship, and then I felt Karen's hand holding mine and her ring pressing into my hand and lost my concentration. This concentration stuff wasn't as easy as it sounded.

Karen spoke again. She told us to close our eyes again and think about the past year, and then to envision what we wanted for the coming year. That was the easiest part. I skipped the past year. It was over. I mean, what's the point in thinking about it. I prefer to concentrate on the future.

I envisioned a new car in the garage. It took a couple of minutes to decide between a Corvette and a Porsche, but I finally went for a vintage red Corvette with white leather upholstery. Then I envisioned a green leather couch with matching chair and footstool in the living room, a painting by Mary Meigs on the wall above the couch, I like her books, and a Canada Savings Bond for twenty thousand in the top drawer of my bureau. I went through my closet and added a few flashy clothes to go with the Corvette.

I wondered what the other women were thinking. I was getting the hang of this and it was fun. But it wasn't like any party I'd ever been to.

I went back to concentrating on the future. I envisioned Maureen winning a lottery and buying a big old house in the country, and giving the kids piano lessons and ski equipment.

Just as I was beginning to envision Maureen building a house down the road from her for my Aunt Susan, and I was in the midst of planning the layout of the rooms, Karen interrupted. She told us to think about ourselves, about our own bodies, and the earthly bodies around us. She said some words about the goddess and seasons changing and internal strength. I could have listened to her forever. But as far as ceremonies go, nothing happened!

Afterwards, after Karen had put out the candles, we all sat in the circle, not knowing whether to talk or what.

Maureen giggled and ended the silence. "That was fun. I feel relaxed."

Everyone laughed, even Karen. Conversations started up. I escaped to the kitchen to make tea. Karen followed me again.

"How do you feel?"

"Good. I'm calm."

"Do you feel centred?"

Centred? Now what on earth did that mean. I smiled at her. "I suppose I do."

"There were thirteen in the circle. Thirteen women."

"I know."

"You noticed we were thirteen? It's a lucky number. Did you know that?"

What could I say. "Are you a witch?"

Karen nodded. "Sure! You are too. We all are, all women."

"I'm not a witch." How could she say something like that. I'd know if I was a witch. It's the sort of thing you'd know.

Karen smiled. I wanted her to keep smiling at me. "We are all witches. Some of us don't think about it, but we all are." She picked up my teapot,

with both hands again. "How'd you really feel during the ceremony?"

I grinned. Grinning's more my style. "Calm. I felt calm when it was over. When it was happening, I kept wondering what would happen next and what the others were thinking about."

"You're honest, aren't you. Concentration takes practice." She was still smiling. "Are you making more tea?"

"Yup. Could you get the tray from the living room. The pitcher will need more milk."

I filled the kettle and plugged it in, then tidied the kitchen counter while she was gone. Why did she say that, that I'm honest? I had to admit, I was attracted to her. Even if she did think she was a witch. I like women who are different. They keep life fun.

As the kettle started to boil, she came back with the tray. "They're talking about ESP in the living room. And about women's intuition." She looked pleased.

I had other things on my mind. "Do you want to stay for supper?" I'm not slow when it comes to women.

She smiled. I like that smile.

"I'd love to. I'll help you clean up when the others leave."

Cleaning up wasn't going to take long. "I'd appreciate that." Then I had second thoughts. I can be impulsive. Women hit me that way, and it's made trouble for me once or twice. "Do you have anything else in that brown bag?"

She laughed. I like her laugh.

Reprinted with permission from the collection of short stories Tea For Thirteen *by Candis J. Graham (Ottawa: Impertinent Press, 1990).*

Annharte

Woman Bath

Friday night at the old train station was our last bath
then a little girl I was slept on the wooden bench waiting
for a train to come or go but this health club will close
Main Street is too dirty but not for tourist attractions

Main Street that bad parade of all women in relations
Off Main on Austin Street hookers pass right by me
don't dare relate or my whitewomen buddies who came after
the swedish massage not the corroded Saturday night bathtub
will get the picture of what it's like to be down Main Street

Before we exit the car the chat about non-white hooker found
dead in a ditch this morning ends on the note of terrible city
terrible men who frequent this skidrow street we are hopping on

I assume she was Indian she was disposable did I mean to say it?

My white friends are right that she was a coloured girl adopted
into a white family just the other day a client of theirs she had
her one mistake and mine

We bathe together I like the part where we washed off the news
together class differences down the drain & naked women are equal
even behind our towels I slung my towel on my hips tightly

One Eye Annie used to scavenge the hotel dining room get her lips
a bit greasy get pitched back into the street by those with
proper protocol to welcome the Queen of England

An Indian woman leaned against a pillar jiggling tiny tits
she slunk back to her white lovers who witness her gay pride
doesn't like me with the same name she's chosen what I don't like

I didn't resist Other circles of white guilts to get out my dirt
refused to join up with some women helping to clean up your own act
but please keep in mind I mind my company dearies

I washed the shy side under my towel pretended to spy on a camp
Nazi women torture on command all the slim girls dancing for them
I watch helpless each seduction because I am afraid to keep diets

Scrub stubborn dirty thoughts for an average non-white me
white part of my pinto hide got a scrub my greed too but I cracked
half of me trekked off to the steam room spritzed by spray nozzle

One of me doesn't fit in a women crowd left in complete rage
her white twin belonged better

Women read Tarot Runes for their future plans ask questions
about abundance & working with Indian girls on the streets
who need extra rubbers sometime sexual workers give up luxuries
money life men even welfare

The cleansed one found the dirty one reclining on a cot
looking superior pure ridiculous unable to be appeased of fury
one followed the dirty old thing to the tunnel

Her pride swells investigates the exact places the girl danced
for white lovers social workers teachers nurses forget police
women when if she gets too curious I have been discussed as to
how my racism prevents treatments deserved by other Indian women
tending to trust not disappoint or please others who work for them

I might be vapour molecules spread therefore I am sniffed

Alice saw the Queen of Hearts playing croquet graciously
Her Heart is well worn Her shoulders sag from extensive yoga
lessons to tolerate my potential quirk play with Her mallet

Her inquisition face Her red tam One Eye Annie covered Her dead
eye She guides young hookers Her own daughter was spared Her rape
She tells Indian girls Her past but not Her daughter Her baby
won't listen like shy Indian girls she is immune to mom's dangers

Say Queen of Hearts or One Eye quit working with my sisters
each one is mine is worth many zeros to fill a blank cheque
that won't bounce in my face & make cash flow out of my sweat

I thought only men were the customers & I'll find turquoise
colours for each woman who is my sister I want sisters to like me

Dangly hoop earrings don't match or beaded quills are no better
& who wears my identity feminist fashion puts more rags on
the back of the dead girl

They didn't know her well enough or her race I spotted a non-
white person who never told anyone of her future as evident
as it was at the time but why bother to wake her up she rests
her case & will hear what happened in a roundabout peculiar way
I must be scrubbed empty

Lousy Woman

Not polite to talk behind your back
call you a lousy woman and giggle
suspend ourselves in utmost disbelief
Spiderwomen checking silk guy wires
not that bad: you slashed the tires
of a minister and took a husband away
mocassin telegram links the continent
didn't run the country for your news
musta followed a warm trail to Manhattan
(seldom do I read Cree syllabics or
gossip columns) perhaps I add to my data
F.B.I. examines my purse for our weapons
not enough frisking to get a thrill from
(it is a big risk to talk to other women)
we review a minority politician's views
more than what the *Village Voice* covers
we pile on the outrage of speaking up
if our talk is too deadly we discuss her
(each time we jam frybread in our jaws
is punctuation, post mortem exclamations)
I saw witch art in a black fringed shawl
hovering over a melba toast politicking
witching was an art glad my back is covered

Chicken in a Mug

Camping out is one way to protest. I drag
my son to see and he's afraid it's the usual
Indians in the park behind the shrubbery. Naw,
it's the Indian lawyer under the tree arguing
the fine points of getting paid for glamour.
Hey, reaching the public is one thing but
on T.V. it was her hand grabbing the cup
and the bouillon cube to get through fasting.
Her California tan looks like what we used
to get working outdoors all summer long.
Her capote is gripped by the sculptured nails.
If they break, her whole skin will tear.
Another script to shoot is four blocks away.
Her competitor is patrolling her corner
exposing thighs and shoulders to the wind.
It's sun down. April days fool you. Keemootch
weather not that I mind the coldness of her.

Six Sisters

Where do they come from, all directions?
I get out of bed to see a red sun rising.
Spirit sisters beg of me to be a daredevil.
I'm not. Just another crybaby. I defy.
All my mother's keepers advise me to give.
Take in one more. Charge the Earth!
We get the dirt treatment. Defiled. Downed.
Damn do-gooder in me keeps me rolling over
in the bed I am sharing but not sleeping.
Rolled without my money gone. Megwetch.
Spared. Not changed. I suppose healing
(pawning the pipe of our daughter's dreaming)
is another pose. Silver hair is worthless.
If you want, you may take my turquoise ring.
I'm sick of showing it off to you sisters.

"Chicken in a Mug" and "Six Sisters" are reprinted from Annharte's book of poetry, Being on the Moon *(Polestar, 1990).*

illustration Gita Saxena

Examples:

Masculine		Feminine	
लड़का	*laṛkā*	लड़की	*laṛ*
बेटा	*bēṭā*	बेटी	*bēṭ*

The Benediction

Eira Patnaik

There he stood—his face smudged with chalk and ashes, his neck strung with rudraksha beads, a shred of raged cloth girt around his loins, his begging bowl, his naked legs; all declared him a *fakir*—a religious mendicant emblazoning his liberation from the world by this grotesque posturing.

He surveyed me, trying to reconcile my Indian features with my attire. The dusky skin did not quite jell with the Western-style, ankle-length, faded denim skirt.

But beg he must. Thrusting his wooden bowl towards me, he whined, "Daughter may God bestow eight sons on you."

"Eight sons?" I said, aghast.

"Yes," he said, "eight sons. I will grant you the boon of eight sons. Eight sons will fill your lap. Eight sons will suckle on your breasts. Eight sons will bring you dowries. You will be the envy of the world. I will grant you eight sons who in turn will bear sons who will bear more sons . . . sons."

"Take back your boon," I snapped, my horror evident in my tone. "Grant me eight daughters."

His matted brows interlaced in puzzlement. "Daughters? Daughters?" he spluttered unbelievingly. His shrunken eyes puckered, trying to fathom the meaning of this unnatural request. "Do you ask for daughters? Do you ask me to curse you?"

Oh! The curse of daughters born to pain. Shreds of clouds floated over the hills, playing bizarre charades with my imagination. I saw a woman bowed with care, an infant hanging from one breast, two straddling her hips, one

astride her neck—all girls. Girls aborted, girls poisoned with berries, girls flung into gutters, girls strangled to death. Brides dowsed in kerosene, wives pushed into funeral pyres, widows with shaven heads, weeping endlessly. Shreds of clouds twisted and turned, incarnating tortured females into grotesque shapes.

"No more, no more!" I cried.

And as I looked, the sand under my feet bore me aloft. My thighs grew into monolithic columns. From my belly sprouted grain. My breasts heaved like the breasts of Isis. In my cleavage coiled the asp of Cleopatra. My brow was the brow of Minerva and around my head floated Medusa's locks, hissing in the wind. I was Kali breathing flames. I was Kali trampling on the demon at my feet. One arm raised aloft bore Diana's bow, the other a shield, the third a lance and with the fourth I pelted the poor fool with silver coins.

"Take back your boon, you old clown," I hissed. "Give me daughters from whose magical loins will issue humankind. Give me daughters who will protect the sacred life on the earth, the sky, and the sea. Give me broad-bosomed daughters who will suckle humankind into a new birth. Give me daughters who will stand like fortresses against evil. Give me daughters whose understanding will transform the sterile intellect into life-giving thought. Old fool! It is daughters that I want."

And as I spoke, the beggar hunched at my feet, gaping upwards, staggering on crooked legs.

"Daughters," I said, pelting him with coins. "Daughters," I hissed, flinging the metal. And as I grew in girth, bestriding the mountain, he diminished in size, receding like a shadow into the hills. And still the hills cried, "Daughters, give me daughters."

Lust's End

Julie Brickman

Rob scarcely noticed his first imaginal failure. A gorgeous longlegged blonde walked into his classroom and he could not imagine her naked. Overtired, he thought to himself, remembering his rather inventive performance with Christine the night before. Pristine Christine, he used to call her. Not any more.

The second incident alarmed him because he was out with the woman. Johanna Stephen Sands was a brunette with pale skin and large undulating breasts. New to academe, she was actually enthusiastic about a contract job with the English department, and she was smart: smart without the poisonous edge Rob hated in so many of his snaketongued colleagues. Toasting *kir* against martini, wine against wine, they drank to her success. As he gazed through the black silk of her blouse at her creamy, plump breasts, a red circle materialized around one breast, then the other, followed by a thick red line right across the nipples. Maybe, he thought, she was wearing some new type of bra that they sold in feminist boutiques. An anti-male bra, with a little switchblade that popped out when you touched it without asking. Rob blinked vigorously several times. The red circles disappeared. He did not invite Johanna back to his condominium that night.

The following weekend at Café des Copains, a lanky miniskirted waitress strode up to Rob's table, and instead of picturing her legs hooked over his shoulders, he saw them in baggy grey sweats as she jogged effortlessly past him in the park, tossing a glorious smile his way as she went. Never in his life could he remember adding clothes onto a woman. At his club the next day his imagination changed a tightmuscled young redhead out of iridescent dancercise tights into a pinstriped suit. As he watched the swing

of her briefcase recede, Rob began to wonder what was happening to him.

The worst was in the classroom. That year his graduate seminar was almost all women, which he used to love. He would take them out in little hordes for coffee, and as their eyes clung to his witty, moving lips, he disrobed them. He didn't do it on purpose; an item of clothing would just slip off after he'd made a particularly clever remark, as if Henry Miller were dispensing rewards. The taut boyish woman with prepubescent breasts would suddenly look naked from the waist up; the fleshy one with engulfing thighs would ripple from a gauzy white caftan. It was fantasy heaven, his own personal *Playboy*. His tongue sprang new muscles; his brain turned new corners; his wit knew no bounds. He loved them all.

A few years earlier when the repressive university regime tinkered with its admission standards to encourage applications from women and minorities, Rob had been a vocal supporter. He had chaired the departmental committee on the educationally disadvantaged and published brilliant articles in the faculty newsletter and the *CAUT Bulletin*. When the associate dean of the arts, a woman, lost the competition for dean to an outside male applicant, he wrote a scathing letter to *The Globe and Mail*. He acquired an enviable reputation as one of the rare male allies of feminist causes. Women poured into his classes, all types of women: old, young, black, yellow, red, pink, and coffeeskinned; beanpoles and midgets; women with Afros, burgundy streaks, spikes, and crewcuts, even one with a shaved head like Sinéad, the Irish singer he had seen on one of those late night rock videos (in his mind she shaved her pubic hair and looked like an eight-year-old girl—impish, impudent, innocent—as she stood naked before him; watching her made him tremble). Keeping up with these women took large chunks of his energy; he found less and less private time to work and think.

There had always been troublemakers, the raging dykey women who didn't think any man could be an ally. When they first appeared in his classes, he could pick them out. They were the ones in Birkenstocks and thick socks or combat boots. Devoid of makeup with straggly hair, they read Rita Mae Brown, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Radclyffe Hall. (The thought of their naked flesh repelled him; it would be reptilian, crusty and damp, with slimy, intestinal pudenda.) When he made a joke about how censorship would affect the modern erotic female, they stared at him with cold, contemptuous faces. After such a class, Rob would seek the company of a gentler female colleague or student who would console him, explaining that these were separatists who believed that women should remove themselves from all male influence for a while. He shouldn't mind, they told him, it wasn't personal. But Rob was sensitive to what other people thought; those critical faces *felt* personal. He began to guide his virile tongue by their reactions.

After a while, he could no longer tell who they were. Criticism could come from anywhere. Radical voices spoke from beautiful faces. They could no longer be attributed to the fat, the old, the ugly, the unmarried. Soon they started to contradict each other in class, and it became harder to tailor his opinions to appease them. No matter what he said, some woman

always found chauvinist implications. He felt like he was dodging fastballs all the time, and watched his influence dwindle as he let their voices take over his classes. One of his colleagues got hauled down to the sexual harassment centre for sleeping with a student who claimed she had acquiesced only out of fear for her grade. In the men's room his colleague whispered: she was willing, she agreed, she hung around after class, spent hours having intimate chats with me in the faculty club. No one believed him. The student had spiral notebooks filled with evidence of her attempts to refuse him; she had tapes of his phone calls, photocopies of his letters, and lists of other students who had witnessed his pathetic approaches. The colleague was put on temporary suspension and required to seek professional help. Rob's nervousness increased; things were veering out of control.

In classes, his favourite female students slipped further from his lusty imagination. Brenda's tight mauve sweater turned into army fatigues after he joked about Barbara Bush(less). A helmet popped onto Kim's shimmering hair when he mentioned a seminal paper. As he presented the thrust of an argument, the whole array of moist, dripping lips thinned into dry sneers. Rob hurried out of class to escape their clamouring voices, but the throng pursued him, carrying bayonets where purses once had hung.

The voices began to talk at him from inside his head: commenting, nagging, scolding, informing, judging. Doris Lessing is not humourless, pigbrain, a low voice rumbled when he stopped reading *The Golden Notebook*. Rape is the Vietnam of female experience, another chided when he flung down his fifth paper on rape in twentieth century American literature. Abortion law is a permanent War Measures Act! this one screamed at him all the way through his attempt to read Henderson's bill on fathers' rights. My body, my body, my body, she shrieked, NOT Henderson's body, not daddy's body, NOT MY BABY'S BODY, and not part of the body of law. Rob couldn't think. Pregnant women carried men's babies. That's why men picked wives so much more carefully than mistresses. He smiled: it felt good to hear his own thoughts.

It didn't last. Casting his mind around women writers trying to find some that he liked (to not look sexist) and could assign to his classes (without stimulating those hideous domestic issue papers), he found himself wallowing around in the sex lives of women writers. Maybe this was the best criterion, he thought, to save himself from the tightcunted writing of the dyke brigade. Woolf, his favourite (the only woman he thought could write at all) had a celibate *marriage*. Rob shuddered (one day without sex left him raging). Willa Cather was a dyke. Gertrude Stein, Adrienne Rich, and who knew how many others. Then there were the spinsters: Austen, Dickinson, Pym, Sarton, Brontë (Emily). What about Djuna Barnes? Dyke? She wrote about them implying that profound sexiness and dykiness sprung from the same vaginal wells. A weird thought. What did that mean? Independence, a voice answered: fuck a hundred or don't fuck at all, but never get stuck in servitude.

Rob hated these thoughts. He didn't want to understand the complex

plights of women. Understanding crippled his aggressive tongue and compromised his ability to castrate his adversaries with one verbal swath. He no longer enlived faculty meetings with sexy quips and irreverent jabs. The wreath of laughter that had always enveloped his lonely, fragile soul disappeared. Once one of the voices used his tongue to lecture a colleague about the necessity of malebashing. After that, he shut his lips firmly at meetings. His big, fleshy face acquired a pinched look; his wide lips pursed in a permanent pout.

