#4

ALL WAYS A WOMAN

All Ways A Woman, Number 4

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Through all the various stages of its production All Ways A Woman, Number 4, has been an exciting and challenging endeavor, unique from prior issues in several ways. The amount of both creative and critical writing submitted for possible publication in this fourth issue was very encouraging and made for both interesting and difficult editorial sessions. We are pleased to announce that for the first time in its history All Ways A Woman has included a man on its editorial staff. From the initial collection of material to be considered through the distribution of the magazine itself all of the work has been done by us, the editors, with the invaluable help and guidance of Prof. Jo Gillikan. In hopes that All Ways A Woman is becoming a tradition here at the College of Staten Island our thanks go out to the Student Government, all of our contributors and to our readers.

Donna Decker
Helen Decker
Gerard A. Rizza

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You Find a Hero In The Preface

The drive is misty
caused by, I think, the loss

of ideas.

That evening after the theater
we walked through November weeds.

Your nature

is not maternal

and if you die
it won't be a mystery.

You see, the Hymn
was spoiled by the man
who kept asking

"Is it apparent?"

We know this problem
will not be resolved in time
to see the children
as lonely and tired as they are.

And you have a son?
No. A daughter.
Where is she?
She is dead, monsieur.

It was in the second edition, and
in her eyes and all the pages.

We have the equation before us.
It is unequal.
Let's make up another one soon
before someone else gets the job.

Lynda Blum

I SEE SOME MUSHROOMS ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

it's morning
each morning is two months long
and
I haven't bought a coat for spring
but this is only
act one
perhaps
I'll find a tenement in Newark
or an idea
defrosting in the sink

to tell
the truth
nothing is important
I should stay
in town a while longer
and not
ask any questions

besides
it's too cold
to think and
I'm lonely after a winter
weekend.

Lynda Blum

I am not a dancer

Mama lied about her age
tellin all her friends
she had me
when she was 19

Mama dyed her hair too
Every month or so she'd be
a natural red head
or a natural blonde

and it didn't go her
no good neither goin
to that fancy school

cause Mama worked
in the phone company

On Saturday she'd send me
to the movies. I'd come home
feelin like there was magic
waitin inside me

Then Mama would look at me
and sing one a them songs
she made up about me being
so plain lookin and her so pretty.

Lynda Blum

Room 706

I am a monster
plucking old men from the windows
of the Broadway Central Hotel

my grandfather thinks
I am still a little girl
and invites me in to play

Later, my mother will ask
if he put his hands on me

the old men
are calling for us to come out now
but grandfather is shaving his legs

I read a bride magazine
and build houses with nickels and dimes

grandfather keeps the quarters
for the maid
who will tell my mother
he was obscene

Lynda Blum

Mama

mama's got
baby blue eyes
that never grew up.

mama's runny like
an undercooked
soft-boiled
egg yolk.

mama's soul's so
big inside
it chokes her throat
plugs up her ears
making all sound muffled
even my song.

mama hides her blind eyes behind sunglasses.

mama can't mend the shatterred voices in her head.

mama's a rat
running round and round and round her trap.

mama's a gypsy always wailing for a home.

mama likes drums. mama likes rhythm. mama loves to dance.
mama is holy. she's a sacrifice. she's a celebration!

mama's a forgotten secret.

mama's a picnic where the ants have come and gone.

mama is a pretty whore.

mama's rocket came to late and was filled already anyway.

now she runs on tip-toes
past my room at night
war-dancing
never missing a beat
I see her reflection.
young Indian bucks carrying candles
trip after her.

mama is a swallowed sob.
she's a strangled prayer.

mama
is
a
choked
laugh.

Donna Decker
NYC '80

Skin

Baby daughter

rub my stockings--

so silk--

as you sit on the floor.

In my mind I see you twenty years later.

Waterless fish

thrashing through scars to get back to your element.

Rub my stockings.

Let you fingers remember soft and smooth.

Let them not bleed from my untouch.

Let me rub my arms

legs

chest

hard

and not forget

how baby skin thirsts

not hold you away

to become like me

a Waterless Fish Mother

who still travels through scars

to get

back home again.

Donna Decker
NYC '81

HEY DONNA:

In this gentleness
are all the wonders of the world.

in your gentleness you went up to the attic-
the wooden cradle had rocked itself to sleep-
you woke it and asked for a lullaby
your 2 year old heart quivering-
the cradle closed its eyes
and waited for the next child it could hold.

in your gentleness
you watched the horses go wild down in the
field
such a young thing
you clapped your hands in glee
and asked the rodeo king for a ride
you tried on his cowboy boots,
much too big
you watched his pocket watch chain spiral
round his thigh
it hypnotized you
14 karat gold and diamonds

in your gentleness
you watched the old house next door burn down
and you listened to the chains bang against the
flagpole at night
and you listened to the gunshots aimed at the
thieves
and you watched the possum play dead

in your gentleness
you listened to the old man's ukulele come from the
shanty
while the young man stayed inside
playing the organ
while the dog sang
while the fireplace asked for more flames

in your gentleness
you cut your fingernails too short and your palms bled
you wore hand me down clothes
and sewed an Easter outfit in the cellar
and played the accordian with such 10 year old
dignity
we had to smile.

in your gentleness
you found a fisherman
who tripped on mescaline
and mixed prime colors on his trip board
his magic wheel
his body covering yours in the pool at nite

in this gentleness
there's been a robe spun for you
the silk of the spinning wheel has
unraveled and
found your form

Helen Decker

For You On Your Marriage

All the fields have been plowed
the corn stalks are rising
paths for you.
She will be rows away
her hands clasped-
the white lace brushing the dirt-
She waits for your footstep
the whisper
not to disturb her roots
She peeks thru her eyelids
thru the corn leaves
watches you search
for her scent.
She giggles.

An ear of corn is growing.

find her boy
She's grown up and ready for you.
find her whispering
the small prayers she learned
giving thanks for you.
her flesh is wet thru the torn lace.

You look so grand today
your black hair cut in passion
the scent of her rising from the field-
she is waiting.

An ear of corn growing in the far field-
its heard the sound of your feet before.

She spreads the leaves
and sees you coming.
You look so grand today.
the fine hairs
stand on her arms ready to shout your name.

You brush apart leaves
calling her.
She presses her thighs together.
you sniff past the place where she waits
she sighs
you keep moving
Kicking the corn stalks
pulling their roots
she is waiting.