Johanna confided more deeply in him. "I want to get into tenure stream right away," she said over Benedictine and coffee. "There's a position coming up in my area next year, and I'm going to apply for it." Being an academic had been her dream from childhood; her mother, a high school French teacher and a frustrated intellectual, was redeemed by Johanna's career. Professionally, Johanna used her mother's unmarried name, and with each publication, the maternal face that had dimmed her childhood with gloom, lightened and eased. Rob, a member of the powerful tenure and promotions committee, understood that he could help Johanna. He knew exactly what she should do: where to publish, how many papers, which committees to join, which to avoid. Sleeping with Johanna would ruin her; she'd just be another woman fucking up her chances. How should he talk to her then? Rob often counselled new male colleagues; he recognized their bellyup deference to his position and rewarded them with his assistance. But bellyup for women had always been sexual: what if it wasn't? What if Johanna just wanted help? friendship? what if her intense excitement wasn't laced with sexual innuendo? was about work? ideas? Disoriented, Rob played safe, gave her information, and took her straight home.

Relationships fascinated Rob now. He puzzled and pondered and speculated about them, even sought women just to talk about them. He read writers he had previously disdained: Marge Piercy, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Robin Morgan, even resorted to social scientists like Phyllis Chesler, Judith Herman, and Ann Jones. Men in their books were vague, shadowy figures with dim interior lives or selfish, critical, violent, furious bastards. The real lives of women occurred in the spaces between their time with men, the time they spent with each other. Men's accomplishments, their thinking, hardly mattered. Instead, how much housework men did, the type of time they spent with children, if they were supportive (listened to women complain), dependent (had to be looked after) or possessive (undercut women's friends, passions), were the qualities of note. Incredibly, these women laughed with each other about men's sexual frenzies, how men raced around to fuck away their anxieties with insipid baby cunts. An equation appeared: strong cunts inspire weak cocks. Men, it seemed, lost their erections with strong women. They had to be coaxed, teased, coddled and sucked, which could take hours and still result in a semisoft prick. (Female psychiatrists labelled the phenomenon *primary male flaccidity*, and debated whether it was a sexual dysfunction or an intractable characterological disorder.) Pricks, according to these writers, only stayed

hard when men called the sexual shots (like when to stick it in). Some women considered a soft prick a compliment, an ode to their independence. Were dominance and hard pricks really related? Rob thought about his prick history. He'd only been impotent with his ex-wife, and her bitchiness had caused it. *Hadn't it?*

Microscopic details about male bodies littered the pages. Pectoral size, chest hair, moles, callouses, skin textures, baldness, paunches, and salty smells leapt into Rob's sexual consciousness. How did he fare? he wondered, was he attractive enough? He angled for opinions from women friends, and extorted compliments from lovers. When he shopped for clothes, which he did with increasing frequency, he thought about what they'd said. It became harder to decide what to buy. Christine liked him baggy and trendy; Johanna preferred the corporate look; Kim directed him to L.L. Bean. Rob bought all three and varied them according to who he might see.

Some days he couldn't manage. He didn't want to be stripped, judged, assessed, and criticized by women. He examined himself minutely in the mirror, pouring over every blemish, agonizing over every flaw. His midriff bulge, thick ears, purple appendectomy scar, and flabby biceps panicked him. He loathed his body. Clothes became armour to distract penetrating female eyes.

It might be a relief to get married. To settle down with one voice, one set of eyes, and one set of opinions. But ambitious women, reluctant to endure the tumultuous clashes of will that marriage seemed to inspire, preferred lovers. "Men come and go," Christine told him, "but my flute is here to stay." Rob didn't want to settle for a witless blonde with a pallid billboard face; he would forever be propping her up just to feel safe himself, but what choice did he have. It was a woman's world. Dread invaded his solitude until he could hardly work at all.

After their next dinner Johanna invited him back to her condo. *Maybe she's the one. She's capable and ambitious. I could encourage her; she's unsure of herself.* He whipped the cream for their Irish coffees, then carried the empty mugs back to the kitchen and rinsed them carefully. Good husband material, she'd think, someone who could look after things while she battled for tenure. Her bedroom was frilly and pink; the sheets on the delicate bed had roses on them. Rob climbed awkwardly into bed like a flabby, clumsy giant. No matter how she stroked him, he couldn't get an erection. Even when she sucked him for what seemed like hours (but was fifteen minutes by the hot pink hands on her bedside clock), he never got completely hard. Of course she asked what was wrong, if there was anything he particularly wanted her to do. Hold me, he implored, let's just cuddle.

In desperation, Rob decided to write about his condition. But his mind was severed from the genital power that had inspired his greatest work. He no longer believed in that power; it had no place in the world. Even with the help of the complete *Oxford* and his exhaustive thesaurus, not a word came. The English language had no vocabulary to describe the jailing of a gender.

Kathy Mac

Lady in Waiting

A lull in the dinner rush

the waitress
hauls out a huge photo album
of her husband's family

Yellowed images
rescued from attic oblivion
and painstakingly sorted, preserved
for her daughter's sake
she claims

"They're so much more interesting than my folks—
we're just prairie farmers—
get excited over tomatoes"

"That's General Alexander
my man's grandda.
His grandmother was Queen Victoria's husband's sister"
or something like that

It means her daughter is royalty
sort of

Which must provide some comfort
when tips are lousy
and her feet ache
from waiting
on tables

Margaret Tongue

Crone Poem: Who She Will Be

She would also have to be harsh,
astringent, acrid as woodsmoke

far-sighted, flint-hard, sharp
as a razor

She would have to have a harsh tongue
as well, unsparing,
be skilled in the uses of bitter herbs
caustic cures
willow and yarrow, nettles,
nightshade

She would rise at the foot of the orchard,
clear as October, tart as vinegar,
an apple-green tang
like a girl in your heart

who, if it came to that,
would walk through blood or spill it—
ax, oakstave, knife—
quick-handed, resolute, ready to take
a life for a life
my life for her
life

She would have to be harsh,
cool-eyed, worn as a coin is,
bold as laughter, staunch
as a crutch

for me to trust her
her kindness and calmness
her even-handed, her sure
her healing
touch

Concepts of Anger, Identity, Power, and Vision in the Writings and Voices of First Nations Women

Kerrie Charnley

. . . I am a young First Nations woman, mixed-blood Sto:lo (better known by the anthropologists' term, Coast Salish) from a village and people called Katzie, 20 miles east of Vancouver. I was raised single-handedly by my secretary mother in downtown Vancouver and through student loans, by working numerous lowly-paid jobs, and by pushing my psyche to its limits, I have made it to the middle of my third year at Simon Fraser University. I started in the racist Anthropology-Sociology department (not to say all Anthropology-Sociology departments are virulently racist but this one is obviously so to any person of colour, particularly a Native person—that is a story in and of itself) and switched to the more enlightened and worldly English department; however at the same time, I encountered a virulently racist professor in an anthro class on northwest coast Native people—naive me thought I was going to learn a lot. Well, I did, but not the good stuff I'd thought—the beauty and dynamism of my people; no, I learned about the insidiousness of racism. I will tell you that story after all. What she did and her attitude, is reflected best in her act of inviting an archeology student to bring in a skull. Well, that skull was a Coast Salish skull and it was handed around the room for us all to touch and notice particular racial/cultural characteristics of it like the bumps and flatness. As the skull was handed closer and closer to me I was getting sicker and sicker in my stomach, my face was hot, and I was sweating and tense. *I held that skull but, at what cost I wonder, I kept thinking this could be my great grandfather who my family always speaks so highly of, a leader, a healer, and here is his skull in this university classroom with people of another culture looking at it and even touching it as if it were a mere object, a dog bone, a dinosaur skull, lacking reverence, respect, difference—I couldn't believe it! What if I were to go to England, set up my Sto:lo Nation University, and dig up Churchill's or Shakespeare's bodily remains and dis/play them in my European studies class. I wonder how these Europeans would feel about that, there'd probably be an uproar throughout the western world, or maybe there would be those who would say it was okay because it was for academia's sake and then it would be again seen what a lowly place humanity takes in the scope of present-day values. Too much is gotten away with in the name of academia. With some relief, I was told the skull was from Pender Island, a far enough distance away from my people's territory so that it wasn't any close relative. I left that class never to return. I found out later the archeological team on that island were in a bit of ethical trouble because they neglected to ask the Native people, whose territory it was, if they could go around digging and removing the bones of their ancestors. This was quieted up, but not without a very smart Master's student withdrawing from that department. I withdrew from that class after three weeks and never went back to school for four years until this past fall, largely because I'd lost faith in that system of learning and because what I needed to know was not at any institution. Now I have discovered "directed studies" and my main interest is reclaiming my stolen identity as a Native person and contributing to the strength and identity of all my people. . . —excerpt from letter to Fireweed Collective, March 1989, accompanying the following essay*

Introduction

For the past five hundred or so years, the voices of Native women have been silenced by the onslaught of European immigration to Turtle Island.* These new immigrants brought a new order of governing structures and belief system with them and imposed these on the land and the nations of people living here, who already had their own governing structures and belief system honed over thousands of years of living with this land and universe. Many of the First Nations were matriarchal and co-operative while these new people were patriarchal and individualistic. These two differences continue to have an impact on all peoples and nations living on this land today. In order for the Europeans to obtain control over the First Nations peoples and get control over the land and her resources, they silenced what was central to the perpetuation of the matriarchal and co-operative spirit and values of First Nations: the voices of First Nations women.

The catalysts that helped break the silence for Native women were the far-reaching and liberating forces of the women's movement beginning in the sixties and the influences of Marx's analysis of class oppression. Other catalysts that helped pave the way for Native women breaking the silences

* Before the last five hundred years of European occupation, different First Nations had their own names for this continent. The Haudosaunee called it "Turtle Island" in its English translation. It is probable that all the nations had a name for the continent since there were trade routes known to go as far as South America in pre-colonial times.

of deaf ears were the loud and strong voice of the American Indian Movement in the sixties and seventies, the growth of Native political and cultural organizations (National Indian Brotherhood, Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Friendship Centre movement, etc.), and the environmental movement also stemming from the radical, grassroots sixties. At this point one might ask the shadowed question, "If so much liberating action was happening for women and Native people in the sixties and seventies, why weren't Native women being heard then?" The answer to this question lies in the happenstance of First Nations' five-hundred-year silenced history. The voices of Native women continued to be silenced in the sixties and seventies by the racist and patriarchal children of colonialism. By this time the racists and patriarchy adherents dressed in both white and red jackets. (Weakened and weathered over the years by European schools and other institutions, Native men and women had begun to believe and use the racist and patriarchal tools of colonialism for their own individualistic bartering for a place within the competitive neo-European status quo.) There were a few fireweeds, however, who resisted the brainwashing and refused to be silent; those who wrote unpublished and spoke to a small audience, but who wrote and spoke nevertheless and harboured a voice for themselves and for those of us who did not have a voice. These women have come to know one another and they are uniting their voices to create a powerful force. Through the traditional values of co-operation and womanpower and the traditional recognition of the sacredness and power of the word that has persisted subversively over the course of five hundred years of silence, along with the contributions of marxism and the liberation movements of the sixties and seventies, these word warriors are being heard.

In the seventies, the novel *Halfbreed* was published by Maria Campbell and this marked the beginning of a movement. Lee Maracle published her autobiography / manifesto, *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*, at about the same time, but due to politics and book market trends, her book did not reach the wide audiences *Halfbreed* did. In 1983 Native women writers got public attention at the Women and Words Society's inaugural women writers conference in Vancouver; this conference marked a path towards the history-making workshops and readings hosted by Native women writers at 1989's *Third International Feminist Book Fair* in Montréal. Lee Maracle, Jeannette Armstrong, Paula Gunn Allen, Janet Campbell-Hale, Chrystos, Joy Harjo, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Midnight Sun, Beth Brant, Barbara Smith, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Marilou Awaikta have all published within the past five years and some of these Native women are also participating in writers conferences and events, such as the events already mentioned and others like the *Vancouver Writers Festival* and the conference *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* held in Vancouver.

This essay will look at the words of recently published Native writers Lee Maracle, Jeannette Armstrong, Chrystos, and Paula Gunn Allen to reflect on some of the concerns these women have on a personal level about themselves, their people, and the world. This essay will reflect particularly

on the silences and anger of being an oppressed people, the functions of image-making, identity creating and erasing of invisibility that are a part of writing; also discussed will be the world view of First Nations people that has empowered us throughout our long history. For the purposes of this essay, because some Native women writers also call themselves "women of colour," there will be points where this term will be used when referring to a concept that has been discussed by a writer who has identified herself as a "woman of colour." What this essay will not address are the mechanics of Native women's literature; moreover, it will reveal the philosophical and political base the writers are writing from. In order to understand the mechanics, it is crucial first to understand the forces that brought those words into being. The beginning part will look at what silences us; the second part will look at our response, in the form of anger, to the forces which silence us and anger's relationship to writing; the third part will look at how Native women writers are creating their own images of themselves through the word. In closing, the fourth and last part will look at the world view of Native people and how a people's world view is reflected in the language of that people; as well, this part will look at how this relationship between language and one's world view is a fundamental concern and force in Native women's literature.

"Why Are You Being So Silent?"

In silence there is no movement, no change—only death, or at best, a slow death. Good odds for victimization, powerlessness. In breaking silence, in speaking, there is movement, change, transformation; creation and birth. Breaking the silence for Native women is a major step towards stopping the forces that have been silencing us. However, it must be done on our own terms or our voice will not be our own and therefore it will not truly empower us. A white woman at a women writers conference made reference to the question of why some women were being silent. The only ones who did not speak, for all the white women did, were the women of colour. This woman said it was probably due to the fact that these women were not used to speaking! This is typical of what a woman of colour must put up with over and over again—white people speaking and making assumptions about us right in front of our very faces and ears as if we don't even exist or have a voice, and all the while taking up the space that we could be using for our voices. Chrystos' poem, "Maybe We Shouldn't Meet If There Are No Third World Women Here," expresses a rhetorical question in response to this kind of familiar experience: "How can we come to your meetings if we are invisible." (Chrystos, 1988, 13) The workshop's topic of discussion, "Living the Great Novel Versus Writing One," did not seek the perspective of women of colour who know most the meaning of living the great novel. It is our silence that is addressed more often than our voices. Finally, at the end of the workshop, out of this body of silent brown women, a voice arose. It was a voice of frustration, of anger, of pain, of sadness and it was our voice. It is too often that the only voice white women will actually hear is the hurting or angry voice of women of colour. It is sad

that this woman was forced into her unvaliant and lonely position without a functional structure of the support of women of colour available to her; instead she fled from the room and the topic of the one-sided discussion continued as it had before, in silence. This is the kind of thing that impacts on every single woman of colour who is conscious of that colour–white dynamic; this is the kind of thing that makes us angry. In Chrystos' same poem, she reflects on this situation and the anger that she consequently feels: "My mouth cracks in familiar shock my eyes flee/to the other faces where my rage desperation fear pain ricochet/a thin red scream How can you miss our brown and golden/in this sea of pink . . . /Bitter boiling I can't see you" (Chrystos, 1988, 13) Someone at this same workshop said that anger is something women writers should address because of its paralyzing effect on one's ability to write. She also said that anger stems from fear. While it is true that anger is something Native women writers could address as it is a very significant theme and force in our writing, the concept of fear as a root of anger is not true for women of colour, for Native women: our anger is a direct result of feeling, and in fact being, powerless and unheard in terms of the dominant European.

Much of our writing has, as its theme, anger at those conditions and forces that have sought to render Native people powerless and voiceless: residential schools; the Church and its missionaries; white tyrannical teachers trying to make Indian students believe their ways, beliefs, language, religion, and physical being are of no value; child abduction; rape; murder; sterilization; germ warfare in the form of diseased blankets; even up until just thirty short years ago, denial of legal and political representation and the right to vote for the leaders of our own land; and many other travesties wrought upon our people. In terms of this struggle we are engaged in, Paula Gunn Allen says, in her book *The Sacred Hoop*, that "[f]or women this means fighting . . . sometimes violent and always virulent racist attitudes and behaviors directed against us by an entertainment and educational system that wants only one thing from Indians: our silence, our invisibility, our collective death." She goes on to cite an example of what kinds of things are being done to us collectively: "'It is believed that at least 80 per cent of the Native women seen at the regional psychiatric service center . . . have experienced some sort of sexual assault.'" (Gunn Allen, 1987, 119) Not only do Native women have to deal with the hardships the average white person has, but our load is magnified by the poverty, the racist sexism, the overt racism, and the covert racism, without the benefit of secure support or coping mechanisms. These were pulled out from under us by the European colonialists and their genocidal policies and actions: our family structures and belief systems were decimated, broken apart, and outlawed. If there is fear beneath our anger, it is the fear that our multi-generational anger might be unjustly and accidently hurled onto one of our own or onto the innocent or onto one of the truthseekers in our lives. In *I Am Woman* Lee Maracle articulates the condition of this anger: "I am torn apart and terrorized, not by you, my love, but the war waging inside me . . . Now you will be watchful, wary, waiting for my hysteria . . . Just as I am on guard against

your anger." (Maracle, 1988, 39) At worst, the victim of our large and looming anger, and too often the usual, is our very selves—for fear of hurting others, knowing so well how much it hurts being the object of unjust hate, and from being powerless to act out our anger another way. The suicide rate of young Native people is now eerily famous and this occurrence is mourned in Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, *I Am Woman*, as well as in Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop*. Too often we turn anger inward because sometimes it is hard to make out who the one real enemy is—a trait, or belief system, or some hard-to-cope-with element in our own selves—and thus there becomes no target at which to aim our very reasonable and natural anger. This dilemma is found in Maracle's poem "Hate": "Blinded by niceties and polite liberality we can't see our enemy, so, we'll just have to kill each other." (Maracle, 1988, 12) By illuminating the real enemies, real sources, from which our self-inflicted pains/violence stem, Maracle clarifies for Native people, for herself, and for other Native women what is clearly going on and what the dynamics and forces are that have shaped our history and are shaping our lives today; thus we have a place from which to start changing those conditions in our lives which oppress us, a place and knowledge with which to empower ourselves. Perhaps the fear that that woman was speaking of was this fear of where the power of one's anger will be directed; but let it be clarified that the real root to all of this silence, this anger, this fear is the very real racism we Native women are trying to survive. Racism and sexism implicate one's whole being; it is hard not to reflect on these experiences frequently and almost obsessively. Much of Lee Maracle's book *I Am Woman* addresses the reality of racism (and internalized racism). In speaking about the people she loves she says: "In all of the stories runs a single common thread; racism is for us, not an ideology in the abstract, but a very real and practical part of our lives. The pain, the effect, the shame are all real." (Maracle, 1988, 2) One way we are able to survive this constant questioning of our right to be, is through writing.

In Breaking Silence We Can Transform Anger and Combat Racism

The act of writing is an incredibly liberating force that can transform anger by allowing it to be expressed and aimed at something in a physical way. An illustration of this is seen in Lee Maracle's story about the "L'ilwat Child" who was denied a seat on the school bus until the teacher's authority, not the child's human rights, coerced the rude European children to move over for the child. Maracle's response to this exemplifies how writing out one's anger can be useful when she says:

> I let the scream sink slowly into oblivion. I went home to scream my rage to a blank sheet of paper. I had not moved to comfort that child either. I betrayed myself yet again. For my hungry, aching spirit, the pen is mightier than the sword. (Maracle, 1988, 109)

Through expressing our anger towards what is really working against us, we can prevent it from turning inward on ourselves. Chrystos illustrates the many sources of her anger and how this anger is a strength, in her

poem "I Walk In The History of My People": "In the scars of my knees you can see children torn from their families bludgeoned into government schools . . . Anger is my crutch I hold myself upright with it. My knee is wounded see How I Am Still Walking." (Chrystos, 1988, 7) In order to know, in all its subtlety, what is really working against us, we have to be able to have a forum within which we can question, express how we feel, and express what our experience is in order to reflect our experience and see it in relation to and in a dynamic with other people and environs. What better a place to paint the picture of one's experience and relationships than in transforming what we already know into word on paper and reflecting thought on that. In expressing our anger on paper we can do something at times and in situations where it may not be possible to do anything else. On paper we can confront the enemy who is not embodied in any one human being, we can even question our own thinking, and we can address someone we are angry at who may not be available or may simply be too powerful or overwhelming to confront in person at the time. This is the power of writing—taking action with the voice and hand, moving thought into physical being, taking it further than one's mind will allow and giving it away to other people's (and other times and places when one later can look back on what is written and see it with new information/experience and discover new realizations) nurturing thought and experience, changing and creating the world: Womanword–uniting–power.

Erasing Invisibility and Creating Our Own Identities In Words

Besides transforming anger and combating racism, writing is also an excellent way to create our own images of who we are in the face of those false ones assumed and designed by Europeans, and thus, erasing the invisibility of Native images and proclaiming Native men and women distinct and valuable people.

In a world where Native people are more or less invisible in all modes of reflection—media, decision-making positions, positions of power, education curriculum, etc.—and are viewed as secondary citizens, media communication is an effective way of breaking the silence and changing the false images of Native people. Communication media such as radio, television, publications, and artistic forms such as prose, poetry, and performance allow and sometimes encourage alternatives to the institutional, political, and social structures which maintain and reflect the racist and patriarchal attitudes of the European culture. In creating one's own images and getting one's word out to the public "at large," validation is experienced by the author and the reader. The writer is reflected within the word on the page and the reader's self-image is reflected in common experiences and views shared with the author. Alienation and isolation are finally broken, transformed into camaraderie with the breaking of silence. Further validation is experienced by the reader's response to the writer's work of experience, idea, and art when the reader is stimulated by the author's words to make active changes in her own life and world, as well as changes in the way she thinks.

Lee Maracle creates a positive image for Native people when she says: "I want to look across the table in my own kitchen and see, in the brown eyes of the man that shares my life, the beauty of my own reflection. . . . I want the standard for our judgement of our brilliance, our beauty and our passions, to be ourselves." (Maracle, 1988, 19) She also says that "[b]y standing up and laying myself bare, I erased invisibility as a goal for the young Native women around me." (Maracle, 1988, 9)

Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa (3/4 Indian and 1/4 Spanish mixed-blood people) says that

> [f]or a woman of colour to write . . . personally and also about her culture . . . she goes back to her past . . . states of depression . . . of anger . . . of being violated . . . and she has to recreate them. She's got to reckon with these things that make up the abyss. (Anzaldúa, 1988. "Remembering and Subverting Strategies in the Literature of Women of Color," *Third International Feminist Book Fair.*)

Gloria also says that women of colour have many different states of consciousness:

> Between subculture and mass culture, between male and female, between the ideologies that are feminine and the ideologies that are patriarchal, the splicing of different cultures . . . all these shifting events . . . shifting perspectives, and a woman of colour does this in her writing. (Anzaldúa, 1988)

We are a different people even from our ancestors but we are still First Nations people: Sto:lo, Dene, Okanagan, Cree, etc. Cultures are not static, they are in constant movement and change and development, and so it is with First Nations cultures. They are not frozen in history as anthropologists and politicians would have one believe. Gloria Anzaldúa says that because our culture has been segmented by the genocidal actions and we have become so overloaded with mis-beliefs about ourselves, "we've taken the occupied self and tried to recover the essential self by deconstructing history and deconstructing cultural theories according to white people and then putting all the pieces of ourselves together in our writing, in our art, in our thought." She says that somebody who reads her writing might say, "[I]t's really disorganized, it's not structured. But the structure is a different kind of structure. It's not a linear structure, it's not a common logical structure, it's not a hierarchical structure," but a circular and organic structure based on the matriarchal and co-operative cultural thought of her Indianness. Thus Native women are faced with the limits of the English language to express their way of thinking, experience, and world view.

Breaking Silence and Perpetuating the Power of the Indian World View

Besides transforming anger and combating racism through creating new images and expressions of who we are, by writing we can make changes in the thinking of Europeans, as well as reinforce our own identities as First Nations people by perpetuating the values, belief system, and world view of our traditions which have been the fundamental power of our existence, and by sharing and expressing our world view.

One cannot understand or define in its entirety the philosophy of entire nations of people in a paragraph; however, important fundamental differences can be explained. In Indian thought there is the desire for things to be whole, co-operative, and balanced; whereas, in European thought there is the desire for things to be separated and put in a hierarchical order. The spirit that a Native person speaks of is not the same spirit as the European speaks of. The European sees spirit as a human derivative and associated with death. The Native person sees spirit as that essence which is characteristic of the physical manifestation it is within and this spirit is associated with life force. Spirit never comes or goes; it always is a matter of existence. Paula Gunn Allen points out that

> [i]n English, one can divide the universe into two parts: the natural and the supernatural. This necessarily forces English-speaking people into a position of alienation from the world they live in. Such isolation is entirely foreign to American Indian thought. (Gunn Allen, 1986, 60)

It is this understanding of a spiritual connectedness between and within all that exists that has been one of our greatest weapons, healers, liberators in our battles against genocide, and this view of the world persists. Lee Maracle talks about how she relied on spiritual healing at a point in her life when white doctors told her she was dying. She connected and worked with and for her community and undertook the practice of spiritual healing and this, coupled with the love she shared with her partner, brought her back to life. Jeannette Armstrong's character, Slash, reaches into his spiritual understanding and goes into his past to bring forth his song at a time when all his physical, emotional, and mental resources are spent during a prison sentence. At this time when life is unbearable, suicide seems to be his only alternative, but it is his spiritual understanding that empowers him to carry on toward eventually uniting all aspects of his once torn apart life and reconciling the past with the present: "The song vibrated through every fibre of my body like a light touch of wings, and the hard ball inside my chest seemed to melt and spread like warm mist across my chest . . . I couldn't stop for a long time. . . . I felt okay for the fist time in about three or four years." (Armstrong, 1985, 68)

Paula Gunn Allen quotes Laguna/Sioux writer Carol Lee Sanchez, saying she

> writes as a way of connecting to her people. . . . What she does is . . . knit the old ways to the new circumstances in such a way that the fundamental world-view of the tribe will not be distorted or destroyed. In her task she uses every resource of her present existence: technology and myth, politics and motherhood, ritual balance and clearsighted utterance, ironic comments and historical perspective. (Gunn Allen, 1986, 180)

The work of expressing a highly sophisticated world-view into the limiting structures of the English language is arduous. It is undertaken by those with courage, self-reliance, imagination, and a need for justice, balance, wholeness.

The powerful connection between language and thought is exemplified by Jeannette Armstrong's statement that

> [n]on-sexist thinking is deeply embedded in our cultures and must be seen from a broader perspective than the warped point of view of a culture whose orientation is always male or female rather than human-oriented. (Armstrong, 1988. "Voices of Native Women in Literature," *Third International Feminist Book Fair*)

This is reflected in her Okanagan language which has no "pronouns to refer to 'her' or 'she.' There is no way we can refer to 'her' or 'she' in any sense of the word. People are addressed and referred to by name, by occupation, by familial role, or by clan." (Armstrong, 1988) Further, the power of her people's thinking and language is reflected by the fact that "[r]ape was totally unheard of in pre-contact cultures. In particular in Okanagan culture it was totally unheard of not because of the punishments but because of the high elevation of human dignity and personal freedoms that we enjoyed." Jeannette comments on the power of writing and thought, saying that writing is itself a sacred act because

> it manifests thought which originates within the spiritual world and manifests itself into the physical world through word. It makes it physical by transferring by word, understanding—understanding being the foundation of our Beings, and therefore holy. So we say to people speak softly but truthfully, when it is necessary, and it is now necessary. (Armstrong, 1988)

We understand that in order to truly change this world we cannot react in such a way as a European would if he were in our position. We do not want this world to continue its debasement of humanity and the natural balance of the earth. We do not want to continue the violence and oppression that has become the way of the European. Lee says in her story, "L'ilwat Child," that "Europe has much to learn from our example. Be ever so thankful that I have not forgotten my ancestors and looked upon myself as just a person or I should have exploded in good European style on those children. I should have slapped them both." (Maracle, 1988, 109) We must use our own understandings of wholeness and balance as the desired goal and not bend to the violent means of domination and separation that history has proven are the European's goals—"divide and conquer," as the old adage goes. "Unite and nurture" would be more to the First Nations person's way of thinking.

Summary

To a people whose word has such a fundamental significance to our lives, to be stripped of our language has been perhaps the most devastating act towards genocide that was done to us. The significance and experience of being denied one's language and the ability to speak, and being denied the physical and spiritual power of language, is to be denied that which is at the core of one's being and existence. The loss of much of our own languages, due to colonial policies carried out in residential and public schools, has greatly silenced Native people. As well, the English language has not served us well; it is limiting in its patriarchal and Eurocentric definitions and structures which leave very little room for ceremonial or

spiritual understandings of relationships. The English language does not fit well with the belief systems and world view of Native people.

We were supposed to forget our own world view and language and adopt the language and world view of the European, and then believe that his erasing of us as unique cultures and independent nations was in our best interests. Some bought it and some didn't, many didn't survive the brutalizations but some have and are seeking justice for our people. Paula Gunn Allen states that

> the fragmentation of consciousness that might be expected to result from ... massive cultural breakdown is a surface breakdown.... Indian values, perceptions, and understandings have clung tenaciously to life, informing the work of writers and artists as they inform the lives of all Indian people. (Gunn Allen, 1986, 182-3)

The battle is still going on and the front seems to be in the form of ideology, the weapon in the form of the word, and the action in the form of informing both the First Nations people and people from other nations who we live with about the healing and empowering values of our traditions and world view and through showing our experiences as examples of that truth. With history being made up of the voices of all nations, all peoples instead of just one European people, the sand will be taken out of the eyes of Europeans, showing them what their own history and world view has been doing all these years and a real new world shall be born.

Conclusion

In referring to the words, artistry, and political sight of Lee Maracle, along with other examples from works and words of Chrystos, Jeannette Armstrong, Paula Gunn Allen, and Gloria Anzaldúa, it is apparent that embodied and working within the written testimonies of Native women are empowerment and healing, bound to the word by the spiritual power essence that exists within all that is and all that connects. In their writing they are breaking silence, fighting racism and patriarchy, subverting the English language and creating their own language, putting English words to the test of an Indian world view, reconciling their tribal pasts with their individual presents, empowering and transforming anger into knowing, self-inspiring, and inspiring others, dealing with internalized racism, uniting powers, transforming the spiritual to the physical, maintaining the world view, values, and responsibility to the oral/word sacredness perpetuated by their grandmothers, maintaining and enlivening their spiritual understanding and connectedness within all that exists (organic or not)—and this list of wonderous and magnificent endeavours these women are pursuing and achieving by using and creating their voices in words could go on and on. The boundaries of essay writing prevent further and more in-depth analysis and celebration of Native women's recent written works; however, it is hoped that further studies and scrutinies and appreciation of these works will soon be undertaken by those who are looking for healing, empowerment, and hopeful visions of a universe where there is humanity, where there is spirit, where difference is celebrated, lived, and loved. These women's words are recreating and creating their individual selves, the nations and communities they are members of, and the world of all that exists.

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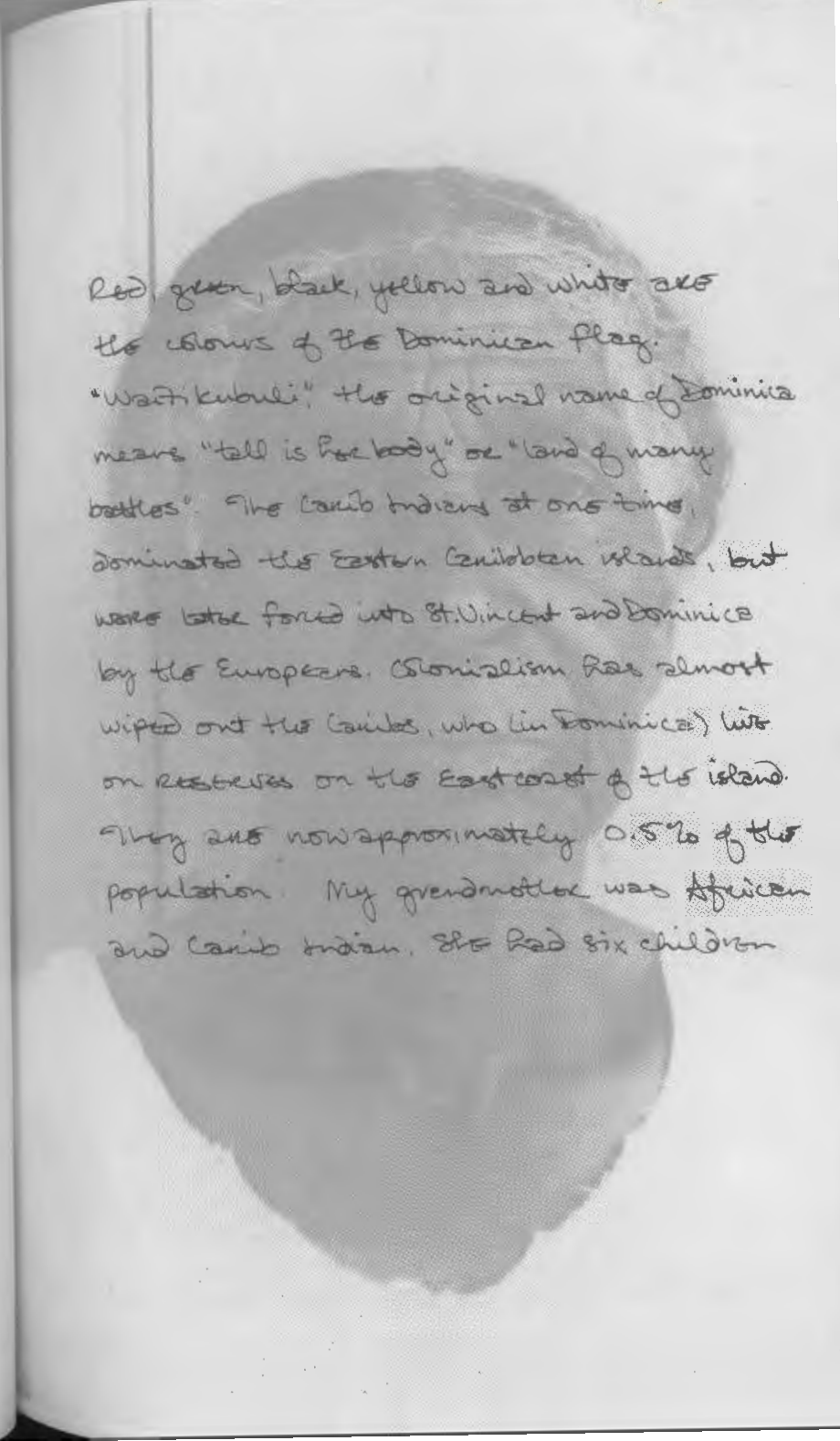
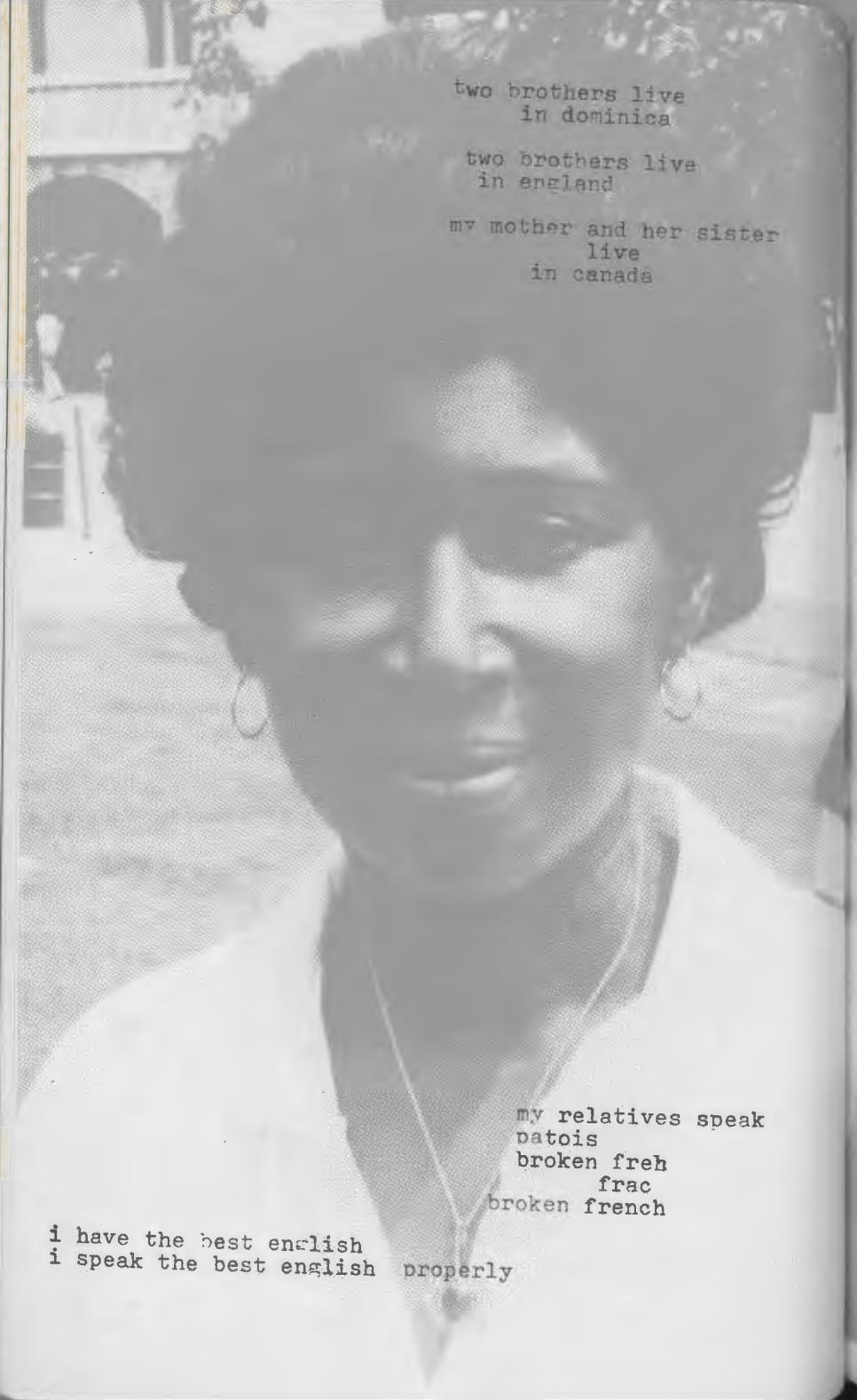
Science, Experiments, and Geography

Karen Augustine





two brothers live
in dominica

two brothers live
in england

my mother and her sister
live
in canada

my relatives speak
patois
broken freh
frac
broken french

i have the best english
i speak the best english properly

Archimedes' Principle
states that a
SOLID
object when
IMMERSED in
a liquid is buoyed
up by a
FORCE
equal to the
weight
of the
displaced
liquid

OR Canada Our Home and native
land True Patriot Love In all our sons
command With Glowing Hearts we
see thee rise The True north strong

Excerpt from

No Rosa, No District Six

(novel-in-progress)