The fields are too high to look over-
you peel apart the leaves.
An ear of corn is growing in the far field
growing wider
opening its skin
you've grown hot with desire
destroying the corn fields.
the stalks fall on her-
covering her
She whispers small prayers she learned.

Helen Decker

they were three children

one
he was the beggar hero
he had a flower arrangement done on his left shoulder,
a mark of his fix
"here are my roots" he said as he raised his shirt
the green stems tangled by the roots.
lineage.
he carried smelling salts in a pouch
that he took to farewell parties.
he played in mud puddles when no one watched
and stored the mudpies in a wooden chest from Mexico.

two
she was the queen of stallions
all the stallions always followed behind her
as she played the harmonica.
it was a Madison Avenue 5:00 rush when she
quicked the pace
and all the stallions danced-
she could shut off the moon from her night table
while her stallions edged and feasted each other
into the black.

there was only one sound.
she would tease them
make them freeze in motion.
queen of the stallions
she'd grin.
when a new stallion was born she laid him in her
bed
and played a long moan-
he joined her
All the stallions joined her
All the worlds heard the moan and wept
All her sound was spread under their black skins.

three
he discovered Japan.
one day he walked over a mountain
and on the other side was Japan-
he knew when he climbed back over he'd be home
and Japan would be gone
so he stayed for awhile.
he found a tree where he rested for days.
villages came
with pieces on trays
they were silent

At midnight they began to hum
their feet tight on the ground-
the rhythm was loosened between their fingers.
At sunrise he was on the mountain top
everything was empty
his eyes were red
rust caught the crevices-
he went home.

they were three children.
they had plans to climb a rainbow through and hide
in the colors-
one thought he should be green
two thought she should be red
three thought he should be blue,
they'd stay there until they were filled
or found the gold-
whatever.

three
he's bringing them to Japan-
it's right over there he tells them - often.
they climb the hills with the army of stallions
while she rides in back
playing a low tune
switching off the moon

Helen Decker

afTERreadingCUmMINgs

a barefoot journey through the very green

forest of your idontknowwhereiam yet eyes

begins morning

the uncombed season of your fluid

yieldings

begins morning:

erupts me from this country of bones

the quickened melt of moon

becomes a gray dance

steeped in silver shadows

a fishline cast towards the center

down

the embankment into empty

space

the moon is but a stone my love

a gentle falling

steeped in silver shadows

morning begins

o my love do you realize

today could be the day

we awaken

from the morgue . . .

gari gullo

that night i licked the hollow moonlight from your cheek

i cry
at the thought of the fattened cow
  wide grazing eyes
stupid? or trusting . . .
  is sorrow the desease
i was born with
        melt me
        melt me like ice in
august you coasted into autumn
took my hand
        do you remember
        we went somewhere
  somewhere quiet and soft
        we sat
        we said things
  feeling the lurch of our hearts
  i licked the the moonlight
  from your hollow cheek

gari gullo

"Pride and Prejudice"

Austin wrote of marriage and love
She portrayed Jane Bennett as a gentle dove
Elizabeth was the second sister
And she was particular about her mister
Mary, in the middle, was short on looks
And buried herself in music and books
Catherine they dubbed Kitty
Alas, she was more than just a little giddy
Lydia was the adventurous one
Who ran away just for fun
From the moment of conception
Their mother began her deception
Beauty, was the bait, marriage their goal
And Mrs. Bennett schemed with heart and soul
With cunning and skill
She moved in for her kill
To snare a rich man
Ah, that was the plan

phyllis lederman

Black and White

Sitting cold and naked on the steel table, she was covered with chalked paper. The room was dark except for the parallel cracks of light slipping through the white shade. Her purple lips were shadowed veins across her pale skin. The nurse paced the gray floor opening and closing metal drawers. Grays, blacks, and whites surround her. Nuns danced in her head. She felt as if she were in a basement of an old house, alone. Her silent fingers gripped the steel table. The back door opened and a tall man walked in. He closed the door leaving an empty echo of hollow sound. His eyes stared at her starched face. She turned to the window and cried.

Colleen A. Mac Duffie

Last night,
I saw a cat on a fence
And the night suddenly
Seemed not as black as the cat.

The mist of the sea
danced
on the blades
of the dunes.

B. Mackie

Roars of lions and
leopards leap into voids where
the Angels reside

Susan Pepitone

I

My spine is the sphere of ancient
dusty people. Black holes breath
underneath brown nerves. Holes
ending in Africa.

II

Africa, Africa pulling me back sucking
me in.
I fall through space. I am beads
of flesh absorbed by black, black,
Back, Back to Africa.

III

I only crawl when the sky is dark;
when the disk is silver;
when the waters turn black.

IV

Running fast from yellow cats, I
climb on trees swing on branches.
I just use my thumb.

Susan Pepitone

Natasha

My name is Natasha.
I always loved to sit in my father's troika,
my lap elaborately covered with fur throws,
as my coachman Yuri, dressed in bear skins,
Whipped the horses over the frosted streets
of St. Petersberg... tails streaming stifly behind them,
whipping Yuri as he whipped them.
The harness bells would wildly jingle in the crisp air,
as I, Natasha, urged he and them to go
faster.

It was the winter of the final revolution.
I had never realized my pedigreed and self-centered
world would come to an eventual end.
The madness of the revolution was to me
as the madness of the troika swiftly covering
frozen ground.
Icy, cold and stifly moving towards me relentlessly,
The revolution fell on all of us as mercilessly
as a sharp snow.
I cry when I think of my gaily painted troika, horses
throwing steam, and the fatherely devotion of Yuri.
My name was Natasha, and I belong to a decadent past.

V.A. Pisarik

Mystical Revelations

Gazing upwards
She is aware of the outlines of the stark,
Black branches of March
Against the irridescent backdrop
Of the winter sky nearing dusk.
Her lover is aware of
Her fixed gaze
Skyward - intent on both
Their pleasures.
Visions of his own.
She lowers her stricken eyes from the cold,
Impenetrable heavens... remorse filling her
Agonized soul. To gaze in mystery at his
Transfigured face.
Finding comfort and revelation in
Half-lidded eyes of hazel lit by desires.
Tenderly she brushes his cheek - reassured
Having been so lost...
As the sparrows with the onslought
of the hawks.