Rozena Maart

Mummy and mamma always say dat I make tings up and dat I have a lively e mag e nation and dat i'm like der people in der olden days dat jus used to tell stories about udder people before dem and dats why mummy and mamma orways tear my papers up and trow it away but tis not true I never make tings up I orways tell mamma what happened and mamma doan believe me and I tell mummy and mummy doan believe me too and den I write it on a paper or on der wall or behind Ospavat building or in der sand at der park and Mr Franks at school he don't believe me too cos he says dat I orways cause trouble wi der teachers and I talk too much and I jump too much and I laugh too much and I swear too much and I doan sit still too much and I orways have bubble gum and I orways have pieces of tings and papers and my hair orways comes loose and mamma toal Mr Franks dat I'm under der doctor and dat I get pills cos I'm hyper active like mamma say, "someone who is restless all der time" but Mr Franks doan believe dat I'm under der doctor cos I make too much movements and today Mr Henson ga me four cuts cos he says dat I was dis o be dient and dat I cause trouble in der class but tis not true cos you see last week we celebrated Van Riebeeck's day on der sixt of April wit der flag and we sing "Uit die blou van onse hemel" on der grass for der assembly and four weeks ago Mr Henson teached us about Jan Van Riebeeck and Mr Henson toal us dat Van Riebeeck made Cape Town built a fort and erecticated a half way station for food and surplies for der Dutch people and der European people so dat dey could have a rest at der Cape after a long journey and den Mr Henson also toal us dat Van Riebeeck's wife was Maria de la Quelerie, dis is true I dirint

make dis up like mummy and mamma orways say I make tings up and den Mari der big girl in my class, she has her periods oready she toal us she wondered where Maria de la Quelerie put her cotton clot wi blood on it in der ship from Holland cos Mari's mummy told her not to tell her daddy her broder or her uncles about her periods cos men mus never see or know dees tings and den we all laughed cos Mari's very funny and today we had to give in our assignments on Van Riebeeck and Mr Henson ga me four cuts on my hand cos I drew a picture of Maria and not Jan and Mr Henson say der assignment was about Van Riebeeck and not Maria and I say is der same ting cos it was all part of der same history lesson and Mr Henson screamed at me to shut up and his veins was standing out and he say dat I was not paying attention and dat he is going to write another letter to mummy about my bee haviour and I ask Mr Henson if Van Riebeeck and Maria had children and Mr Hensen says dat I want to play housey-housey all der time and not learn history and I say dat if Maria was Jan's wife den dey must've had children and den Mr Hensen took me down to der office to Mr Franks cos Mr Franks is der principal and Mr Henson tell Mr Franks I was causing trouble and Mr Franks believe him and tells me dat he know I should not have been at school in der first place and dat I've made trouble since Sub A cos when I was in Sub A Mr Franks found out dat I was 5 and not 6 and he sent me home and der next day mummy went to school and made a big performance and Mr Franks took me back cos mamma doan wanna look after me der whole day and cos I start to write when I was four and mamma say I make too much mess on der walls and on der tings and now der school doan want me back no more and Mr Franks say dat I mus bring mummy to school but I dirint do anything wrong all I wannit to know was if Maria and Jan had children dat's all.

r. 29 April, 1970

* * *

A warm April afternoon greeted the child standing with both arms on her hips. Her sticky fingers cupped the flesh around her cheeks as she eagerly observed the friendly wall upon which her writing spoke her truths. Her eyes, notable for observing several activities at the same time, moved over the written area, sealing it with a narrowed look of approval while her mouth pouted in a somewhat revolutionary way. Rosa took the sides of her dress and tucked them into her panties. It bubbled like a fluffy pancake as the Cape Town afternoon wind encircled her body; her brown cinnamon legs sweetened its appearance whilst also holding her rebellious posture together. She giggled as she saw her reflection in the sun. Rosa lifted her school-case and threw it over the wall and pulled a face as it sounded like one of the rats she threw across the gravel park. The stones were filing her case smoother and her shoes now had to suffer the grinding the brick wall were to put them through. The crevices between the stone bricks of George Golding Primary School knew Rosa well. She climbed with no difficulty. Once at the top she leapt like a grasshopper and knelt on the ground for awhile pretending to sort out pebbles. Rosa undid her buckled black shoes

and knelt forward to pick the thorns off her socks, throwing them one at a time at the row of marching ants. She removed the pieces of her dress still caught between her bloomers. Her plaited hair, tentacled in spiderly fashion, lay scrunched up between her legs. Its web of discomfort awaited the mystery that only Rosa could decide. The black balls of her eyes surveyed the area and alerted her to her peers some yards away. It was nobody she knew and no one who would complain to Mamma Zila. Upon deciding whether to go home through Hanover Street or down Constitution, Rosa chose Hanover. Verbalizing her decision to herself, she exclaimed, "In Hanover Street there are lots of busy people and nobody watches your feet, only your face!"

* * *

The shuffling of feet, the racing of pulses, the screams of little children being bathed by older sisters and brothers in the backyard, the green hose pipe curling itself up among the plants, the sound of several litres of urine being flushed down the toilet in the backyard, where its circular swashing motion competed with bundles of early morning hair awaiting its disposal, the sound of creaking floors as boys and men raised themselves from their place of sleep, the smell of fire as the stove brewed its first round of morning tea, the ravenous chirps of gulls circling the street for morning bread crumbs, the sound of peanut butter jars being emptied by eager hands clenching sharp knives, the smell of fresh tobacco as working women and men light their first weed, the aroma of freshly braised tumeric onions from homes already preparing the base for tonight's supper, the ripeness of tomatoes, onions, potatoes, Durban bananas, and Constantia grapes shining like jewels in Auntie Tiefa's cart, the disgruntled noises of dockyard men walking the charcoaled streets, their feet removing chips of wood and cigarette butts from the previous night's fire, their eyes looking ahead matching their place of work—the sea, with the sky above the heads—and spotless Table Mountain—grey with not a speckle of white on its top—these formed the backdrop of this early morning Black experience.

Rosa was searching for a place to hide until the streets were clear. She "morning Auntied" everyone in sight as women took their children across the street and set them on their way to school with older children from the neighbourhood and others carried their day's produce, bundled on their heads or packed in their carts for purchase, to Hanover Street. There was a regional meeting for teachers at George Golding Primary School and Mr Henson, Rosa's class teacher, was not attending the meeting and would be supervising their class the whole day. Mr Henson and Rosa had a history of conflict, where the former had asked for Rosa to be expelled from school. The female-child recollected her thoughts and smiled to herself, remembering how Mamma Zila, Rosa's maternal grandmother, had asked politely that Rosa be readmitted. Mr Henson, being a rather stern man who, on many occasions, demanded far too much respect than Mamma Zila thought he deserved, asked that Mamma Zila sign a written document for Rosa's conditional reacceptance and, in addition, state that Rosa was to behave

and do as she was told. Resenting his authoritarian tone, Mamma Zila held Mr Henson at the collar, lifted him out of his shoes, and insisted that Rosa be readmitted without conditions, mentioned a few of her relatives' names—suggesting a larger, family gang fight—and upon stating these, Rosa was reaccepted. Mr Franks, the principal, warned that if Rosa was found doing anything unlawful, like writing on walls, engraving graffiti on the wooden desks, influencing other female-children, or throwing stones, she would be expelled permanently.

Deciding where to run and hide was not very difficult at 7.30 in the morning. The men from Ospovat factory were all outside waiting for the two sirens before the start of their working day, the wooden chips on their overalls still visible from the previous day's work. The women one usually saw at 7.45 rushed towards the red-faced Mr Stowe waving their sandwiches to their white doorman and supervisor. For many of the men, it was their first opportunity to look between their prepared sandwiches and bargain with Auntie Tiefa for some tomatoes or maybe some homemade mango pickle. "Don't kick the bloody tins. You two boys better start walking before I come down with my stick. I mean right now you two devils." Motchie Tiema shouted at Wasfi and Ludwi to go to school. "Morning Motchie, the children being troublesome again," three men shouted. "Ai tog, you know when these boys start to grow hair on their balls." The men all laughed, shaking their heads in agreement and for fear of not wanting to disagree with Motchie Tiema. "See you men later, the beds are waiting for me." "Salaam Motchie," Auntie Tiefa greeted. "A leikom Salaam Tiefa. I'll give in my order on Thursday, the usual you know. Send Krislaam to Galiema from the Seven Steps." "Okay Motchie," replied Auntie Tiefa. The two women waved goodbye. Auntie Tiefa loaded the cart for the day's sales of fruit and veg. A few men gathered round to buy some fruit before Auntie Tiefa took off to Hanover Street. She hit their hands away and made sure that nobody was helping her load or themselves with fruit. "No focking hand-outs for anyborry. I dirint ask you to help, okay." Some of the men grumbled a bit and reluctantly they moved away. "Are you talking to me or chewing a brick Boetajie? Your father went with my father to the war, so don't try your kak here," Auntie Tiefa reprimanded the man. "No, no, no, Auntie T, it's time to leave now and the siren is going off any minute and I jus wannit to save you der trouble." "Gmmm! Okay take der tomato and skoot." And so they did. The men were pleased when the first siren rang and they could move towards the big white building. Children walking past the factory automatically kept their ears closed; others yawned the full duration of the siren—some exercising their jaws, others competing with the loud factory sound.

Rosa, hiding in the lane, pretending to fasten the buckle on her shoe saw the opportunity to run. The Free Dispensary van came to collect Uncle Tuckie. Mrs Hood and Auntie Flowers were standing at the door waiting for the driver to come to a halt and open the van. Both the women lifted Uncle Tuckie into the van, dragging his lame legs one at a time. Rosa noticed that the two women were dressed like they were going visiting or

shopping. Mrs Hood was not wearing her apron and Auntie Flowers wore her stockings. The elastic garters were visible to Rosa as she watched Auntie Flowers bend to lift Uncle Tuckie's legs. Hiding inside their house would be a wonderful idea, she thought. She could always leave and since nobody locked their doors anyway, it would be as easy as chewing bubblegum. Rosa removed her shoes, held them in one hand, and entered the home of Mrs Hood without the two women noticing. The second siren rang at 7.45 a.m. Now everybody would be inside attending to household chores. Auntie Raya was late, so was Mrs Benjamin. Both women were shouting at Mr Stowe to wait for them. "Meneer, we're coming now-now ... meneer." Mr Stowe smirked in his usual arrogant manner. Auntie Raya folded her apron and tucked it under her armpit, nodding thankfully to Mr Stowe for waiting on them. "Ai, Tuckie was really a handful dis morning, der man jus doan stop talking about der war." Mrs Hood stooped to pick up Uncle Tuckie's plastic gun and shook her head, still communicating to Auntie Flowers.

Rosa heard the two women coming into the house. She was at a loss for where to run to now. She ran into Mrs Hood's bedroom. Both women were approaching the kitchen, or maybe the bedroom. This she was not sure of as both rooms were close to one another. Rosa slipped under the bed. Ai no! Mrs Hood dirint take the pee-pot out yet, Rosa sighed, and cursed the sight of the urine-filled pot sitting boldly beside her. The female-child fitted her shoes like gloves into her hands and placed them, rubber facing downward, onto the floor. She soon realized that she would be needing both hands for protection. She wiggled them out slowly and stuffed the shoes in her unbuttoned bosom, placed both hands over her mouth like a mask and stared at the two pints of urine in the cast iron pot. She lay virtually immobile. When she lifted her head the diamond pattern wire from the bed caught her hair. When she tried to wiggle to each of her sides, the shoes, boxes, and other stacked away household goods prevented her from moving in the limited space. Auntie Flowers always dragged her feet and when Rosa could not hear them any longer she knew Auntie Flowers was standing still. Auntie Flowers placed herself on the unmade bed, right in the middle of it. Rosa's inquisitive face fitted neatly between the grown woman's legs. Auntie Flowers raised herself from the bed and walked towards the mirror. The springs above Rosa's head gave a bowful bounce, a salute which seemed appropriate since Uncle Tuckie's military boots seemed to ask for one. The urine pot got the stares from Rosa. Rosa's attention was soon fixed on Auntie Flowers who slowly removed the pins from her circular bound hair. Rosa had never seen Auntie Flowers with her hair down. Although Auntie Flowers was quite fond of her, now was not a good time to talk about Auntie Flowers' many hair pins. The child was silent. She was mesmerized by the sequence of events, most of which she would never have observed had she not sought the privacy of a small space under Mrs Hood's bed. Rosa's mouth fell open as she counted, "Aaah ... 15 ... 16 ... 17 ... 18 ... " Tasting the urine stench against her palate, she shut her mouth instantly, placing both her hands over her tight-lipped

mouth. She continued counting by nodding and memorizing so that she could remember to tell Nita and maybe write it on one of her favourite walls. Auntie Flowers started singing, "Wait by the river, wait by my side," as she brushed in long, silent strokes. She sang in a funeral voice, Rosa thought, the kind of voice that vibrates, makes waves, and causes for everyone to cry. Auntie Flowers' voice was deep and passionate. "Wait till the moon is right, wait up all night, wait till it's morning, come hold me tight, wait till we kiss good-night, come let's not fight." Opening and closing her mouth was more agonizing than Rosa had anticipated. She wished she had told Mamma Zila that she was ill and could stay home to watch Auntie Flowers under better conditions. The urine lay still in its place. Glancing at it reminded Rosa of how her excitement was hampered by its presence.

She watched carefully as Mrs Hood brought the metal bath into the bedroom. Mrs Hood moved towards Auntie Flowers and stroked the woman's hair. It was not unusual for Rosa to see Mrs Hood plant a kiss on Auntie Flowers' cheeks. This kiss was long and wanting. Auntie Flowers was still singing, "Wait till the birds are singing, wait till my heart is ringing." "Flowers, gimme a hand wit der water please." "Wait for the morning sun, wait till the birds are done." Auntie Flowers wrapped a towel around her hands and assisted Mrs Hood with the pot of hot water. Rosa heard the noises of the women's feet dragging the huge pot of hot water from the coal stove. As she waited for them to enter the room something started moving on her head. Rosa, for fear of missing out on the bathing events, shook her head sideways until the eight-legged creature fell to the ground. It was a small spider. Its presence distracted Rosa immensely. Auntie Flowers hated spiders and seeing one now would cause for her to run out of the house and for Mrs Hood to go running after this harmless creature, finding yet another under her bed—an eight-year-old, more dangerous one between her overdue urinal and her husband's military boots. Rosa grabbed the spider and placed it smilingly into the urinal. It died instantly. The two women had brought the big cast iron bath into the room. Mrs Hood kept pouring cold water into the bath. Rosa, in the meanwhile, found a pair of Uncle Tuckie's shoes and placed them over the urinal, preventing the smell from leaving its temporarily destined place. Auntie Flowers went into the backyard and came back with some lavender violets and yellow daisies. She gently removed the petals and threw them into the water. Although its floating glory was not visible to Rosa, the child smiled a pleasant smile, thinking that Auntie Flowers was finally going to announce the name of her love and ask, like female-children do, "He loves me yes, he loves me no, he loves yes?" and at the pluck of the last petal, a positive answer is blessed with a scream of joy. Instead, Auntie Flowers placed the last petal on Mrs Hood's head. The woman exhaled from deep within her bosom and blew the petal until it floated, then rested on her dress.

Rosa watched attentively as Mrs Hood undressed. Her dress was the first garment she lifted over her head. It fell softly to her feet. As Mrs Hood bent

to pick it up, Rosa saw Mrs Hood's kadoematjie.[1] Unlike Rosa's that was tied to her vest, Mrs Hood's was tied to her bosom. Her breasts were large and full and held her petticoat firmly. The woman removed her petticoat by removing her arms from the garment. This she did not pull over her head. She slipped it off her shoulders and wiggled around with both her hands between her legs. Without much ado, the full contents of Mrs Hood's underwear were removed and Rosa's mouth gaped open to meet its nakedness. It was Mrs Hood's belly that fascinated Rosa most. It was similar to Uncle Tommy's. His had scars of war, physical fights, operations, and many other journeys he had been on. Rosa thought about her geography lesson and how Mrs Hood's stomach resembled a map, with mountains and all. Mamma Zila's flesh was firm for her sixty years and she had no scars of any sort. And like Mamma Zila, Mrs Hood had not cupped her breasts either. It was their resistance to white settler-colonial culture and the need to remain untainted by it which was not observable or understood by the eight-year-old female-child, since she had rubbed her breasts with onions—a local remedy—with the hope that hers could soon fit a commoditised, prepackaged, cotton cup. Mrs Hood's skin was lighter than Mamma Zila's and Rosa could see her freckles clustering around the nipples. Rosa felt her own face and thought about how her freckles clustered around her nose, a small protrusion. Mrs Hood's were darker and clustered around her nipples, a larger, orally-celebrated protrusion. Mrs Hood's breasts lay straight against her belly and her warm fingertips gently soothed the clustered skin until the fullness of her nipple was visible to Auntie Flowers. It looked warm and comforting. Rosa was moving her hands around, thinking about how much the long extensions of breasts reminded her of her winter hand gloves—the ones she wore during July and August when her hands were sore and remained stiff, in snake-like position.

Auntie Flowers unbuttoned her dress and there, nakedly the two women faced on another, each with her own shape. Each put her left foot into the bath at the far side of it, allowing for some space for the right foot. Auntie Flowers was standing at the back of Mrs Hood, who had her arms round both of them so as to embrace Mrs Hood. As both women placed themselves in the bath, splashes of water fell to the floor and small lavender petals stuck to the outside of the bath. The two women remained locked together for quite a while, their silence perturbing Rosa greatly. Mrs Hood lifted her head backwards and placed it gently on Auntie Flowers' shoulders. Her clavicles made their appearance and her long grey hair made big circles on the nape of her neck, sculpturing her clavicles in a somewhat vivacious manner. The room was silent. Both women were breathing deeply. The release of their breaths shook the room. "Wooooooow," they both breathed out repeatedly. It was not like a voice lesson Mrs Jacobs gave, the female-child thought, this was very different. Auntie Flowers did not sing again and Mrs Hood held the woman behind her tightly. When Auntie Flowers moved forward keeping Mrs Hood at some distance from her, it enabled her to unlock herself from the firm grip she needed relaxation from. As she

removed Mrs Hood's arms and hands, she stroked them rhythmically, like the voetvrou[2] does with babies. The strokes were long and, unlike with babies whose strokes are accompanied by words of wisdom and pray, Auntie Flowers hummed a song. It was unfamiliar to Rosa who had her eyes fixed on Auntie Flowers' knees. They were round and big like Mamma Zila's and told Rosa that it was Auntie Flowers who did the scrubbing and polishing of floors in the house. Auntie Flowers stroked Mrs Hood's hair and made rings with it, placing water on the already curly bits. Some of the droplets nestled themselves onto Mrs Hood's lips. The two women put each's finger in the other's mouth. Rosa thought it was exciting to see grown women exchange spit. She wondered whether they did the same with food. Although this was an exchange of water, the female-child thought of it as equally defiant. Mamma Zila had warned Rosa so many times about exchanging food already chewed and Rosa thought about telling Mamma Zila about this incident.

The thought left her mind immediately as the gushing water jolted her attention to the two women exchanging places in a bathtub too small to contain one grown woman. They sat facing one another now and Rosa could only see Mrs Hood's back and some parts of Auntie Flowers. The urinal was beside her and although moving her head from right to left did leave room for greater vision, this did not quite fulfill the little girl's curiosity. It was the way in which Auntie Flowers cupped her hands and poured water over Mrs Hood's breasts that fascinated Rosa most. It reminded Rosa of Father John and baptism at St. Marks, where the family attended church regularly. Auntie Flowers did utter a few words— silent words, warm words, judging by the serene smile on Mrs Hood's face— although not exactly in the same tone as Father John. Both women's eyes were cast towards the ceiling. Are they talking to God? Rosa wondered, almost aloud. Both the women embraced one another tighter. The water squirted out between their legs and the overflow ran under the bed to meet the unwelcome gaze of Rosa's shoes, both of which were still stuck in her bosom. Suddenly, like a stroke of lightning, Mrs Hood raised herself. Rosa closed her eyes for fear of what was going to happen to her. With her eyes closed and waiting for her punishment, Rosa heard Mrs Hood's hands moving and grabbing something, then moving its contents swiftly with her hands. A ray of sunlight shone on the right side of Rosa's face. The sun, although not casting its fullest power, had enticed the woman towards the greater acceptance of its rays. Boldly she drew the curtains, wrapped them around her wet legs, and danced a child-like dance—a tantalizing, somewhat naughty teasing motion, while Auntie Flowers giggled. The rays of sunlight shone brightly on Auntie Flowers' face and enhanced the sharpness of her clavicles, its wetness bronzed like a medal, waiting patiently to be touched and admired. Mrs Hood's teeth met the temptation, sucking dearly at its warmth until blood filled the gaps between her teeth. Her kiss planted a red glowing print on Auntie Flowers' face and the woman's sparkling eyes made Dracula seem like a hopeless case for seduction against the wishes of frightened, chaste women. Both women ate graciously from the blood, their tongues curling with lust and their palates seeping with its nutritious contents. There was passion, love, admiration, an exchange of caring moments, stolen from the heavy load which the constraints of marriage bore. No body or blood of Jesus Christ could fulfill the spirituality of body, of being, that these two women felt and allowed themselves to indulge in.

As the blood coloured the water, Auntie Flowers scooped a handful and poured it over her face. Rosa's tilted face and opened mouth allowed for the sun to shine on her palate—it gulping the air from which these two love-drunk women breathed. Rosa's eyes were still; her body lay motionless. And like a mother feeds a child, Mrs Hood lifted her breasts from the waist up, holding onto their length with her knees while Auntie Flowers' mouth enveloped the quivering protrusions. Heavy breathing like a voice lesson, Rosa thought again, was the medium through which these two women communicated their desire. Mrs Hood's partner's desires were fulfilled and, slightly salivating, eyes closed, and fingers clenching the rims of the bathtub, Auntie Flowers moved her body forward, lifted her legs and feet out of the bath, and wrapped them around Mrs Hood. Auntie Flowers' feet, crossed one over the other, made a shape of a bow. Is this what Auntie Spider spoke about when she referred to white women being scared of Black women's powers and how our women can wrap men up like Christmas presents? It was no idle thought. Rosa lay watching every movement of Auntie Flowers' toes, each cracking joint succumbing to the vibrant touch of its beholder. She recognized the visual image implanted in her mind, one created by the words of Auntie Spider, also known as Auntie Legs, who regularly told stories about Black women's sexuality to girls in the neighbourhood, preparing them for their approaching womanhood. Is this like sex? the female-child asked herself, having been told that it being when a woman allows a man into her vagina.

Slowly Mrs Hood moved her head back as her breasts extended themselves into the mouth of her lover. Auntie Flowers bore no resemblance to a child any longer. Her whole body was wrapped around Mrs Hood who accepted its passionate, lubricious glory. Both women held each other close and kissed every freckle, every inch, every part of the other's face. Rosa lay still, motionless, with a smile on her face. There were no hands visible to Rosa; but, to the women who each had their folds unfolded, stroked, and stimulated, the organs attached to their arms fulfilled every libidinal desire. Transmitting their otherwise clandestine sexual appetite, their voracious tongues sweeping every morsel. Several soft cries were muttered, then louder ones filled the room—each with distinctive sound and echo from all of the four flabbergasted lips—then a cry of relief, accompanied by laughter and softer outcries, each intermittent one exhaling more joy than the one before.

There was a knock on the door. Both women looked at one another. The knocker decided to let itself into the house—a common practice—to see what was keeping the inhabitants of the house from answering. Remembering their arrangements for a ride to Hanover Street, both women

gasped, looked towards the window to access the brightness of the light—telling the time of day—and answered the caller. "Just wait Peter, we're getting dressed." Rosa could hear the person stopping in their tracks. "Okay, Mrs Hood, I jus wannit to know if you ladies were ready for Hanover Street." It was Peter Jantjies, a neighbour who worked at the dockyard and sold fish to the vendors in Hanover Street. He was taking several women down to Hanover Street and offered women in the neighbourhood the option of selecting the finest pieces of fish and, on occasion, would give them a ride in his cart. Both women raised themselves simultaneously and silently hugged as the water ran over their firmly held arms. The towels brushed their skin lightly and slowly, reluctantly, both women clothed themselves in silence. Mrs Hood opened her wardrobe, groped among the many items, removed her money cloth, and clutched it under her arm. It had several knots in it and the woman, feeling a bit of discomfort, removed the cloth and relocated certain portions. In the far right corner the rent money lay knotted until the end of the month; in the far left corner lay the food knot, which did not include money for purchasing fish. Mrs Hood located the fish knot just below it, its proximity strategically placed so that, whenever possible, small transfers could be made, especially since Peter was the more gullible peddler and known for his kindness, and sometimes, not often, the money scored on bargaining would be used for buying stockings and rose water. Peter left the door open and Rosa could hear him calling women in the neighbourhood. The two women lifted their tub of passion and released it in the backyard, where the water removed splints of wood and took them down the drain. Auntie Flowers and Mrs Hood departed and met Peter at the door, each lifting herself individually into the cart and assisting Peter with the calling of their equally late peers.

Rosa was relieved that she was finally alone to make decisions about the rest of her day. She removed herself slowly from under the bed, looked around to absorb her surroundings since she had not been able to enjoy them laying under the bed. The female-child giggled softly to herself, then louder and louder until the sound filled the room with panic. She became silent, bit her lip, pouted a bit, and nodded to herself. "It's a secret and noborry knows anyting," she uttered. It had dawned upon her to speak to one of her many walls—her companions—and this event needed to be recorded. Rosa walked into the backyard and placed herself on the concrete step, pulled her dress down so as to protect her body from the coldness of the cement bricks and sat down. She stared at the wetness of the cement floor seeing the reflections of the two lovers whom she had thought, and people in the neighbourhood thought, were cousins. She undid her buckled shoes, removed her socks, and stuck her right toe into the wetness. She pulled it back instantly still staring at the reflection of her thoughts. Did she now partake in this event by placing a part of her body into the water? Several thoughts occupied her mind, most of which seemed to suggest that the events she had just witnessed were for secrecy. She raised herself almost graciously, in adult fashion, and found a piece of wood at the back

of the yard and took a splint from the dry log. Having pricked her finger, as she usually did when writing on walls and implanting her print, she swore to secrecy and vowed never to talk about the events she had witnessed. She remembered Mamma Zila's words: "Child, when you grow older, you'll find out that there are some things you just doan talk about." Rosa had always thought this a strange saying since everybody exchanged stories and, as far as the female-child knew, there were no secrets—only ones not told to white people, if you worked for them.

Touching her nipples and remembering the fullness of Mrs Hood's breasts, she climbed over the wall and rested herself among the wooden logs in Mrs Benjamin's backyard. There was nobody home and she could climb all the walls to the end of the street, and when the sun shone way over Ospavat indicating that it was twelve noon, Rosa would go to the Hopelots forest and play in the trees, where she could again see where the sun was, wait for the sirens to sound after lunch and return home promptly, as expected.

1. **Kadoematjie:** A piece of cotton cloth filled with earthly soils, herbs, plants, and indigenous mixtures. The cloth is sewn together and worn around children's (and sometimes, adults') necks and most times pinned to their vests or any piece of underwear. It is meant to protect children from harm and colonial evil.

2. **Voetvrou:** A woman who delivers babies and who is known for walking the streets fulfilling her role in the community.

Patricia M. Wourms

Sheets

I think it an odd
coincidence
that I have s e x
and change the sheets
once a month.
I try to do it
more often
but the other sheets
are usually in
the dirty clothes
pile.
If I were to buy another
set
I'd just leave them downstairs
longer.

I prefer the patterned
sheets
they hide the dirt better.

My mother used to
h a n g our on l i n e
sheets the
they always smelled crisp
and white.
Imagine—white sheets
with five kids
dirty feet
menstrual blood.

Once I tried to have s e x
after two weeks.
I fell and hurt my knee.
I'm sure it was because
I hadn't changed
the s h e e t s on the bed.

Sisters

The walls are white
hot white
white hot
the windows—if there are any
are six inches from the ceiling
and they're grey
steel grey.

As soon as I open the door
she rushes over.
"Oh, just look at the dresses I've found . . .
Does this one look good on me?"
She treats me like her sister.
I am her sister
in some sort of feminist way.
I tell her
"No, that one's too dark for summer."
She tries on skirts over
her skirt
The longer ones reach to the
top of her heavy laced up
winter boots
and it looks absurd.

The pills are taken out
red and green
green and red
they take away thoughts
but the pain remains
and the table is covered
with a cloth
a wet cloth.

"I don't like them low cut,"
she tells me.
"And I need some skirts for summer too.
Oh, this would be good
for me—or for
you if you like it."
The clerk and I look
at each other across the room
and we smile.
Her hair is streaked with
grey and her dark eyes
dart around—clear but unfocused.
I'm not sure what to do.
"That matches nicely," I say.

The hands on the clock move
clockwise
counter-clockwise
marking an endless day
an endless night
the ladies in white move
in
and out.

I pay for my dresses.
"What about this one? Is it
good for summer?"
she draws me in again
It's great I say—but it's
gaudy and dull and I
don't know why I lied.
I don't want to leave. I
want to sit on that lime
green couch by the window
and watch.
The door sticks, it's
tough to open. Something
is asking me to stay.
I start my car but I want
to go back—my
sister is inside buying skirts
and dresses in a second hand store on
13th Avenue.

The papers are signed
Black on white
white on black
She's really not that sick
they say
but she's all alone
she has no home
and the buses don't run on
Sundays or holidays.

6:45

I can still remember
my sister going to the bathroom
to delay either washing
or drying dishes
to this day
she still goes to the bathroom
at 6:45.

I still remember
those perfect summer nights
denim cut-offs,
halter tops without breasts
football on the lawn across the street
with a family of boys
trying to get started
before 6:45.

I can remember
butter tart mix running down
the kitchen wall
evidence of the latest fight,
echoes through a hole in the door
the shape of a hockey stick
trying to calm the others down
sometime after 6:45.

I remember
how dad would leave his place
in front of the television
any time anything erotic came on
and that included
kissing.

I also remember
when my sister called to say
"I'm getting married."
And I said—it's your life . . .
Now she's divorced and I'm married.
I'm not sure but I think
she called at 6:45.

I can still remember
how
after all these years
I don't
like
kissing.

Thuong Vuong-Riddick

A Famous Vietnamese Song

On the way to Nice we camped
with just our sleeping bags, we lay in the field.
It was the first time I had slept in the open,
just before the firmament.
I remember the scent of lavender,
the growing ecstasy I felt,
attracted to the stars,
I understood then
how wonderful it would be
to explore in the universe, to be part of it.

In Nice we stayed at the students' residence.
There, the flowers had a fragrance
like those in my home country.
During the day we studied *The Wasteland.*
At night: the songs, the love songs of the students.

One afternoon at nap time I had a vision
of a boat going down a river without a shore,
I heard a plaintive voice, someone
crying or lamenting.

I described to a friend what I'd seen
on my closed blinds and she told me
I'd seen *The Boat Without A Shore.*

I must have heard the song when I was little;
I must have memorized that ghost-boat;
that voice moaning in the night.

Remembering Spring

I think of the sunny country
When it is howling
When blizzard from Alaska
pours its tremendous anger
Pulls trees and roofs
lakes and fountains are frozen
icicles forming inside my windows

I think of the sunny country
inside me
When it snows like this
When the wind makes us curl under our coats and makes us run,
I think of this spring that will never come
In so many friends I knew
In so many lives stopped suddenly

Their spring which was stolen from them
Their spring that never comes

The astrologer

In Saigon there was a famous astrologer
That everybody consulted
Then all of a sudden
He started to predict foreign countries

Students, the rich, the ordinary
And even the poor, and disinherited.
To all, he predicted, "You will travel overseas"

We all laughed
And said on gloomy days;
"Let us go to the astrologer's little shop
So that he can look into our future,
Our fabulous destinies!"

Twenty years latter, we look back
And all of us who left Vietnam
Remember the astrologer, who once said
A whole country was going overseas

Blue/Red/Mad

(Fragments from a diary)

Éva A. Székely

I turned thirty-two yesterday. In downtown Toronto, Canada. A Hungarian by birth, a Jew by circumstance, an immigrant for twelve years. The thirty-second anniversary of my birth was marked by a dream—a dream unfinished, as usual; unsettling, as almost always.

Yellowish plastic floor patterned to imitate the waves of sea I saw as I looked down at my feet. America. I knew it was there I was. America of an age perhaps not arrived but on its way, approaching as the moulded ripples forced my gaze.

It was sterile in the apartment. Nothing smelled, nothing seemed to move, to breathe, to make noise, to colour, to give a feel of something alive. It could have been a game of fantasy. But no, it was real, only it did not seem so. There were people coming, more and more people came, yet the place did not appear crowded. They were arriving, silently, some smiling. Smiling plastic smile. They grabbed a drink. Walked around. Stopped. Moved their lips as if talking. Only nothing was heard. Conversations were happening.

A man was asleep on a sofa, in the middle of the apartment that had no partitions. He, too, was silent and, motionless. I walked to what seemed like the edge of this apartment with no definite shape, to the balcony. It had very railing, and people walked around the railing, with drink in hand, lips moving. It wasn't a balcony, after all, for on the other side the floor continued. The floor there was green, imitation lawn wall-to-wall carpet.

Where was I? What was this? A scene from a novel I used to illustrate a

point in my thesis? But what point? I thought as hard as I could. It was then that looking down at my feet I noticed a yellow plastic moulded floor. I tried to conjure up, page after page, my thesis. Nothing. Wait, this isn't a scene from a novel, this is a play! My thesis is a play, and we are all performing it now!

Plastic yellowish mould. People coming and going. Liquid-filled glasses in hand. I am looking around; not a speck of dust, a strip of paper or morsel of food to be found. So sterile. The eyes of people: polite and cold. Here and there lips—dismembered and curled at the edges.

Perfect. The perfect appearance. Of nothing. No fears, tears, pain, or boredom. Just nothing. No one seemed to mind, no one but me. This was home, but not to me. Strange? No. Alien? A bit, and even worse: vacuous *and* cold.

* * *

I woke up to be thirty-two. Mt cats were there. Our cats. And the escalators a few streets away, as if right in bed with me. And the cars and the trucks. They were all there as the day before. Only now I was thirty-two. In ambivalent possession of a couple of degrees, going for another. And jobless.

Hours later. Appearance–women–work–class. Work. No work—das Nichtzuhausesein/not-at-homeness–anxiety. Where to from here? What is there to do instead of work? Where do I find it? What do I do when I have looked and looked and looked and found none? I can't make work. I simply cannot do "make work," a job.

Who needs me? Maybe this is not the question. But what is?

* * *

An immigrant is not a stranger. Having gone away some place different for a while, to a place where customs, everyday affairs, and perhaps even the language were new, is not analogous to being an immigrant. The immigrant, at best, can feel accepted, taken in, as a boarder in a boarding house, as long as she can afford to pay. The boarder—usually—has to be grateful for having been allowed in.

Everything says, "You don't belong, you're merely tolerated." Even the trees, the earth, rivers, and rocks speak that sense. Perhaps underneath the earth the immigrant belongs—to the worms. We might know more about the geography and the political system of the country than some of the people born and raised here, and recite the words of the national anthem forward and backward, but we never belong.

Some of us were taken in for political reasons. Not *our* political reasons but those of the new country. Some of us were taken in for more obviously economic considerations. All of us were taken in because it serves some interests of the host country, interests that rarely—if ever—coincide with those of the immigrant.

The blue machines of the host country are spitting ice. No wonder I am cold most of the time.

I try to keep warm. I put on a sweater, one of the articles I obtained from the "free store" in the building where I live. How long will I live here, I wonder. How soon before I am no longer a student, still jobless and then homeless as well? It seems almost inevitable.

I like fires and I like trees. Even dried-out dead ones. Still, I will also burn them. To be warm, warm beneath the skin, warm all over inside. To imagine. To fantasize—even at a candlelight.

* * *

Yesterday I gazed into the light of a single candle and I travelled through the part of the world—my world, the world they say we share. Do we? Someone wrote, "Look into my eyes, reach out with your hands, realize—finally—that you're not alone." It's a struggle; it's a struggle to know that I am not alone.

The everydays. Getting up in the morning. Waking to the realization that here is another day to face without a job. Without a a sense of what is to become of my life. Some vague ideas about the directions in which I may scramble. Nothing takes a clear shape, I can only conjure up blotches, amorphous, greyish configurations to force my day into some semblance of a structure that may release me from feeling that my life is completely beyond my control.

The everydays. I have finished writing my dissertation. Last chapter, last words on the paper, maybe. It does not feel like a big deal. Another degree in the drawer: "Doctor of Something." And jobless. I have been at it for ten months, no it's been a year. Handed in dozens of applications—it's hard to keep track. I had, I think, seven interviews. No job offers. I can't get used to the idea that tomorrow and the day after and after that day I would keep looking and finding nothing. I used to be angry and determined to "fight"; I have a hard time now staying determined. I have been told by "caring others" that this was a "technical matter"; the task is to convince the prospective employer that you "fit the glove." That it simply requires "know-how" of "packaging and selling yourself." (I don't think packaging and selling were meant in quotation marks.) And that I really should not get all wrapped up in how dehumanizing this whole process is. "We all have to do it," I was told. Is that supposed to mean that because this is the "normal" process, it's not dehumanizing? And I should not be angry and depressed?

I think back at the past ten–eleven years of full-time study; I wonder how I could have foreseen what was in store for me, and what I could done differently. I don't know. I don't find "the field" I thought I entered; psychology has changed. People I wanted to work with, the people in the back wards of hospitals, no longer get to see the psychotherapist. "It is not cost-effective," I have learned. Those times I get mad at myself for thinking that I could have predicted the situation

Everydays—this is their general shape. These thoughts and the looking at ads and asking people about possible jobs and sending out yet another resumé with a cover letter. Receiving yet another letter of "Thank you for your interest, but no . . . Not qualified . . . Found someone more suitable, experienced, etc., etc." I resolve to write grant applications and contemplate leaving this wonderfully free country for good. Being in its "wonderfully aristocratic institutions . . . not proletarian like in Eastern Europe" (as one professor who interviewed me for a job put it), I often feel sick. Listening to its wonderfully simple-minded, distorted and at all times wonderfully manipulated news makes me afraid. Afraid that beyond a handful of people I will never be able to talk to anyone, no one will understand my discontent and rage. Or those who do, will also only dare to whisper their understanding. Afraid of being labelled "crazy" who belongs in the "nut house."

* * *

I had a dream many years ago when I lived in Montreal. I dreamt I was in a nut house. My best friend came to see me. He was not allowed in, but he found the cell in which I was put up. The cell had a window through which we could talk. He was presenting me with an elaborate plan for my escape from this place. I tried to tell him that I did not want to leave for I'd end up back there anyway. I hate what's outside my cell, and if I re-entered that world out there I could not tolerate my life. But he kept on talking, talked through my words without listening to what I had to say.

Psychopathology, I read, is the best choice a person can make under very difficult circumstances. It is a choice that one keeps making in the face of a world that does not listen—perhaps dare not listen—to what one must say, so that one does not have to make that choice. Yet, most (so-called) helping professionals I have met do not understand that craziness is a (forced) choice, sometimes the best one can make. For them, a person is not depressed because her life is rather depressing and devoid of hope for it being any different. No, she is depressed because depression is in her blood chemistry. She was born to be predisposed toward illness [sic], and accidental circumstances triggered her breakdown. Neat, safe explanation. No need to look at the world, at her misery-creating situation. And no need to look at ourselves.