V.A. Pisarik

she

she is always having to be moving to define
and in this motion she is warming
and like a child she is entranced
suddenly and always entranced
she is beginning in dreams
and in the mornings she is beginning
she has never let me see what she will not explain
she is a wonder
she is always having to be moving to define
and she is never nodding
a constant
always all ways all alright i will tell you
she is my heart
and only in sitting does she rest

gerard a. rizza

cathy told angie - for cathy randolph

couldn't get it in all the way
and parts of us cried
i think it was our fingertips
and thought how like an arm
that reached inside for her
but didn't reach far enough
touched lots of places and
we'd lay and she'd kiss my cock
and stroke it till i'd come
wet my belly drowned hairs fill
hole
she told me how her mother
had warned her that men are
disgusted w/women when thy're
done after they've come
and i felt important to
prove mother wrong
(she told her sister about
me and us)

gerard a. rizza

poem for helen

don't tell white lies to anyone
and make your bed. its prettier
and pleases us both that way
listen to your feet in the sand
which is your home close
to the water line. be ready
not on guard but ready always
believe me as you listen to your
self in the wake and the rest
i have your tears on my shoulder
and my face lying on the memory
of your warm back listen

gerard a. rizza
feb. 6, 1981

for donna decker

what that which heats

your mind plays paint

paint and lockets infra

heart

she wore a yellow dress

you used mostly black

and green to show the

ribbons

in her hair was chopping

wood hard night that

night

gerard a. rizza

poem in progress - for helen decker

the hard taste of a last side by side cigarette
in bed at night using candles warming the room
your pink robe rolled for a pillow
talking in the dark sharing a hymn at night
being afraid w/you for all impossible
and wonderful . . .

gerard a. rizza

Graying hair yanked by
wrinkled hands, stands
the balding woman.

Hair combed by harsh winds,
aging skin painted with fear,
shuffles the bag lady.

Theresa C. Roman

"Sandman, sell me a bag."

Poppy fields burn slowly,
as the rich, dark, smoke d^{rifts}
with the wind.
I N H A L E.
exhale.
Soooo relaxed, my eyes slant d$_{ownward}$.

"Awaken, Ulysses, the cyclops are rushing towards us."
Startled, I thrust my sword into the fire, until it glowed
white-hot.
Prepared for battle, my sword gouged the eye of the leader.
Polyphemus is blind.
"Sandman, sell me a bag."
Deep, much needed sleep, overcomes me,
as snowflakes whispered,
"You've arrived in Emerald City.
I clicked my sparkling, red shoes,
Just as Dorothy, I need to go home.
"I want to go home!"
"Sandman, sell me a bag."

Alone,
in the dark, rubberband cell, bouncing from
wall, to wall,
reaching the top,
nestling the bottom, I've lost control.
I sit abandoned,
tracks running parallel in both arms.
Gently, I pull the long, dull needle,
from track number 106,
and wait for the trip into the
unknown.

Theresa C. Roman

Latex dreams

This summer I latexed a beach house with dreams
As two young women watched from the boardwalk below
Their swimsuits were shining in the sunset
Brilliant lighthouse beacons calling the soul ships home
watersmooth curves of leg and thigh

A ship at night sea
I turn towards them for salvation
But crowds of vacationers move in like a heavy fog
Leaving me to sink down to the waiting depths

Douglas Schwartz

The bottom of the chasm

She moved like
The moons of Mars
Reflecting light
Vaguely

The relaxed satisfaction
Of knowing
The animal baseline has been reached
And nothing lower
Is possible

Douglas Schwartz

By the sea

Emotions changing with the tide
Crashing full highs
Shrinking bone dry lows
Dangerous seasonal extremes

Like vacations shorelines
You never knew
What to expect
From her

Douglas Schwartz

Emotional current

Through the ice of the night,
I walk with measured steps
As constant as stars.
Heels clicking like metal electrical relays
Towards her well lit room
where resistance,
gives illumination.

Douglas Schwartz

Trying to remember

Her face

Forms

In a broken kaleidoscope

Patterns

In yesterday's clouds

Textures

Of leaves under the snow

Douglas Schwartz

MARITAL EXPECTATIONS

by Esther Chopp

I woke up starving, leapt out of bed to wash my face and brush my teeth and crept back in to await my breakfast-in-bed. I heard no clattering of dishes, no muffled curses directed at clumsiness, no giggles. I jumped up again and looked out the window to check if my parade was advancing down the street. What, no drumbeats, no marchers, no horses prancing? Back in bed once more I sneaked a peek under my pillow for the Cartier box. It must have slipped down under the covers. No, not there. I stripped the bed down. Nothing. It must be with my breakfast tray. Where the hell is that tray, I'm famished? Don't get nervous. It's awfully quiet down there. I wonder what they're up to. I bet they've invited all our friends over and they're assembling to come up en masse. In that case, better put a face on, a little perfume, a sip of mouthwash. Still quiet. They must have heard me jumping around. All right, I'll play along, I'll pretend I'm asleep, the better to surprise me. Sh, Stomach, all that grumbling is impolite. They'll be up in a minute. But, it's been nearly an hour. Don't panic. Ding, dong, ding, dong. The doorbell. Oh, so that's the game! O.K., here I come, I don't suspect a thing, I'm cool. One single solitary figure? It must be a singing telegram or directions for the day. They do that sometimes. Slam, I don't care if I shortened his nose with my door! Fuller brushes today? What's he nuts? Doesn't he know? Well, now that I'm down, let me look around. That's what they probably expect. They're waiting to jump out at me from some corner. Kitchen: dishes in the sink, garbage on the table. Bathroom: wet towels on the floor, globs of toothpaste in the sink, the faucet dripping. Bedroom: nightgowns flung across messy beds, dresser drawers ajar vomiting rejected shirt sleeves. This must be some mistake. I check the calendar: confirmed, September the sixteenth, my birthday. No kids, no husband, no party. No breakfast-in-bed, no parade, no prancing horses. No gift, no singing telegram. No grand entrance into my third decade of being.

Am I expecting too much from marriage?