* * *

The everydays. They pass, mostly in our sixteenth-floor, small, one-bedroom apartment. The garbage chute is next door. Cockroaches wander in and out, they jump on top of the kitchen counter, run along the walls, and hide and lay eggs between napkins and cereal boxes. When I go to dump the trash, I smell decomposing vegetables and diapers. The plaster is peeling off the walls. For months we lived in nearly constant, though varying types of, noise. "Necessary repairs, you would agree," they say. New students from a nearby college, perhaps trying to outdo the neighbouring pubs' customers and shrieking motorcycles, fire engines, and ambulances, scream into the night. Are they trying to tell the world they are also here and not wanting to be forgotten?

I see the same bagladies and beggars and ex-psychiatric patients in the

streets I walk every day. I am afraid to talk to them. I am afraid of what they might tell me, I do not want to hear. They are one of the underworlds on the surface of the earth, and we pretend we do not see them. They ask for bus tickets that they can later exchange for beer. They sell "bedtime reading for average Canadians." (The sign has changed several times lately.) A woman sits with her legs spread wide on Yonge Street and when you look at her she sticks her tongue out. Another woman appears to be sleeping on plastic milk crates, surrounded by a dozen or so plastic bags—all her belonging.

One summer morning (as I am waiting for my "shrink session" paid for by OHIP) a young-looking woman sits on the bench next to me by one of the university buildings in a big overcoat, with a brown blanket under her arm, fishing for a cigarette in her coat pocket. She finds one and lights it. Her hands are shaking. Under a bright blue sky I watch other women rushing to work in pretty summer dresses. And over there, on the sidewalk, as on most sunny days, sits this man of uncertain age. Guitar case open by his feet, cigarette in mouth, an old transistor radio by his side, he's watching people when he is not asleep. I have never heard him ask for "change for coffee," nor have I heard him play his guitar. The one near the museum, always in the same red jacket and slippers, eating french fries and wiping his face with his free hand. . . .

I can't see them from my window, but I can see them everywhere, like the bag ladies of New York City, fighting for a corner in the wall to make their abode for the night, and ones woken and kicked out of Central Station every half-hour by the police. And at the university we speak of "growth" and "self-actualization" and "consciousness raising." Our growth, our self, our consciousness, and those most similar to us. We, the future educators and helping professionals—those who will be able to "make the glove fit"?

* * *

Stretched between birth and death, in a space that—more often than not—is isolating and lonely, we exist: bag ladies, beggars, ex-psychiatric patients, those with and without jobs, those who "need" them, those who don't. We try to make friends, some of us do. Friendships dissolve when we can't stomach our anxieties and real differences, when we can't form the other in our own image, and when the other leaves or "changes" or dies. We exist with parents who seem to rule our lives, towering over us without understanding or accepting that we are not them or like them. That we cannot be like them, or what they want us to be. With silences, they keep the fire of guilt burning. Their silence is a ceaseless reminder of us having failed them. Our lives, supposedly, belong to them. Our future, without doubt, must be one that pleases them. They have lived through us and refuse to see that such lives are deaths for all involved. Parents—themselves miserable women and men—trying to hold on to the semblance of the only power they ever knew.

Many of us respond to the oppression by having children of our own,

with resolve to never do onto them as their parents had. And alas, the children end up feeling guilty and struggling to break loose. I don't blame them, the parents. I am only mad at them. And—I hope I shall never be one myself. In our pitiful, miserable world, who could be substantially different from the old "authority?"

* * *

Parents and candles. Today is the first day of Jewish New Year. If I were to commemorate it, how many candles would I light? My sister says, as many as there are in the family. I don't know if it means as many as actually present (or alive) from the family. This ignorance annoys me. I never light candles to celebrate religious holidays, but I wish I knew the history and the rituals.

I got up to light a candle. It's red and round, the size of an apple. Not like the apple in *Zabriskie Point* that was the size of a baby's head. That was an American Apple, the bigger-the-better kind, the look-what-we-can-produce kind, just like the sandwich the woman ordered on the deli and munched driving the car before she bit into the apple. I remember that movie vaguely. The name of the river, Anyway River, and the scene where all beautiful people appeared to make love, "back in nature," on the side of a blue-grey mountain.

This is a Not–American-Apple candle. It's been lit by a Not–North-American, even though she has been a citizen (a "naturalized citizen"—what does it mean?) in a North American country. This "naturalized citizen" cannot punctuate in English, often uses words incorrectly, and, according to at least one person-in-power (relative to her position as a student, of course), she turns nouns into verbs which is "clearly" incorrect. Furthermore, she idealizes "working class" (and forgets to hyphenate working-class) and Non–North-American (people or societies?). I read between the lines, she is an ungrateful and rebellious immigrant. Dear Dr. AB, when was the last time you thought about who you were, in relation to the rest of the world, beyond your list of publications, invited presentations, and sweet smile in public?

Smiles. I distrust them. They tell me, "Come near me and you will smell terror. Come near me and your defeat will be my glory. Come near me so I won't have to ask, who and what I am." I like faces with lines, lines of thought and pain, lines of labour, lines of age. I don't like pink, except in flowers, and I don't like youth, except when it is seen and admitted as always in passing. Eternity and promises and forgiveness I do not like.

* * *

The red candle. It sits on a blue platform. Nothing that is alive is like this blue. It's the blue of inanimate objects. There could never be a blue like this in a flame.

The blue of wheat flowers, the wild flowers growing in wheat fields is "my blue." The blue of the sky in September above the high school I attended. And perhaps the blue of the sea by the Greek Islands I have never

seen. Those are my blues, the ones that can be blown by winds, that change their colour, that fade and sometimes disappear. The ones for which I must wait patiently. Years might go by before they show themselves again.

* * *

It rained when I went to KC for an interview. I should have known. What should I have known, though? That it was going to be interrogation, not an interview? Spanish Inquisition in the "free world" for a teaching post? "So why did you leave Hungary," for six hours? Rather than asking me straight what they wanted to know: "Are you religious, are you a marxist, and what kind of a woman are you anyway?" No guts, no, these questions cannot be asked in the "free world." God forbid, I might have answered them straight.

* * *

Bob Dylan, he did not know that the immigrant is not to be pitied. She hates pity, and she also hates tears, even though she might cry. He was wrong in thinking that what was important was that the immigrant "hates his life" and "fears his death," both of them passionately. What the immigrant, at least this one, hates is the prohibition against doing anything passionately. Hate or love or whatever. It's the myth of "normality" I hate.

(May - October, 1985)

messages/(glass)

Alisa Gordaneer

angela took me there, and i was just be-coming then so i didn't learn until later—that first time and the only time i've ever been there that i didn't feel like a piece of shit later. stuff there that i look back on (what i can remember) the next morning and dammit swear i'll never go and do something like that again (until the next time that seems to come like me too soon. at first, angela said hold on to me, babe, we'll have a blast, just see . . . that night the moon was full out, and they say that ol' goddess-rock up there makes people do weird stuff—i'd be pretty sure to bet she does, cause it's as good a reason as any to explain why i did anything at all. . . .

so there we were, and i'd had a few drinks of something they called draft but tasted worse, and angela was blowing her smoke in my face everytime she turned to me, everytime she stopped undressing the room long enough to know i was there . . . angela undressing with long, piercing glances, like she did to me at night when she wanted everything, and wanted it fast. angela undressing, fast angela, and then there was me, breathing hard to catch up. from those drafts, she looked cold, was cold when i touched her shoulder. she said not now, don't touch me and kept undressing the room, subtly, i knew she was longing for touch and i wouldn't let her feel me and my presence, why did she bring me at all? she let go my thigh, the imprint of her hand was red when i went to pee the next time. she was gone. i, island in a sea of bodies i didn't i know but could if i tried, tried real hard or not at all, they too all there for one reason? angela gone, music throbbed into my guts, my blood, i couldn't stand it anymore, lost like a floating something, a bottle with a message never washing up on shore or any other

place, waves lapping like tongues all the time, me not knowing what the message inside really says. . . .

angela behind a pillar, she knew i could see her hiding and didn't care if i did, i could tell by the look on her face. i went over, annoyed her but didn't let her cow me into leaving the room while she undressed this one, (seductive in a t-shirt and i could've ripped it off myself. what did i want, did i really want, did i really? another draft and another draft, cold breeze from angela and i couldn't watch, (had she brought me here to show me this?

the only night i didn't feel like shit after. the only one. i didn't feel like shit, only angela, she started there and then the reason i left was the bruise she gave me . . . she began, undressing the t-shirt, who looked at me like i *was* a piece of shit, not just looked like one. a moment snapped, no draft but a real hurricane: the bottle hit floating debris, the seal broke for good like virginity and angela beginning to seep in like creeping mildew in the shower at home, salt astringent that i could feel—eat me away inside, angela, who did you say was loved? angela, did you say *was loved*? angela, did you say loved? angela creeps inside me, a festering sore, angela who began like her name . . .

why shouldn't i, she said, trying the t-shirt's tits and nuzzling her neck, growling at me like a cat with a piece of meat—vegetarianism, ha, she got her meat anyway. me or her, we'd never give and take at once . . .

i wanted to see her live down here, alive in this place, her other home, so i came, or had she brought me? you wanted to come, she said, if believed her, you wanted to come so bad you started writhing on the floor and what could i do but make you come, with or without me . . . now you're here, you get what you asked for, and you can't complain, can you? writhe on the floor, now . . . the t-shirt takes her lips, i can't complain, i deserve no better, asked for this? she says so. the message eats away my insides, turning bottle-green.

angela turns me on, angela turns on me. the t-shirt is peeing, i down another draft, bought by angela, she's trying to make me forget. forget to remember—, i can't quite—, and is she—? sentences elude me, time goes in circles or not at all, and angela puts her hand between my legs to make time stand still until . . . draft to her lips, draft from her lips, hurricane and tornado force, tsunami of beer and every natural disaster imaginable, my body reels, but i'm not in it: words, angela's words, they're angry, and what have i done? it's my fault, i know, there's no other reason, angela can't be wrong, she just can't be, she's angela? i won't let her be wrong . . .

i have to count to see if i have all my teeth left, with my tongue to twenty-eight and someone is helping me from the floor. i try to tell her there's blood on her shirt, i know blood red when i see it, especially on a white shirt . . . i can't speak, or i can . . . ? no words come out. only sounds, and then not too much of those. angela's somewhere else, the t-shirt is with her. the t-shirt returns, helps mop the blood (off (my face) which is mine) . . .

shit. not that night. the only night i didn't feel like shit . . . i went home, dark comfort, by myself and quiet, i could see the light of home before i

arrived, on and off like beacon to floating bottle—before i got there, waves of dark, in over my head, i swam on concrete, cool like the ocean and colder, colder—i woke and knelt, dewed grass, shivering and wet, (misplaced mermaid. the light kept going on and off, lighthouse, (i flow to the door) floating . . .

angela's there, she turns on the light, turns it off. she's by the door, waiting. she only wears a t-shirt. the house is trashed, she did it, she's got a look that says terror. she's got a knife in her hand, she lets me in and the look is not undressing but dressed and it knows what it's doing. it's my fault, i'm late, i drank and she left. the t-shirt i recognize, the t-shirt is not with her: did she see the carnage of my bookshelves, did she help? did she throw the eggs from kitchen to floors, to windows i won't clean later? there is broken glass in the bed, broken bottles . . .

angela raises her hand, the knife glints. you can't leave, she says, i have no other bed, made in love and in broken glass—i turn, i run. angela stays, blood red, her knife craved flesh—no vegetarian, her meat was me. knife lost one flesh, found another, angela blood red in the morning when i returned and thought she'd be gone . . .

the only night i didn't feel like shit. angela lives, in me, not with me anymore, i'm a cairn for her, a living monument to the only night i didn't feel like shit—angela alive, i have become her, i know this. did angela feel like this? my knife seeks flesh, it's unsatisfied. (i know why. i feel.

how could i let this happen. how could i. how could this happen. how could this . . . how could i . . . how could i let this . . . could this happen?

angela is asleep now, the message which is her, which is her dream, is in her. i am still cold, hard as glass on ocean floor. angela is awake now, in me, after the only night i didn't feel like shit . . . the only night i didn't feel. . . .

Virginia Dansereau

Pinioned

Well now that's done: And I'm glad it's over.
—T.S. Eliot *(The Wasteland)*

Fish still attached to the bones
on her dinner plate
wine half-drunk
she begins to speak rapidly of devotion:
Hopkin's to beauty
    outer being inner
Eliot's to simplicity
    complicated by allusion
and Yeat's to unity
thought mind-hammered

The words mean nothing to him—
contain no mathematic or scientific logic
But she exudes passion
Rote perhaps predictable
No matter
It is passion and makes him swell
with passion of his own

He takes her hand leads her
to the sheepskin by the fire
As he always does
As always
she follows him times
the beat of his wings above her
to the chorus
of the black-winged women
who transformed her into this Leda:
    It is a sin
    to kiss your boyfriends
    too long and hard
    my dears
    or to refuse
    your kind husbands

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another little secret

he only grabbed her
pulled her into the boy's toilet
the smell dank and fecal
and forced a hand
between her thighs
his fingers moving
to a beat
she had never heard

for years afterward
that beat
and the beat of his words
this is our little secret
broke the rhythm in her step
jolted her upright at night
pounded bullets of revenge
into her brain

in another time another room
another child
squeezes her eyes shut
clenches her teeth
and spreads her legs
still plump with baby fat
because she is daddy's girl
and he needs her

Then and Now

The good old days, she mutters
as a dark cloud of memory drifts
across her bony face. Lingers.
They can keep them.
She shakes her grey curls.
Looks around for her bi-focals.
Women have education now.
None in those days. My parents say:
'Girl don't need school to dig Seneca roots.'

I pick up the glasses from her night table,
their cat's eye frames neatly folded,
and hand them to her.
She hooks each
of the plastic arms onto her ears
and pushes the bridge high
on her nose.
she adjusts them on her ears.
A line of sunshine playing on her crimpled lips,
she chuckles,
then reads to me—
excerpts from the Bible
in Ukrainian
and headlines from the Western Producer
in English.

Fucking In The Air

Marusia Bociurkiw

Every woman I'd ever slept with showed up in Vancouver for the Gay Games. It was an accident, of course. Giselle said, "What if they all meet for lunch?"

It was August. It was very hot. Sunlight ricocheted from the ocean to the pavement and up into our skins. I got an eye infection; I had trouble seeing. I was dazzled by the light and by the sight of so many lesbians. I got nervous and had to take a lot of coffee breaks. Nadia said, "Don't worry. Soon, things will be back to normal and all the lesbians will be invisible again."

Jamie was a jock. We only slept together once—during the coldest night of the year. It was cold for February, so cold that if you went outside, you got a headache. Despite or perhaps because of this, the women's bars were full every night. We were coming home from Café Sappho one evening and I didn't have mittens. "Come to my house," said Jamie, "and I'll lend you mittens." That should have been a warning: Jamie never knew how to say what she wanted.

The Gay Games began with an opening ceremony. The Lesbian and Gay Freedom Bands of America marched around a huge stadium that had been built by developers' money off the backs of 10,000 homeless people. I sat in the stands with my girlfriend and 20,000 other queers. With great bravado, I put one arm around her shoulder and drank beer with the other. I cheered and hooted; I said to my girlfriend, "I feel normal!" It was a joke, of course, and she laughed in her indulgent way, while her body braced itself against my sarcasm. So, silently, I wondered whose freedom we were

celebrating—in a country that had long ago been occupied by America. I rubbed my girlfriend's back and tried to see the ceremony through her cool blue eyes. For a moment, I saw 20,000 queers feeling good about themselves and, in a campy sort of way, pretending to be normal. When Jamie marched in with the Ontario contingent (which was only one-twentieth as big as the one from Minnesota), I cheered again.

Jamie was agile. She had wrapped her legs around my stomach, licked my cunt, and tickled my toes—all at the same time. As she fell asleep, she whispered something simultaneously feminist in spirit and sexy in attitude, something about the anti-free trade demo we had been at the previous week and about getting so wet it showed through her pants. Jamie was versatile, but she couldn't say she wanted me. So, she acted like she did and necked with me quite pleasantly after Coalition Against Economic Repression meetings. But she never let me into her bed again. I invited her to my apartment after Lesbians For Choice meetings; she always shrugged and said maybe. The Coalition disbanded; we got our free-standing abortion clinic; and Jamie and I didn't speak for a year and a half.

Even though I was on holiday, I set my alarm clock for seven a.m. because I didn't want to miss anything. There were movies and softball; videos, poetry readings, and parades; gay men lounging in sidewalk cafés; lesbians buying peaches and take-out coffee in Portuguese corner stores; and faggots who had never met before sitting together in the backs of buses laughing loudly. Taking some time out, my girlfriend and I went to an aquarium on the other side of town to see the dolphins. There were at least nine other lesbians there, peering into the pale blue water. We saw two women necking in front of the shark tank. It was real, of course, but it seemed like an obvious metaphor too.

I got very tired. I don't know if it was because of the long hours, the sensory overload, or because I was running into every woman I'd ever slept with.

I saw Mercury out of the corner of my eye at the delicatessen on Commercial Drive. She was buying chorizo. I guessed she wasn't vegetarian anymore, but I couldn't ask her because we weren't speaking. Mercury was a performance artist, most renowned for her lesbian three-ring circus which featured trapeze artists who fucked in the air. Through the grapevine she had heard that I had been on an arts council jury that had denied her funding. I had never been on a jury in my life. But we let the grapevine speak for us through its twisting, menacing tendrils. One day we made an appointment through our phone machines to talk and straighten things out. She never showed up.

Mercury had been rough and clever in bed—biting, wrestling, and laughing. It was a summer affair: our skin sweated into each others' pores. She was very straightforward, insisted we use safe sex, and never looked me in the eye when we made love. When we first met, we had dates and discussions about art and long phone calls. "I've grown fond of you," she said. We began to be friends, then we fell into bed; our friendship became fragile. She would call, then she wouldn't. She would hug me when she

saw me; then she wouldn't, then she would.

"Just say hello and get it over with," said my girlfriend wearily, as we ordered salmon paté in the deli. My girlfriend's body shielded me from Mercury. I didn't say hello but my body leaned in that direction, remembering the porousness of her. It was dark and cool amongst the cheeses and rows of olive bins. I felt oddly aroused and unsettled; I wanted to lick the salty sweat from my girlfriend's neck. Outside, the heat and the lesbians, blazed. Mercury bought three pounds of chorizo, then glanced my way. She walked over to where I was and hugged me in a matter-of-fact way, without looking me in the eye. Then she left.

Later that day, as we watched a lesbian bowling competition, my girlfriend looked me in the eye and said, "Why do you keep having people in your life who aren't there?"

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe, at this point, it's a pattern that's impossible to break." I looked back into her eyes, which had turned almost grey in the dim light of the bowling alley, and I saw that she was there in a big, quiet way. For that moment, I forgot she lived in Calgary and I lived in Montréal.

The next morning, we went out for breakfast to the most obscure and unlikely greasy-spoon in the city so we could be alone. There was a line-up of lesbians at the door, trying to be alone too. We were seated at a table for four. Eléna was there with her new lover Cindy. My girlfriend sighed deeply and buried herself in the menu.