SANS SUGAR

by Donna Decker

I haven't been here before, but I have, in my mind's eye -- I've been here before. The empty Kretschmer's wheat germ jar, the koos koos -- a strange wheat that an old natural foods roommate introduced me to -- the brown rice; I know it all. I could tell he was a health nut. I could tell by that strong, firm, brown, tough-skinned body. He looks as though he runs ten miles a day. Let's see. What's in the fridge? I feel like a sneak. Don't want anything to eat; just want to see what's there. Some fresh tomatoes, an old moldy loaf of whole wheat bread, a large container of plain yogurt. Oh God, what am I getting into? Here I'm hoping for some donuts, bagels, cookies, stale strawberry short cake even; all the good white sugar, white flour stuff. Not even honey here.

Ha. I run into a health freak. Me, who's usually so paranoid around them. Like they're going to find me out or something. Got to pretend I'm not into food or I'm really into badminton, or jogging or rock-climbing, when all I really want to do is take long leisurely walks and lay in the sun for physical activity. Bars communication. Guess that's why it never lasts. Oh well.

Wish I had worn something different rather than this old Puma t-shirt, dungarees and sneakers. This shirt looks as though I've slept in it. Maybe because I have on numerous occasions. It's so soft. But where's the sex appeal Petrie? Where's the woman who used to wear black tight halters with the feathers round the neck and dance to Reggae rhythms till the wee hours? I think she flew out the window with the flight of her last lover.

Let me check out the bathroom. You can tell a lot about people by their towels. Wonder what time he's getting up. Don't usually do this sort of thing, snooping in people's cabinets. But this one's interesting and I'd like to keep him around for awhile, so I'd better see what he's into. One of those "on the road" characters. I thought I was through with them when I left Colorado. Telling me, "I just want to love you tonight baby, I don't want to love you forever." It could be their theme song. Sounds like it was written by the Eagles. Like they get some sort of sadistic pleasure when they visualize you ringing the door of their friend's apartment and being almost gleefully told that they're no longer in town.

Usually, I just wanted some arms, some company, some holding for the night myself. This one has some of those charactertistics; spouting Zen koans and Confuscian proverbs like "he who travels lightest, travels farthest." I wanted to say, "Yeah, but not necessarily deepest." But I didn't. No clothes, no luggage. Just books and journals. No plans, no money. Just seeing as many places as he can, being in as many places as he can. I wonder if it's also a woman contest. But this one seems a little different. I notice so far that he at least looks at me when I'm talking. His eyes do look a little starry, but I don't know if that means he's totally here or very distant.

Petrie no, Don't look in the mirror. You'll be depressed. Too late. I saw it. Pimples and frizz. All I see is this blurr of pimples and frizz. Whenever my hair grows out of these damn permanents its starts looking like an abandoned bird's nest. I need some sun to dry out my skin, streak my hair with gold highlights, mellow me out, make me sensitive to touch again. Cut it Petrie. You're here for business. Think about business.

What do we have here? Practically nothing. Some salve for jock itch, a razor, a toothbrush, Tom's natural peppermint toothpaste. Bare. The tub's clean. No dirty rings, no hair. His white socks look as if he bleaches them. He's got perfect feet. Small, tan, strong. I have this thing about feet that I inherited from my brother. He always checks out people's feet. It's Bob's art -- to pick out the best feet. He used to say, "It's a matter of aesthetics -- the juxtaposition of the skin color with the muscle tone, amount of hair and the proportion of the toes to the rest of the foot. Are the toes short, fat and stubby, while the rest of the foot's narrow?" He can ramble infinitely about foot varieties. If they are white, skinny and hairless, they usually aren't worth his time. But sometimes things just come together and Bob can see Heaven in the ugliest foot. He believes the foot is the gateway to the soul. If you can massage Bob's feet and know which part controls his solar plexus, he'll follow you anywhere.

Hmmm -- he's got a candle in here. A romantic? I wonder if he takes baths with the lights out and the candle lit? I wonder if he does it alone. Ooh -- large velvet bath towels. Imagine wrapping myself in that after a warm scented candlelit bath. This guy's got something. When's the last time I took a bath with a man? It's been so long, I'd be too depressed if I counted. This lack of love's beginning to show around the edges -- no more spark, no more lustre -- these same old boring clothes. Sexy underwear used to be one of my greatest loves. Now I've seem to taken to athletic bras and white briefs and it's not because I'm into jogging. Why are you hiding this

body Petrie? Oh hell. It's not that important anyway. Touch and sex -- just a small part of life. Non-essential. Ha. Dream on.

The nice thing about this apartment is the view of the bay through the back window. I've always wanted to live close to a clean beach. Can just see myself, suntanned and firm, walking, writing on the beach everyday.

I'm feeling too strongly for this guy for no rational reason. Maybe this guy is me in my fantasies. I'm tongue-tied, a fool, infatuated around him. Can't feel myself around him. Think I already blew it. Doesn't matter. Been practicing celibacy for almost a year now. Gosh, let's see. The last one was Frank. Frank.

Look at this. Massage beads. Guess he doesn't have anyone to do his back for him yet. Already I'm thinking about massaging his back. Me, a sophisticated, liberated woman of the eighties. What a joke. If my radical friends really knew how soft I was inside, first they wouldn't believe it, then they'd throw me out of the sisterhood on my ass.

Why do I feel this guy's a little different? A little softer, a little stronger. Maybe because he always takes his time. I've only been with him a few times, but I feel his attention is totally on exactly what he's doing. Seems like Zen or meditation. I tried to learn Tibetan meditation in Colorado, but it seemed so pseudo -- all the post-adolescent hippies whose parents were still footing their bills, otherwise they wouldn't have been in Colorado in the first place, sitting on little round pillows in the temples staring straight ahead with their eyes wide open, silent for hours. They were "so into the head of meditation." Even if they had no concept of Eastern culture, they had that concept down in a week. Where was the insight? I was always turned off. Like the night I went to a party and this young Buddhist woman from San Francisco told me how she hated the Colorado winter. I happened to mention that I'm really comfortable at the beach and wow, zap, just like that, she lays into me -- about how I should try meditation for my hates, anxieties and hostilities. Maybe she was right, because I almost punched her.

Wish I could see his bedroom. He's probably sleeping on the floor to strenghthen his back. I wonder if he fasts. I hope not. My bother and his friend stayed at an Ashram in Big Indian, New York for a few weeks one summer, and in a matter of days had a couple of staunch North American Buddhists starting to smuggle in Snickers bars and Coca Cola -- good old Bob.