Eléna and I had had a most passionate and unexpected eight-month affair. We met at a Committee Against Racism meeting. People always asked us where we met because they were surprised to see us together. Taxi drivers and feminists were always asking Eléna where she was from, and then would argue with her when she told them the truth. So, she would make things up: Sweden, Siberia, or Switzerland. Then she would flash me a look of amusement and anger.

When I first met Eléna, I talked about racism all the time; I clipped articles from the newspaper and re-read Angela Davis. I thought it was the appropriate thing to do. One morning in bed as I read aloud to her from an article on Aboriginal land claims, Eléna put down her section of the paper, turned to me, and said, "Shut up."

"Hunh?" I said.

"If I want to hear about racism from you, I'll ask, O.K."

". . . unh . . . O.K."

Our sex got better and better as we drifted apart. The more we argued, the more we came. Then we let each other go.

I hadn't seen Eléna in a year. We kissed each other on the cheek. My girlfriend was reading the menu like it was *War and Peace*. We were all introduced and shook each others' hands like diplomats at the UN. Halfway through her scrambled eggs, Eléna's legs secretly wrapped themselves around mine; I curled my toes around her ankles. We all made polite conversation.

Out on the hot pavement, my girlfriend said to me: "I don't want to meet anymore of your ex-girlfriends. It tires me. I think about the kind of sex you

had and whether it was as good as the sex we have. And it makes me sad to think that someday I'll be your ex-girlfriend too. It hurts me to think that our bodies could be so close and then so far away. So please, don't introduce me to anymore of your ex-girlfriends."

That afternoon, my girlfriend went to see the lesbian softball competition and I went to a lesbian poetry workshop. When we met up later, we had completely different things to describe to each other.

She told me how, from a distance, the playing field looked like any other playing field, but when she got there, she saw a woman she knew who had been kicked out of her government job for being a lesbian standing confidently at the bat. A closeted Olympic swimmer was pitching, competing in a sport that wasn't her specialty so she wouldn't have an unfair advantage. A woman my girlfriend knew from high school was playing left field and caught a fly ball that won the game for her team. My girlfriend sat in the bleachers and watched women flex their arms and stretch their bodies in the sun. Some of them were showing off, and she and the other spectators were there to watch: that freedom to look was part of what the Games were about.

I told my girlfriend about a workshop I went to conducted by one of my favourite lesbian writers. Though her stories were sharp-edged and tough, her own demeanour was gentle and soft-spoken. I told my girlfriend how the workshop had both men and women in it and how, at one point, we were talking about memory. The men talked about memory as something to do with writing technique; the women talked about memory as something to do with pain and abuse. Haltingly and gracefully, several of the women talked about memories of incest and how these had surfaced in their writing. The men turned silent. Some of the women, including me, told stories. I had never told my story to strangers before.

My girlfriend and I looked at each other with happy faces. We had each, separately, had such wonderful afternoons.

That evening we met Giselle and Nadia for dinner and Nicola was with them. Except that now everyone called her "Nick" and I didn't feel I could ask why.

I had met Nicola at some conference. I couldn't remember if it was the *Feminism and the State Conference*, the *Forum on Women and Pleasure*, or the one called *Towards a Sex-Positive Women's Movement*. It was back in the times when the state still funded women's conferences. I was presenting a paper on lesbian sexuality. Nicola had seen my name in the conference brochure and, deciding she wanted to meet me, she arranged to be the person who picked me up at the airport.

It was the most marvellously flattering affair. She drove me around town and took me to an amusement park. We made out on a ferris wheel, then she got me back in town in time for the panel.

For five days, we talked about lesbian/feminist theory; then we had sex, then ate, then talked, then had sex again. Then, I had to go back. We wrote letters, then postcards; we had lunch when we were in each others' cities; we were friends, then friendly colleagues.

But at dinner, Nicola was distant and tense. "Who *is* this jerk?" my girlfriend asked. I had never heard my girlfriend call anyone a jerk before.

I felt a chill wind of something halfway between grace and disgrace, something there was hardly a language to describe. I had had the gift of Nicola's friendship, then I didn't. Nothing had happened: the gift had simply been withdrawn. It just wasn't convenient for her anymore.

We passed around tofu kebabs and garbanzo paté. I tried Nadia's kugel. My girlfriend poured more wine into Nicola's glass. I asked her about her work at the women's counselling collective. "We're underfunded, I'm overextended, and I *never* discuss work after hours," she snapped and reached for the wheat-free bread sticks, while I swallowed my eggplant scaloppini.

There was nothing to say. Nicola was burnt out; I was leaving town in four days. But these were only excuses. As I dug into my non-dairy carob cheesecake, I mused that the compassion, or maybe even the ethics, that would pin things down and make everyone more considerate, didn't yet exist. She had nothing to give, nothing to make her try. It was all very logical. I remembered that there were times that I had turned away from people for no good reason, except that I didn't have room for them anymore. But I suddenly I wished I had tried. And I wished she had tried. It didn't feel decent and it didn't feel kind.

In the days following, I went to a lesbian re-make of a fairy tale, saw faggots from Texas square-dancing in the street, and drank cappuccinos in a pool hall that was full of, in equal numbers, Italian men and dykes. I also ran into Kate and Gina and Premila and Lisette. They were ex-lovers too. Sometimes we smiled ruefully at each other; sometimes we avoided each other. The avoiding always hurt and never really seemed worth the trouble. Occasionally and with great courage, we would embrace and look into one another's eyes.

The last night of the Games, my girlfriend and I went to a huge outdoor women's dance. Two women from South Carolina wearing silk cowboy shirts played guitar and fiddle for awhile. They were very serious and very good. "I don't know how many of you ladies like country music or know how to dance the two-step," one of them drawled, "but we'd sure like to encourage you-all to give it a try." A huge cheer went up from the crowd. My girlfriend and I danced the two-step and then we just danced close together in the standard, sleazy, bar-dyke way. We were remembering the imprint of each others' bodies, for the next time.

After that we sat in the bleachers feeling sweaty and content, watching muscular women and ordinary-looking women dance or cruise or just stroll around. I saw Eléna leaning against the bar, her dark hair loose on her shoulders, looking very butch and very vulnerable. Nicola walked by wearing a cowboy hat and gave me a flashy cowgirl smile. Jamie sat with us for awhile, looking nervous and fresh in her spiky, streaked blond haircut, and shook my girlfriend's hand. They looked a bit like Martina Navratilova and Steffi Graff at the end of a tennis match. Mercury danced sexily with another woman and showed off some New York avant-garde–

dyke dance steps. She didn't look at me at all.

But I knew we were aware of each other. I knew our bodies remembered one another because there were scars and new knowledge and old pain. There were the body-memories of something beyond skin, of moments of closeness that were scary to hold onto, but they were all we had.

I felt sad about the scars. I felt like one of Mercury's trapeze artists—fucking in the air. No safety net except for a casual, makeshift community that was figuring out the rules as it went along. The thought made me feel like a super-athlete competing in a game that wasn't her specialty: nervous, heroic, terrified, and carefree—all at the same time.

Life Is Tougher Than Art, But Art Is Tough:

Interview with Terry Galloway

Pamela Godfree

Terry Galloway is a writer and performance artist currently based in Tallahassee, Florida. She has been either writing or performing for most of her life. As part of New York's P.S. 122 Field Trips, she performed an excerpt from her one-woman show *Out All Night and Lost My Shoes* at the Betty Oliphant Theatre in Toronto last October. She also performed at Womynly Way's *Crossing Cultures* festival in November 1990.

As well as touring *Out All Night*, Terry is in the process of developing a new piece called *Lardo Weeping*. She is also close to completing her second book of poetry. An article she wrote about her life as a deaf woman has been anthologized twice: in *With Wings: Literature By and About Women with Disabilities* (The Feminist Press) and in *Life Studies: A Thematic Reader* (St. Martins Press). *Apalachee Quarterly* in Florida is publishing *Out All Night and Lost My Shoes* complete with pictures and text in 1991. Terry is presently teaching at the renowned California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles.

I interviewed Terry Galloway while she was in Toronto for *Crossing Cultures* this past November. Below are excerpts from *Out All Night and Lost My Shoes:*

Let's talk about . . . suicide. I've thought about suicide a lot you know. But I don't think I was ever that serious about it—I worried too much about final results. I didn't want to shoot myself because there'd be no face left to make up; I didn't want to take poison because it would be right back where

I started from. *(Squash face with hands)* I wish Amy Vanderbilt were still around. She wrote a million books of etiquette but when she died she jumped out a 17th story window. SPLATTTTT! Not very polite. I always wondered what our lady of the last world would have advised if she had written an Etiquette of Suicide.

photo Beatrice Queral

(Take up the pearls, the glasses and the "Etiquette of Suicide" text)

Etiquette of Suicide

This book was written to serve as a reminder that good form is as essential in death as it is in life: that there is a right way and a wrong way to end it all when all has ended. This for instance—*(She picks up the cheese grater and grates it across her wrist)* cheese grater across the wrist—is definitely a wrong way. While this *(She picks up the serving fork and prongs herself along the veins)* is at least effective. As you see, even when one's life has fallen around one's ankles, one can relinquish one's sanity according to fixed canons of good taste. Too many a well-bred Junior Leaguer has gone bonkers wearing the wrong dress at the wrong time. My advice—whether stark naked or formally attired, always wear your pearls.

In that trying time before Fateful Action is undertaken, so to speak, decorum and drugs are de rigueur: a well-modulated conversation, a well-managed luncheon, and three hundred and fifty milligrams of valium do wonders for one's social control. Even alcoholism, tactfully managed, can help one maintain a false repose.

But try to remember that noisy gulping of beverages is frowned upon; and it is a positive outrage against all the canons of good taste to rest one's elbow precariously on the edge of the table while waving one's spoon wildly about in the air. But . . . if one does allow one's face to fall into the vichyssoise, an immediate recovery is advised. A simple "I beg your pardon" will suffice, taking care not to slur the consonants.

There are any number of ways that one may choose to meet one's maker, but should you choose the Shake and Bake Method of self-demise, perfected by Sylvia Plath, try to arrange that the hour of your demise falls between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., hours more convenient to family and friends—because you will, after all be monopolising a major kitchen appliance.

When one is at last prepared for that last leap out of polite society, feet first is the best rule. Always remember to hold the hem of your basic black tightly in both hands so as not to afford too candid a glimpse to the vulgar passerby.

The final word about final words is this: whether written or spoken they are always better done in French. "Vous me faites dégueuler, au revoir!" sounds infinitely more refined than "You make me puke, goodbye!" don't you think? Follow these simple rules of self-departure and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you died as you had lived . . . and that now as always, dying well is the last revenge!

* * *

Everything suddenly took on a terrible urgency. Even something simple and dull—like coming home from work in the afternoon—took on a terrible urgency. Because if you really believe that any minute could be your last minute, then every moment becomes a Moment of Near Suspense. . . .

Moments of Near Suspense

(Plow into the audience screaming) Taxi! Taxi! For God's sake lady get out of my way! I gotta get home, home, home! Move it, move it, move it!!! You son of a bitch! You've tried to trip me up before! I'll get back to youuuu! *(Burst onto the stage)* Made it! And it's only *(Look at wrist. Gloat)* 5:15! But the key?! Where is the key? *(Paw frantically at pockets)* What has happened to the key?!?! Here it is! *(Suspiciously) Exactly where it should be!* It's as if somebody knew I was coming home and stole my key, made an exact copy and put it back *right where it had been! (Sharp intake of breath)* There's a light coming from under the door! But I know I didn't leave a light on! Oh god, oh god what if . . . *(Fling open the door) Daylight!* The light switch hasn't even been touched. I see it now . . . He stole my key, came in while I was gone, at the steak I left out to thaw, used up all of the toilet paper, they probably took my winter coat out of the closet and they *didn't even bother to touch the light switch!! (Another more terrible thought)* What if he's still here? Hiding in the closet waiting for me to check on my coat. *(Sidle over to the closet)* He's probably got a razor . . . one of my disposable razors . . . oh pleasepleaseplease *(Fling open the closet)* He didn't bother to take the coat after all. *(A heart stopper)* What if it isn't a *he* at all . . . but a *thing* . . . a thing that can make itself look like a he! Or a coat hanger *(An agonized shriek)* or even—a *chair! (Moving as if compelled to the dreaded chair)* No, God, don't do this to me, don't make me do this, nooooo! *(Sits)* Nothing. *(A studied pause)* How clever. How clever. How diabolically clever! It's just waiting for me to relax, to drop my defenses . . . and then . . . and then . . . *something will happen! Something is bound to happen . . . if only I sit here and wait! (A peak of physical tautness)*

* * *

When my Granny Doris was a young woman, she lived in a place in Texas called Snake Canyon. It wasn't called Snake Canyon for nothing. She lived there way in the middle of nowhere with her husband and two children. One morning she got up to see her husband off to work as usual. And then she went in to check in on the baby. My mother says she remembers waking up for some reason and seeing her mama standing in the doorway—barefoot, still in her nightgown, her hair still down. That little baby he was just as still—a little blue death bubble coming out of his nose. My mother says her mother didn't say a word, didn't make a sound. She just picked that baby up and ran. She ran just as dawn was breaking. Barefoot. Through Snake Canyon.

Now that's the kind of bedtime story my mother always told us. And this is a poem I wrote for my mother a long time ago for Mother's Day.

Bones, Mother, Is How You Scare Me

bones, mother, is how you scare me
like the silence
of Snake Canyon as your own mother ran
barefoot
(in her arms your infant brother
death's blue bubble from nose to lip still
unburst)

bones, mother, is how you scare me
like the jazz
you sang in all those nightclubs in Berlin
the red dress heating up your skin
(as the boys watched sweating and smoking
your own thin, handsome soldier among
them)

bones, mother, is how you scare me
like the night
you stuck your bridge out playing the
toothless crone
(terrified by how suddenly beauty aged
we begged you to be beautiful again
none of our own young faces quiet as
beautiful as yours)

bones, mother, is how you scare me
like the thought
of you with your father's
eyes weeping his death
(all the imagined future husked to the flesh)

bones, mother, is how you scare me
as familiar to me
as this flat, blue Texas sky
and the story of your own mother
who ran barefoot through the silence
of Snake Canyon.

* * *

Pamela Godfree: Terry, your work seems to deal a lot in instincts.

Terry Galloway: Grrrrr (laughs). Yes it does. What do *you* mean by instincts—I'm curious.

Pamela: I mean that you draw on instincts and the audience responds very instinctively.

Terry: Do they really? You know, I'm glad about that because I think that's something I deliberately set out to cultivate. Because I think of myself as an animal above all.

Pamela: Yeah, it reminds me of the animal in the Museum of Natural History, that part in your piece, and just one's responses to moving in the world—we rely so much on instincts.

Terry: But you know what I think is funny one of the things I think has always bothered me about people—people in theatre, people in religion, people in literature—is that there's so much denial going on of the fact that we are animals. And also because of the whole division of mind and body. It's just a bunch of poop. It's a thing that just bothered me and I wanted to make something that I thought was eloquent, could be poetic but also be fun. And also be true to that other inarticulate part of experience, that could actually not verbalize and yet make clearer another part of experience—which is fear or pity, terror, outrageous humour, those kinds of things. That's what I'm after. Actually, I'm glad to know the audience responds instinctively, I like that, I would rather have them do that. You want to surprise them. That's why I start off with stupid jokes. I'll start off with a stupid joke that they think is going to be a story, and it ends up being a stupid joke. I love to do that kind of thing because it surprises people into laughing.

Pamela: I think that you work with surprise. You never do what the audience expects that you might do next.

Terry: Really. I enjoy that (laughs).

Pamela: And at the same time you work with words, you're very verbal and there's a lot of words in your work.

Terry: Well, words, words, words (laughs). Was that Hamlet when he was going mad? Yeah, that's what's so funny . . . I'm deaf. Sometimes when I

would be touring with P.S. 122, that's New York's Performance Space 122, they do the Field Trips, and I would tour with these guys, and when I would do it, sometimes I would be the only one of the performance artists who would be saying anything. The others would be dancing or doing mime or doing comedy, or like Blue Man Group, doing a particular brand of very witty, but non-verbal, comedy. And I'd be up there and I'd be the deaf person and I'm the one who is yakking (laughs). It used to really tickle me, it's quite funny. I mean I have an obsession with sound, in part because I've been losing my hearing since I was a child. Also in part because I think I just inherited it. I love sound, I love words, I love to talk. But I also love to listen to stories and things of that sort. I'm kind of word-obsessed.

Pamela: And you read a lot.

Terry: Oh yeah, constantly. My whole family—we're readers, that's just what we do. I read everywhere, every time, every place. If I go to the bathroom I could be in there for hours (laughs) *if* they have magazines.

Pamela: When did you want to start performing? When did that start for you?

Terry: Well, when I was little I was in Germany—Berlin. I was born in Stuttgart but I spent my childhood time in Berlin. And we had an American school there and I remember I was madly in love with my kindergarten teacher. She was wonderful and she used to have us perform. The way we would do it is that we would make up our own little playlets. And I loved doing that. We would hide behind the desk and then we would talk about what we were going to do and then we would get out in front of the rest of the class and we'd do it. And actually, you know, that's been a pattern of my life—you know, going somewhere, writing something, and then coming out and doing it. It was always original theatre. And I also remember when I was a kid I was quite sickly. I had lymph gland things wrong and all sorts of things wrong with me because my mother was given antibiotics when she was pregnant with me. And they didn't know what all was going on and it wasn't until later that they discovered that I was losing my hearing, my eyes were screwy and that caused me to hallucinate. But then I was so sick. I remember I got very ill and I was supposed to play the lead role in a thing called "Sparky the Little Elf." One guy misunderstood this and thought it was "Sparky the Little Elephant." I like that. I have to remember I'm going to use that—that will be the title of something. But I became ill and another hapless child was put in my place. Then I returned to school and by accord, by popular acclaim, they ousted that little girl and put me back in. In part because I had been sick but in part because she was no good. She deserved to be ousted, at least that's what I've told myself after all these years of unbearable guilt. I wonder if her life is ruined because of that, isn't that a horrifying thing to think? You could have ruined someone's life in kindergarten by being too good at what you were doing (laughs). That's when I knew I loved it.

Pamela: So from then on you . . .

Terry: From then on I did nothing. I was involved in stuff but I was also busy going deaf. I always did theatre, drama, speech, that kind of thing. I loved to recite poetry, I loved to write poetry. But that was not an option, supposedly, because I was deaf. Actors, performers, writers—they have a

photo Beatrice Queral

The performer and her puppet, Hand Chops.

hard enough time making money as it is, but a deaf one? You know I didn't sign and I wasn't part of the deaf community, so it wasn't like Deaf Dance Theatre or anything of that sort. So that was odd.

I was an American Studies major at the University of Texas in Austin. And I didn't know what I was going to do with that but supposedly I wasn't going to be a performer. That didn't happen actually until this last year that I've really thought of myself as a performer, a writer.

Pamela: A solo performer or with others?

Terry: Well, I've done both. For years I was involved in different groups. It started off being groups and I would do poetry readings and stuff like that. But when I was in Texas I did a thing called Shakespeare at Winedale and that's what allowed me to do some performing, but also to make myself understood. I had a great deal of difficulty when I was in college in my twenties articulating enough to be understood. I slurred and I still do somewhat—I talk very quickly. But it was sometimes hard on stage to make myself understood. Shakespeare at Winedale is an experimental English program that is part of the University of Texas. And every summer he would take us out to a place called Winedale, Texas where we would learn Shakespeare by performing it. At the end of the six weeks we would present some Shakespeare in a barn and people from all over the place would come and bring picnic lunches. Well, he let me do everything—his name was James B. Aires and he saved my life. He was my buddy. Of course we had huge fights—you know, I broke my hand running into a barn door once, just in fury. But he let me play everything—creatures, Falstaff, Lady Macbeth, Puck. Then I played lots of characters that were thrown down flights of stairs and spat upon. Those were my favourites (laughs).