There is something to the meditation. Ray told me that he sits for an hour a day. And he does seem to float. There is a difference from the chaotic nuts I see running to the ferry during rush hour. Not much seems to bother him. Don't trust myself yet. O.K. face it. It's not that you don't want a man. You're afraid. It's that cringing feeling that when he puts his arms around you, he's going to think that your stomach's too big, your breasts sag, your thighs are too flabby, you smell funny, you don't know how to kiss, you stroke too hard, love too soft, or he'll find some kind of mark on your body that you've never seen and then he'll have his own secret about you.

What do we have here? Very interesting. A collection of Nin. Any man who loves Nin can't be all bad. In order to love Nin, some sensitivity's got to be coming through. Nin with her essays on the essentialness of femininity in a world of blue jeans. "How can we float, swirl and feel like women in blue jeans?" Nin, the French lovely lady asks the contemporary women of America. Nin. What else? Some psych, poetry, philosophy, literature. Interesting. Not too much Buddhism. No pop self-improvement, a few modern novels. I use people's book collections like Bob uses people's feet.

I think I hear him moving around. Maybe I should let him know I'm here or he might come out with nothing on. On second thought --

"Hey Ray. You're a half hour late. I let myself in." What a little cutie. No shirt, no socks, just faded dungarees. Perhaps I'll reconsider my celibacy vows. Slow down Petrie. This is not the time. Time is for business. Remember the last time you made lovers out of a potential business partner. Disaster. You wound up moving in, cleaning, driving him around, being his alarm clock. You became a fine mother substitute. Blew a good possibility to record. You've got your own thing going. The trick is, not to forget it.

"Oh, I'm really sorry Trish. Just got in around four. Wild partying going on in Tribeca. Sit down and make yourself comfortable. My place is pretty bare right now. Haven't had time to stock it."

I wish I could stop these fantasies of me and Ray driving through the Rockies, camping at Lake Junewaska on the top of Senora Mountain, standing underneath the falls. Brings me back to my motorcycle mountain man in Colorado. What a cliche.

"Just give me a few minutes and I'll pull myself together. Then we can start working."

I hope he doesn't cover that wonderful rippling chest. It's been so long that I've seen one that I like. It would seem like some sort of tease to cover it up now. Well it's rapidly disappearing underneath a red and black plaid flannel shirt.

Now the lumberjack images will start coming. Please. I wish he could be a normal person. Clean, white-washed, nothing on the slate yet. Ray Silver -- a nice young man, no preconceptions. Just a nice young man. I don't want a nice young man. I want someone strong to hold me, to rub my back, to wet my thirsty skin. It's been too long. But now I've got work to do.

"Ray, you have anything that resembles coffee around here?"

"I just bought some White River tea. First time I've seen it in New York City. Just the right blend of herbs and spices. A little like a strong Darjeeling if you steep it long enough. The mint's real subtle."

"Sure. Make a pot." Coffee, caffeine, nicotine, sugar. Something to jolt me, make me move. As soon as I get out of here, straight to Donut Hut. Get some decent nourishment. Then to the beach to think this thing through.

Donna Decker
II/80

Helen: My Younger Sister

There was a time when I hated you, when we wouldn't talk. You who collected pails of caterpillers and squashed them with your bicycle and mourned for days when you stepped on a frog and accidentially killed it.

I was so scared at P.S. 26 because everyday at lunchtime you came and stood by me. I didn't want to leave you alone when I went to junior high. I wondered what to do until one day you didn't show at 12:00. Then I saw you jumping rope and playing "Strawberry Shortcut" with other first graders. How I feared when you needed me. How crushed I was when you didn't.

One day you ran to me, screaming, "Donna, the stream by the willow isn't there today, but it was yesterday, where could it have gone?" And since I was older and had read many books, you believed me when I told you that a giant had come during the middle of the night and drank it up. I stopped doing that sort of thing when I told you that the nickel was worth more because it was bigger and you took the dime instead.

When you were asked at 8, "Helen, what would you want if you had a million dollars?" You replied, "A car, a house, and a pack of cigarettes.

They laughed at you,

at Beetsy,

at you-

Your voice made whatever you said sound funny. You sounded like a tugboat captain at eight years old, until they took out your tonsils and almost killed you for operating while you had a fever. Like I almost killed you, smothering you with your security blanket when you were two.

I was so afraid when we got to Puerto Rico and had no place to go. I thought you'd be scared and want to go home and wish you never came and would want me to take over, but instead you sat on your suitcase with the Spanish yellow pages in hand, circling the hotels that were right on the beach, laughing at businessmen who asked us to share their suite, laughing at the phone operator who knew only Spanish, laughing that it was 4:30 A.M. and we were in Puerto Rico during the middle of January, sitting on suitcases with no place to go.

You'd spend the whole day with someone because it was their birthday. You'd make them cards and presents and shut off the lights at twelve o'clock and sing "Happy Birthday."

I'd make you eggs and not let on that there was mayonnaise in them. I'd make you tuna fish and crumble up the chunks with my fingers to make it smooth. I'd put mayonnaise in this and tell you because mayonnaise is fine in tuna fish. Like ketchup's fine with eggs at night with tea when we talked and you'd read me a poem. I'd love it and see some choppy lines. You'd let me draw through them, etching them out, editing your poem. You didn't even wince and usually kept the revisions.

You've become a fine poet. you float with your words. No longer the six year old who hovered near me, now you take center stage, writing to the music in your head.

The music you sing in your bed at night,
the music you write for your mirror,
the song that teaches me now.

I renounce my throne and stand next to the only person I've ever always loved and feel the lines merge.

You take it slow, calming my frantic treadmill, running, reading poetry, lighting candles and writing, making order amid the chaos of clothes and books and music in your rose-painted room.

"What do you eat for breakfast to make you write like that?"
You eat fantasies that never dried,
tales you told to invisible students, dogs and cats,
and anyone who did or didn't listen.

Now your tales are poems.

Donna Decker

REAL STORY

by Cathy Wyatt

We had two colored Barber's Shops. One of the barbers - Buddy Branden - was tried and convicted for killing his sixteen year old son. After his wife died, the truth came out. Lord, I can never forget that night. His daughter Cara fifteen years old - she was light-skinned and had long legs and hair. Everyone used to say that Buddy wasn't her father. Because he was just as dark as night and her mother didn't have much light to her skin. She came running to the door banging and screaming her head off. I thought that someone was after her. I remember my husband Dave opening up the door and she came running in with blood all over her night clothes. I couldn't make out head from tail from what she was saying. I told her to sit down and I gave her a cup of water to drink. She drank the water and looked in my face and said, "Oh! aunt Katie, my daddy done kill my brother." He cut him all up with his barber razor, now he is sitting on the side of the bed crying and saying I kill him. "Child where is your momma," I asked her, she said "I don't know.

I thought to myself, that fool haven't had enough of running the street and chasing after every man she could. Buddy caught her two weeks ago fooling around with the undertaker, he try to kill her. Put her in the hospital with a broken nose, and half blind her right eye. Dave brought me out of my thoughts when he say "I'll call the Sheriff, you can let her sleep in the bed with Catherine. I look at Dave he was a hard working man, keeping up the farm the way his father did made him look forty-five instead of thirty. His father had left him the farm when he was twenty-five. Before that we use to live with his parents. After his mother died from pneumonia, his father took to drinking and worrying. When he died the doctor say it was natural causes.

We had pigs, cows, chickens, and all kinds of vegetables growing in our garden. Dave wouldn't let me work in the garden or anything on the farm as far as the animals were concerned. He used to tell me when I use to ask to go with him to pick peas or milk the cows, that his father never let his mother do anything besides raise him, cook and clean the house, so I am not going to let you do any. He was even against me being a mid-wife. Because sometimes he would come home to find me not there and sometimes I was out half of the night, whenever someone had long labor pains. I gave Cara some of my night clothes and told her to sleep with Catherine, I told her that everything would be all right in the morning.

When Dave came back into the house, he told me the Sheriff took Buddy and the razor down to the station. The Sheriff wouldn't let no one see the body, because he say it was cut up too bad. The next day Buddy went on trial the jury convicted him to fifteen years in prison. He was sent to Birmingham, Alabama, to the State Penitentiary there. It came out in court that his wife's finger prints were on the razor as well as his. But Buddy said in court that his wife had use it early that morning to shave him. He loved that woman and everyone in town knew it, even she did. He got out of jail after ten years when his wife died. Her lover the undertaker went to the Sheriff and told him what really happen that night. He said that he could no longer live with the guilt of knowing the truth. They didn't do anything to him for holding back the truth, because he was a respectable man and the only colored undertaker we had left in town. He said that Betty, Buddy's wife, had asked Buddy for a divorce early that morning while Buddy was shaving. Because they wanted to get marry. But Buddy said no, he told her that he would kill her first. The undertaker said she came to him and said she will never be free as long as Buddy was alive. He asked her what did she mean by that, she said nothing and went away. He didn't think no more about it until that night when she came running to him, saying I killed him, I cut him up with the same razor he use shaving this morning. The undertaker said that he was so sure that it was the husband, so he told her to stay the night with him so that people would think she was out all night with him. The next morning when they both heard that it was the son in the bed instead of the father, and that the husband was in jail for killing him. Betty was afraid to visit Buddy, she told everyone that she was afraid that he was going to kill her. The Sheriff went to Buddy in prison after his wife died and told him what the undertaker had told him. After the funeral Buddy went away. He never told anyone why his son was in his bed that night.

On June Singer's "Androgyny"

by Donna Decker

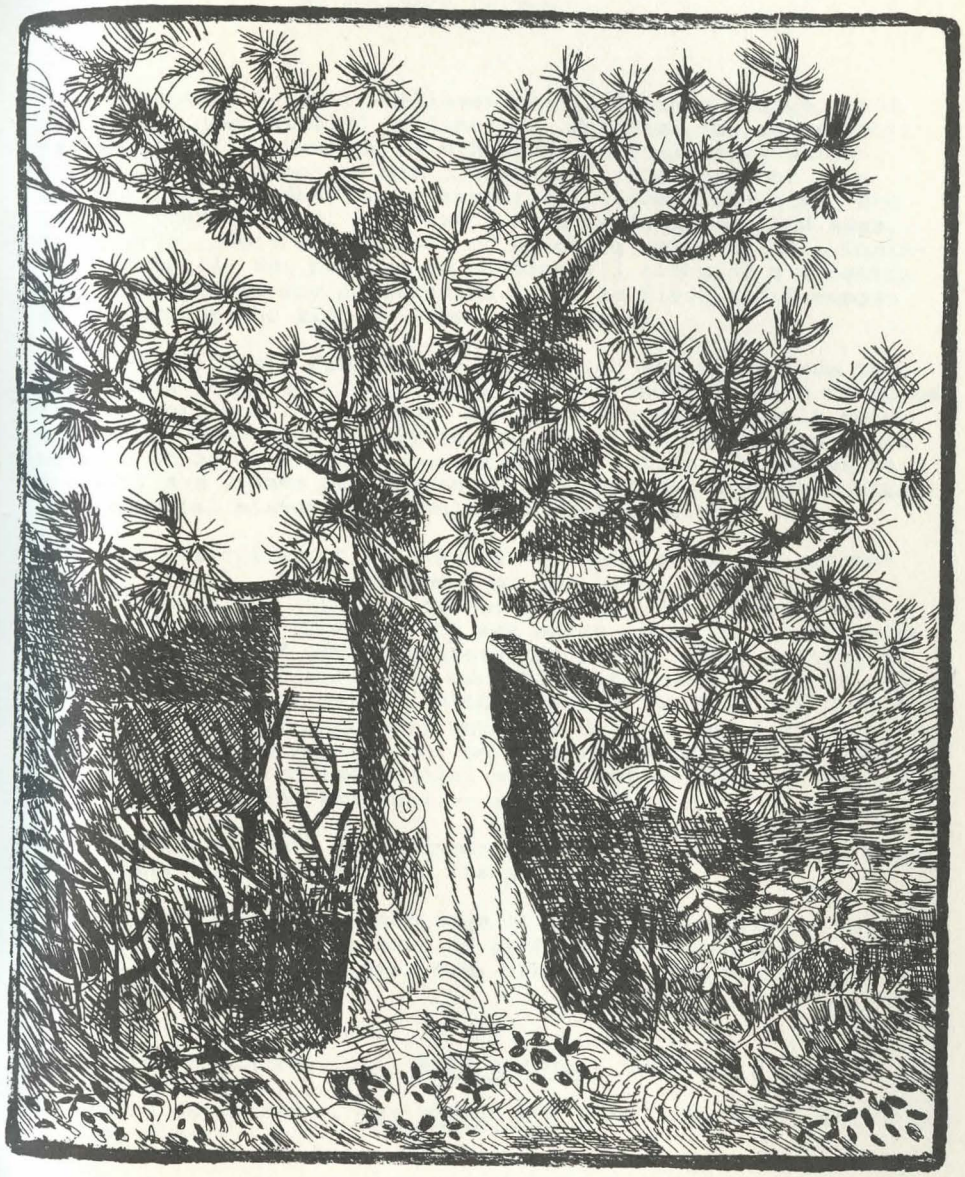
The word androgyny is a combination of the Greek words, masculine and feminine. Throughout Androgyny, June Singer -- a practicing Jungian analyst and author -- shows that both characteristics are present in men and in women. She contends that contemporary men are out of touch with their feminine traits and women with their masculine, each tending to ignore that which they feel is contrary to their own sexual identity. Problems arise when people perceive feelings in themselves as threatening and repress them. This fragments their own personalty and they subsequently cannot relate to themselves or to the other sex.