And from that I helped found a cabaret in Austin, Texas. It's called Esther's Follies. It was kind of an overnight success—it's been going on for fifteen, sixteen years. but he was also involved in that indirectly because a lot of his students got involved with it and I was one of them. So that's when I started writing for theatre, writing skits and comedy. I did a couple cult figure things—Jake Ratchett, short detective. I also had a prostitute called Bubbles Le Roux. The Follies, at that time, was located right next door to a massage parlour, so all of the prostitutes would come and watch the show and they really loved it. So, I started doing Bubbles Le Roux and I would come in with them (laughs) and I'd get up on stage and say, "Oh, gimme that microphone, hahhahhah, hi there I'm Bubbles Le Roux. I'm a whore." She'd tell horrible jokes, I mean horrible sexual jokes. Want to hear one? Okay. "Well you know, one time, I'm goin' to tell you something sweetheart, I've had it with politicians because I think politicians and whores we really do have one thing in common. It's that you pay us to screw you—hahhahhah. But when I was in Texas this is how I got to know a politician just a little bit too well. This female politician, a Republican, of course, hahhah, she got drunk at a party. She comes up to me and she says that she wants me to kiss her in a place that's warm and wet and smells funny. So

I took her to Houston." (laughs) That's the kind of humour.

Pamela: So you've created your own space to do performance.

Terry: There was a group of us that was doing it. We were all friends and we would get together late at night and do stuff. And then people started coming, and more people started coming. I like it better when it's like that. When it starts getting too institutionalized I don't like it as much. It just doesn't interest me. The element of surprise is often gone. It can still be wonderful but it's not astonishing.

When I left that I went to school at Columbia in New York. And I started doing theatre—and I would do it alone because I didn't know anyone who did performing. And also at that time people weren't being very political. There seemed to be this kind of blanket over things. And I'd seen this really, really wretched performance by a woman performance artist. And I thought, Oh hell, I could do better with a dog. So I wrote a play called *Heart of a Dog* and did it with a dog (laughs). My co-star was a dog. So, that's what I was doing. That's when I started seriously thinking about writing seriously for theatre—not just skits, not just poetry, but trying to do a combination of everything, of Vaudeville, of bad jokes, of poetry, a little bit of humour, music. . . .

Pamela: Popular culture you have a lot of.

Terry: Oh, art and garbage both.

Pamela: So mostly it's in the theatre world that you perform now?

Terry: Am I mostly in the theatre world? No, not at all. I left New York and then I went to Texas and I got a grant and I wrote. So I wasn't in the theatre world then. I would do my show but I wasn't in a theatre world. And then I moved to Florida for love, my lover teaches there—in Tallahassee. And there could be nowhere more remote from New York or that theatre world than Florida was then. So I wasn't really surrounded by theatre people—I didn't know any there. I don't fit in with drama departments or community theatre. I mean I'm just not doing it. There wasn't another theatre world there. I was in retirement—I just read for about four years. And then I would be asked to perform, there were people who had heard about my shows by word of mouth. But I wasn't making a push to do it. When I was asked to perform I would go and perform but it wasn't until this year that I really started doing this touring.

Pamela: And it's been tireless touring.

Terry: Yeah, this kind of concentrated effort is quite new.

Pamela: How are you finding that, touring all over with your work?

Terry: I do it on my own and also with P.S. 122 Field Trips. It was also Mark Russell from P.S. 122—he's a Texan and he knew my work from Texas. He's

the one who kind of pulled me out of obscurity. Well, I'm still obscure, but who gives a— You know, he pulled me out of my own self-imposed isolation and got me back involved in this world. And I'm grateful because . . . you know, it's real funny because it will allow me to work. It will give me back a certain inspiration and confidence and vision. How can you have confidence in your vision if you're in theatre but you don't have an audience to try it out on, to see who shares it, who is vehemently opposed, who hates it. And so, having done this I'm finding that there are a lot of people out there who share that kind of vision which is both comic and very bleak and strives for a certain kind of simplicity about things. So, it'll allow you to be confident enough that you can do more, so you can say ah-hah, I have that kind of creativity in my soul. I can do these things and it means something, it's not just idle chat. So, I'm actually quite grateful.

Pamela: Yeah, it's anything but frivolous what you're doing. It's right to the bone stuff.

Terry: Yeah, what I do on my own is *Out All Night and Lost My Shoes* and *Lardo Weeping*. I have a group in Tallahassee now called the Mickey Faust Theatre. we're so close to Orlando and Mickey Mouse—we do a bunch of junk, it's silly stuff. I'm Mickey Faust who sings this stupid song with Annette Fuckafellow. A lot of it is frivolous, it can be extremely silly. I love that. I like it if it's just funny—give it to me.

Pamela: From frivolity you just take it and twist it and then the next thing is real life gut stuff.

Terry: (Laughs) I like real life gut stuff. I also like just stupid stuff—dumb jokes, puns. I'm going to do one more solo show—*Lardo Weeping* and it ends with an anorexic striptease. That's a slang term. You know, *Weekly World News*, that's a supermarket tabloid, uses . . . lardo as a slang term for fatso. Weeping—that's a hard word to hear in an odd way, isn't it? I thought, it's not enough to sob or to cry—one must weep. So, it's about an obese agoraphobe who is extremely funny, very witty, poetic, who tries to monitor world behaviour from the privacy of her apartment. She's always shooting out irate letters to the editor—ABC, NBC, to the FBI—she's a crank. She's a crackpot but she's a crackpot who has a lot of control over her life. But it ends with a huge burst of self-loathing. I wear a fat suit for it but it's a fat suit that comes apart in strips. She does an anorexic striptease in which the strips are held together with velcro. So when it goes kkkkk, that's a piece of flesh coming off. She is frustrated and she runs to the icebox and it glows with an unearthly light. She goes, "Ohhh," and launches herself at the food and goes rararara [demonstrates speed-eating]. "Oh dear, I did so want to be a good girl." She turns her back and she vomits her guts out, blaaaa. She turns around, she wipes the vomit off the corners of her mouth and she says, "I think I'll have a little bit more." Back to the icebox, rararara, turning around, blaaaa. There's this dainty trill of music and she says, "What a very private act to have witnessed, what a very personal thing to

have seen. But if the choicest cuts of meat are always lean, then I, if I'm to thrive in this world of fashion and TV, I've gotta start starving for physical fitness." She drops her nightie—she is, quote, naked. She takes part of her shoulder and says, "Just call me Miss . . . " She pulls the flesh off, kkkkk, "Bones, boom bum pum pum boom . . . " Then it becomes Boom Boom Room. So it's kind of shocking.

Pamela: I think that you like to shock people.

Terry: I like it, I also think it should comfort. I think it has to do both. Without the comfort—life is so horrifyingly shocking as it is, you know. I try to be comforting but it's not easy (laughs).

Pamela: How do you see yourself as a lesbian and incorporating that in your work?

Terry: Well I do and I don't. Lesbianism isn't the be-all and end-all for me. So, I talk about it but it's not the central image. What the central image is in my work are what I consider the central images in life—death, that kind of thing. But yeah, I'll talk about it, I talk about it very casually. When I refer to my lovers I refer to "she." I do my Gertrude Stein—my intellectual version of *The Honeymooners* in which Ralph and Alice Cramden are replaced by Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. There are things in my poems, that letter to the little girl I was in love with when I was at the Lions' camp for crippled children, the one who was paralyzed from the neck down—that's very obviously a twelve-year-old's crush on another girl. It's just part of my life and a pretty easy part. My parents have known I'm gay forever. The paper where I live when they did an interview with me talked about my partner with whom I live. I once read this thing that if you can pretend like it's all alright, that people should not be disconcerted, then maybe they'll take the cue that they can relax a little with it. To me it is just a part of my life, to them it might not be. But I try to pretend that it is to them, and if they get too freaked out I'll rape the shit out of them—pllllhh (laughs)—that's lesbian rape (laughs), the tongue waggling furiously. A nasty little gesture—the old Bronx cheer (laughs). So much more benign and cheerful than actual rape isn't it?

Contributors

Annharte is co-founder of Regina Aboriginal Writers. Her book of poetry, *Being on the Moon*, was published in 1990 by Polestar Press. She is currently working on a novel about the disappearance of her mother in the 1950s. **Karen Augustine** is currently doing research for a series on Black women and mental health. "Science, Experiments, and Geography" was exhibited in *Black Women and Image* at A Space this past February. **Marusia Bociurkiw** is a writer, activist, and video/filmmaker living in Toronto and Montréal, where she is active in the lesbian/feminist potluck and cocktail party circuit. She is currently working on a video, *Bodies In Trouble*, and on a film about the internment of Ukrainian-Canadians during World War I. **Julie Brickman** is a writer and a psychologist who has published articles in the *International Journal of Women's Studies*, *Women and Therapy*, and *Kinesis*. Currently, with the encouragement of a Canada Council Explorations award, she is writing her first novel. "Lust's End" is her first published fiction. **Kerrie Charnley** is a freelance writer pursuing a Bachelor's degree in English at Simon Fraser University. She is mixed-blood Katzie-Salish with Jewish and English heritage. She writes to find redemption for her mother and her grandmother in her upbringing and the struggles they had to endure.

Wendy Clouthier lives in a lovely house in Ottawa, has her own graphic design business called Watermoon Design, and is learning accounting so that she can start a new business with a partner to do bookkeeping for non-profit groups and all kinds of interesting women-owned small businesses. She would be happy to give up all this excitement to own a farm in the country and call it Watermoon Organic Stuff. **Virginia Dansereau** is a British Columbia writer and the business manager of the Kalamalka New Writers Society, the collective which runs the national Kalamalka New Writers Competition. Her poetry has appeared in *Grain*, *Harvest*, *Western People*, *Folklore*, and *Room of One's Own*. **Terry Galloway** is presently touring *Out All Night and Lost My Shoes* in Glasgow, Manchester, and Brighton. The performance is being published by Apalachee Quarterly (c/o Barbara Hamby, 1168 Seminole Dr., Tallahassee, FL, 32301) in 1991. **Pamela Godfree** is a Toronto lesbian feminist engaged in multifarious media. She is a former *Fireweed* collective member. **Alisa Gordaneer** lives in Victoria. She has just received her B.A. from the University of Victoria and will be co-editing their student newspaper, *The Martlet*, next year. Alisa is currently writing a story on the semiotics of an ad; she also does cartoons. When she works for money, she is a florist.

Candis J. Graham is currently polishing a second collection of short stories and yearning for time to work on her novel. "Tea for Thirteen" is dedicated to her sister, Andrea Graham, who has a great sense of humour. **Camie Kim** lives and works in Vancouver. Her short story, "They Speak Quickly," was published in *Fireweed*'s issue 30 (Asian Canadian Women). **Rozena Maart** is a Black South African feminist scholar-cum-activist. She works, speaks, and writes in the areas of Black Consciousness and violence against women. Presently, she lives and works as a therapist in Toronto. Rozena's poetry-and-essay book, *Talk About It!*, was published by Williams-Wallace in 1991. **Kathy Mac** is a founding director of the B.S. Poetry Society. Ms. Mac publishes her work frequently in magazines and anthologies across Canada. She has been featured at readings in communities across the Maritimes. Kathy teaches creative writing at St. Mary's University (Halifax) and for Dartmouth Continuing Education. **Marcia Masino** is a Toronto-based freelance artist and illustrator. She specializes in work of a gynocentric nature. **Eira Patnaik**, originally from India, teaches Women's Literature at Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD. "The Benediction" is one short story from her collection *The Laugh of Kali*, awaiting publication.

Gita Saxena was born in Ulm, Germany and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. She has since left the Prairies for the cement pastures of Toronto where she finds sustenance with others who have also fallen between the cracks. **Éva A. Székely** works as a psychologist at Centenary Hospital in Scarborough, Ontario. Most of her work is in the area of eating disorders; some, on immigrant women. She is the author of *Never Too Thin* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1988) and has taught women's studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.). **Margaret Tongue** is a lesbian-feminist crone with a strong interest in women's spirituality. She lives in Vermont. Margaret's most recent publications have appeared in *Sinister Wisdom* and an anthology of lesbian erotic poetry, *Wanting Women* (Pittsburg, PA: Sidewalk Revolution Press, 1990). **Thuong Vuong-Riddick** was born in Hanoi, North Vietnam. After studying in Paris, she emigrated to Canada in 1969. First living in Montreal, she moved to Victoria, where she now lives. **Patricia M. Wourms** was born and raised in Saskatchewan. She has worked in broadcasting for 14 years. Having been a commercial producer, Patricia is now the director of operations for a TV station in Regina. She lives with her husband, who also writes poetry and short stories, and her son.

Announcements

Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Do you write? Do you want to? Queer Press, a new Canadian lesbian and gay publishing company, wants to hear from you. If you are a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, one of our friends, lovers, family members, a professional working with survivors or a member of the queer community who has something to say—say it to us. We particularly want to encourage gay men to write about these experiences. We also encourage all those whose voices have historically been suppressed. Send typed, dot-matrix, and neatly handwritten work and artwork with a SASE and brief bio to Q. Press, P.O. Box 485, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2T1, (416) 516-3363. Deadline May 31, 1991.

The **Conditions Collective** is accepting submissions for an anthology of new writing by women on the topic of **women and censorship**, to be published by Cleis Press. The collective will consider poetry, fiction, analytical essays, novel excerpts, interviews, drama, journal entries, correspondence excerpts, and translations on this topic. How does censorship relate to the issues of race, class, age, relationships, sexuality, women in prison, women with AIDS/HIV, and women's and lesbian movements? Submissions could explore the ramifications of censorship on future writing; the ways that women censor one another; or the homophobic hysteria over gay and lesbian writing and images. B/w photos and other visuals will also be considered. Send submissions (typed, double-spaced, up to 15 pages) and SASE to Conditions, 247 Liberty Ave., Jersey City, NJ, 07307. Deadline June 1, 1991.

Call for articles on horizontal hostility. Oh that again. Why does this keep coming up? Why are we so angry at each other? Do we direct the same kind of energy at the patriarchy, or do we aim at each other out of fear, powerlessness, pain? What have we learned from working in organizations? What can we do to change these behaviors? Do we *want* to change these behaviors? What's trashing doing in lesbian-feminism anyway? What's trashing and what's righteous criticism? How do we struggle with racism, classism, homophobia, etc. between us without demolishing our sisters? Or is sisterhood a myth? What about rebuilding the bonds between wimmin that were broken so well by patriarchy? What about a code of ethics for working responsibly in the local/national/international community? How do we deal with lesbians who repeatedly trash/injure other lesbians? Send with 50 to 100-word bio to Hag Rag, P.O. Box 1171, Madison, WI, 53701. Deadline June 1, 1991.

Call for submissions. The Women's Art Resource Centre is seeking **slides of artwork and information on women artists** across the country for their slide registry. In the fall of 1991, WARC will launch its first Women Artist Calendar and Exhibition based on artwork represented in the slide registry, with the intention of presenting contemporary multi-media artwork from feminist and politically engaged perspectives. Submissions from different regions, sexual orientations, the differently abled, elder women, and women of colour are encouraged. Please send 5-10 slides, slide list, CV, and an artist statement; good quality black and white photos of artwork for consideration in the calendar to WARC, 394 Euclid Ave., Ste. 308, Toronto, ON, M6G 2S9. Deadline June 30, 1991.

Black Studies Journal—Canada's first. *Aluta!* publishes articles, critical essays, in-depth interviews, international reports, short stories, poetry, and resource listings—intertwining Black Consciousness with feminism, gay liberation, and class struggle. Send submissions with a covering letter and a short biography to *Aluta!*, P.O. Box 279, Station B, Toronto, ON, M5T 2W2. Deadline July 1, 1991.

The editors of ***SAGE:** A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* are soliciting essays, personal narratives, and interviews for a **special issue on relationships**. This issue will focus on intimate, friendship, and family relationships. Send manuscripts and queries to SAGE, P.O. Box 42741, Atlanta, GA, 30311-0741. Deadline September 1, 1991.

Birth Tales. Visual artists, writers, musicians, performers, and filmmakers are invited to submit artwork about their birthing experiences. Very specific, personal, and autobiographical works are most welcome. These works will be compiled for inclusion in a gallery show and a slide lecture and workshop series that will tour medical schools. Artists who have previously shown or published on this subject are invited to submit documentation, to aid in the compilation of a bibliography to accompany the project. The artwork will provide a focal point for the discussion of vital issues, a dialogue that can contribute to the ultimate formation of medical, legal, and community practises in the field of childbirth that are safe and life-enhancing. Submit slides, tapes, manuscripts, or proposals to Debbie O'Rourke, Community Arts, A Space, 183 Bathurst, Suite 301, Toronto, ON, M5T 2R7, (416) 364-3227/8. Deadline for artwork September 15, 1991.

Stories, short-short stories, memoirs, excerpts from novels, and poems wanted for ***Lovers*, an anthology of writings by women** on the more humorous, quirky, horrific, memorable, disturbing, embarrassing, unusual, bizarre, kinky, outrageous, as well as everyday, commonplace aspects of relationships with lovers, male and female. I am seeking memorable profiles of lovers as well as interaction between them. This collection will reflect diversities of age, ethnicity, and sexual preference. Possible themes: pursuit, affairs, courtship, long-term/short-term, midlife and aging, affairs, travel, work, age difference, long-distance relationships, religion, recovery, etc. To be published by The Crossing Press in 1992. Previously published work considered. Send submissions with SASE to Amber Coverdale Sumrall, 434 Pennsylvania Ave., Santa Cruz, CA, 95062. Deadline October 1, 1991.

Submission Requirements

These guidelines will ensure the safety of your work; when submitting written or visual material to *Fireweed*, please:

- Always make sure that each submission is carefully labelled with your name and address.
- Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for our reply or return of your submission. (If you live outside of Canada, attach an international reply coupon with sufficient postage. Do not send American postage!)
- Send material type-written on 8 1/2"x 11" paper (single-spaced for poetry, double-spaced for prose). When submitting poetry, we suggest that you send six or seven poems to give the editors an idea of your work. For prose, no book-length manuscripts, please.
- Visual artists are encouraged to send whatever material you feel would reproduce well in our format. send slides or photographs—no originals through the mail.
- Your covering should include a brief biographical note, including previous publication credits, if any.

We do not publish material that the editors find racist, anti-Semitic, classist, sexist, or homo/lesbophobic.

Upcoming Issues

Open Issue (Loosely About the Body)
Open Issue
Jewish Women (*extended deadline* June 15)
Sex & Sexuality (deadline July 31)

Back Issues

7—Women and Performance I • 8—Women and Performance II • 9—Bread and Roses • 10—Writing • 11—Popular Culture • 12—Blood Relations • 13—Lesbiantics I (OUT OF PRINT) • 14—Fear and Violence • 15—Feminist Aesthetics • 16—Women of Colour (OUT OF PRINT; reprinted as *The Issue Is 'Ism* by Sister Vision Press) • 17—Writing • 18—Atlantic Women • 19: Theory I • 20—Theory II • 21—Short Stories • 22—Native Women (OUT OF PRINT) • 23—Canadian Women Poets • 24—Writing • 25—Class I • 26—Class II • 27—Writing and Humour • 28—Lesbiantics II • 29—Writing • 30—Asian Canadian Women • 31—Weird Writing

Fireweed back issues are available for $4.00 in Canada; $5.00 outside of Canada from FIREWEED, P.O. Box 279, Station B, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5T 2W2. Please enclose cheque with your order.

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