Through the use of myths, the Bible, Gnostic and alchemistic texts, European and Eastern philosophies, and modern psychological and scientific thought, she shows that the idea of the androgyne has been with us since the beginning of civilization. Soon after people became aware of themselves as sexual beings, they began to differentiate between themselves and the other sex. No longer perceiving all traits within themselves, they split off certain characteristics and projected them onto the other. The way back to a whole concept of personalty would be to realize that the opposing traits within one sex can complement instead of contradict each other.

On studying the impact Christianity had on the Western world, she came across reference texts to the Kabbalah, the books the Bible was written from. She began to research the Kabbalah, eventually finding that the creation myths recorded in Genesis were different from the creation stories found in the Kabbalah. The Deity in Genesis is purely masculine, while the creator in the Kabbalah is androgynous. This fact has been hidden by the patriarchal dominance of Christianity. More research must be done in order to integrate "feminine" traits of the gods back into our culture.

Ms. Singer sees the Womens' Movement as a force for recognizing the androgynous characteristics in both sexes, as long as women do not identify too much with "masculine" traits thereby devaluing and neglecting their own. If this were the case, the movement could then be thought of as humanistic, benefiting all people by making us aware of our potentials.

In Androgyny Ms. Singer shows that potentials of the mind are limitless and explores practical ways for helping us to relate to ourselves, others, and our environment in a positive way, thereby raising the quality of living.



"Feminism and Marriage" in De Beauvoir's The Second Sex

by Kathleen De Meo

Simone de Beauvoir believes that all human beings, male and female are entitled to liberty. Feminism for de Beauvoir is the logical extension of a humanistic philosophy which extends to all areas of man's behavior. She does not hate men nor does she deny their historical accomplishments. She is also suspicious of any "ism", such as feminism, and says, "I utterly revolt at the idea of shutting women up in a feminist ghetto."[1] She prefers to examine all sides of a question before coming to any conclusions. She is first and foremost a free person who also believes in feminism.

She discusses feminism in The Second Sex first from the historical point of view, supporting her theories with examples from history and literature. She then discusses female reactions and expectations. It is her overall view that there is no such thing as a female nature separate from a male nature. Instead, she speaks of a human nature that has been fragmented by historical mistakes and cultural conditioning.

The basic idea of de Beauvoir's feminism is the concept of the "Other". As a statement of the belief that the male is definitely the superior of the species, she quotes Benda's RAPPORT D'URIEL. "The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself...man can think of himself without woman, She cannot think of herself without man." De Beauvoir uses this as the base of her argument, woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her. She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, the Absolute -- she is "The Other."[2]

As "the other", she becomes part of a minority group which has little hope of bettering its situation.

> "Women as a group have no means of organization. They have no past, or history, no religion of their own. They live dispersed

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1. Simone de Beauvoir, All Said and Done (New York, 1974) pp 452-459.
2. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York, 1974) Intro. pp xix-xx.

among males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition and social standing to certain men -- fathers or husbands -- more firmly than they are to other women,"[3]

She further contends that all male ideologies are set up to justify the oppression of women, and women are so conditioned by society that they consent to the oppression. The most obvious institution to consider when discussing women is marriage. Since most women expect to marry, and many actually do marry, it involves a large part of the female population. De Beauvoir feels that marriage benefits the male more than the female, but the female actively seeks matrimony more than the male. She has been conditioned since birth at home and by society to expect to marry; she has been led to think of marriage as an occupation. If she works before marriage, she usually considers it a temporary condition. This state of affairs presents a problem today. Society is not as stable both morally and religiously as it was before. There is less pressure on a man and woman to marry today. This is fine for the man, but based on past female orientation, this eliminates an occupational choice. Therefore, the female has to create a need, in order to keep a job opportunity. Thus, humorists are guaranteed laughs when they refer to "catching a husband" etc. The male-female situation is so basic to our culture, it has its own place in national humor.

This situation leads to ambivalent feelings and attitudes in the female. She seeks marriage, but she fears it also. Through marriage to a "producer", she becomes a full-fledged member of the larger society. His work justifies his existence to the group, and by extension justifies her existence. Her real work is to 1) provide children to continue the human race and 2) to satisfy a male's sexual needs and take care of his household.[4] She fears marriage because her work justifies nothing; it is only through her link to a "productive" member of society that her existence has meaning. The female in marrying often feels that marriage represents freedom because she is leaving old domination and is carving her own place in life. It soon becomes evident that her so-called place was carved for her, not by her. She takes his name, belongs to his group and family, socializes with his friends and is facetiously referred to as, "the little woman" or "the better half" or even perversely as "the ball and chain". All of these expressions can be reduced to one word, Other".

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3. IBID. p.xxii.
4. De Beauvoir, Second Sex pp 475-540.

Every living activity according to scientists requires progression and maintainance, and for men, marriage provides a successful synthesis of the two.[5] Through his occupation and contacts outside the home, he affects change externally, and hopefully internally. When he is tired, harrassed and put upon, he returns to the maintenance side of his life. He returns to his house, his wife, his children and restores himself with the aid of the family. The woman on the other hand is locked into maintenance only. There is no personal progression, no change; she is doomed to repetition and dullness. This is what de Beauvoir considers the real problem in marriage -- the mutilation of the woman through non-growth. Even if she works outside the home, she is treated differently. Her income is usually regarded as supplementary, and therefore nonessential. The man tends to regard it as a rather frivolous activity that puts them in a higher tax bracket. If her salary is necessary for survival, she has different problems. She has to produce on the job for the paycheck, and produce at home to avoid the guilt feelings she has for leaving the children. If she manages to achieve this Amazonian balance and perhaps manage to advance in her job, she has still other problems. If her job involves travel, or transferring to other cities, it is unlikely that a husband would feel compelled to cooperate. But if his job involved travel or moving, she would be expected to go along even if she had her own career. This is what society reinforces.

De Beauvoir looks at every aspect of marriage, and is convinced at every turn that it is a man's world. She sees housework as a negative struggle. A woman accomplishes no permanent good. She simply beats back dirt for a little while. She fights to maintain a status-quo which is hardly ever noticed. She does not "produce" something from an activity that is of benefit to the larger society. De Beauvoir dismisses cooking as a temporarily satisfying but non-permanent activity, and she views shopping as having some benefits because it takes the woman out of the house and forces her into a social activity.[6] De Beauvoir has eliminated every aspect of marriage as a suitable occupation.

What remedies does de Beauvoir offer for this sad state of matrimony? First, she would eliminate all civil, religious, and societal rules. It is her feeling that private relationships should remain private, and the world at large has nothing

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5. IBID.
6. De Beauvoir, The Second Sex.

to say about them. Her ideal is "for entirely self-sufficient individuals to form unions one with another only in accordance with the untrammeled dictates of their mutual loves. Love is an outward movement, an impulse toward another person, toward an existence separate and distinct from one's own, toward an end, a goal a future. Conjugal love, on the other hand, leads to all kinds of repression and lies.[7] It is for the individual alone to determine whether his will in general and his behavior in detail are to be such as to continue or break off the relationship, .." She makes it clear that the individual's freedom is everything, and the state, society and religion should not interfere. An example of this type of relationship would be the one she maintained with Sartre for over fifty years. They never married; they chose to live together as free individuals.[8]

She suggests that each individual should be integrated into society at large, where each (male and female) could flourish without aid, then form attachments through generosity.

She blames the institution of marriage for all the failures, not the individuals.

Her arguments have eliminated every reason for considering marriage as an occupation. It is a relationship for both male and female. The female must be defined and differentiated in reference to herself, not any "other".

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7. IBID.
8. De Beauvoir, Encyclopedia Brittanica.

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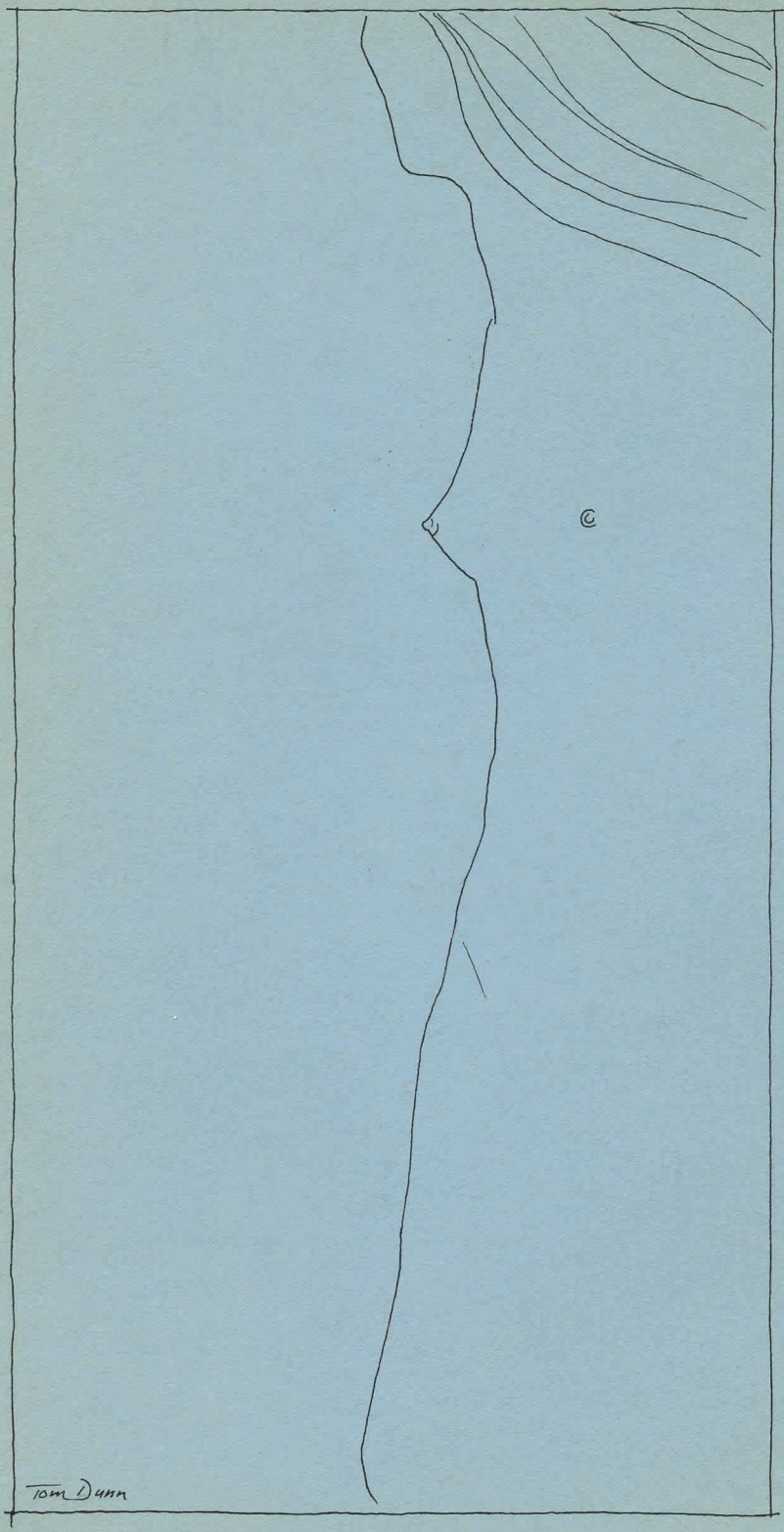
Tom Dunn