

# ALL WAYS A WOMAN



**1992 - 1993**

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# *All Ways a Woman*

1992-1993

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## All Ways a Woman

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## Dedication

Woman  
i have come to love  
the sting at my feet  
as i walk through your words  
a hallowed brazen land  
of slicing tongue jamborees,  
plodding truths and power.

i have limped without you  
but your spirit  
has rescued the dance  
as i move, renewed,  
to your womansong.

*Kerri V. Dunkerton*  
*Editor*

*This issue of All Ways a Woman is dedicated to the memory  
of warrior/poet Audre Lorde, 1934-1992*

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*Carol Garzone*

## **A SONG, A BREATH, A LIFE FOR ALEX**

Today is my birth day! I've been waiting for months. Waiting to see the face that comforts me, sings to me and caresses me.

The time is finally right. The long journey is beginning. I can feel the muscular walls tapping, encouraging me to move on. My heart is racing with excitement as the echo of the sea rings in my ears. I'm tired, almost exhausted, but the memory of the lullabies gives me the strength to pursue the challenge of that great Suez Canal. The final rush of water numbs me, confuses me, scares me. Suddenly I'm cold. Still frightened, I feel a smooth, strong object supporting my heavy head. The light hurts my eyes, the noise is strange and intense, loud and unfamiliar. It hurts my ears. What happened to the gentle sounds of the sea, the warm, soothing blanket of water around me? **SING ME A SONG, TALK TO ME!** Where are you? Help Me! There's no air here. I hear my voice cry, louder than ever. I take a deep breath, my first breath of life. I finally hear that familiar soft, loving voice. "Hi, Alex, you're beautiful."

My long journey has left me exhausted. I want to sleep in the warm comfort of my previous home. I don't understand why I'm being moved by these robots that are as warm and soft as I. Were there others in this world beside that voice I know so well? What are they doing to me? I want to sleep. **SING TO ME!** These strange people don't sing; they just probe, probe every part of my body. They make me cry. I'm so tired. They cover me with confining plastic on my bottom. It makes noise when I move. Something is coming over my head and frightens me. It covers my chest and arms. What are these things on me? My feet are cold. **SING TO ME!** I finally feel safe, wrapped tightly in cloth, with my arms and legs hugging my body. I'm tired, I want to sleep. Is this my new bed, this plastic box? Through the slits of my swollen eyes, I can see there are others just like me. Some are wrapped in blue and some

in pink. I'm tired, I want to sleep. Hours have passed. I had a dream. I heard that familiar, comforting voice sing to me. I awake suddenly, frightened. I can't breathe. SING TO ME! Help me! There's no air in here.

I awake to the steady sound of my heart beating. It is louder and more distant, as though it were out of my body. My clothes are gone and I am very warm. I feel a stinging on my leg, an uncomfortable tightness on my chest. There are long, strange, plastic tubes coming from my body, that lead to the boxes that echo my heartbeat. I'm enclosed in a plastic container. The strangers I see are blurred visions, covered in green cloth. They have no faces; they only have eyes; serious, concerned eyes. I am confused. Life is so complicated. SING TO ME!

I feel an emptiness. My cries startle me. As I struggle to move for comfort, I feel a soft, gentle touch, and hear a familiar song, the same song I'd heard in the passing months. I see the loving eyes as I search, rooting. The air is so heavy outside my plastic dome. Her eyes, her voice, her breasts comfort me. I'm tired. I gasp for air. SING TO ME!

Today I'm going to my new home. I'm frightened. The air is heavy. Why can't I breathe? I'm happy when I see my mother's eyes, hear her voice and feel her warm skin. She helps me breathe.

The doctors are always poking and probing. They talk to each other in whispers. Where am I? The ride in the car seems endless. Am I going to another new home? More doctors, probing and poking. They are gentle and they have faces. There's a special face, always smiling, laughing, with familiar eyes. They're my mother's eyes on a different face. She has the same gentle voice, the same song. She plays with me and we laugh. She makes everyone laugh. She shows me my new home. Many children live here. Some cry, some sleep. There are many machines, some for each child. They have familiar wires and tubes.

We are dressing for a party! We all have red on and

will visit a big man in a red suit. There is a huge tree that sparkles with a million stars. There are brightly colored boxes with ribbons. Candles are burning. We are celebrating the birth of Jesus. Tomorrow we will celebrate my new life.

How long have I been sleeping? I'm in the plastic dome again. I can't move. I'm frightened. SING TO ME! I can hear the machines pumping air in rhythm with my heartbeat. I feel heavy, tired, my throat hurts. I can't see anything, my eyes are heavy. I hear the two loving voices. I can rest; they're hers. The moisture drops from the dome onto my cheek. It tickles. Her hand is there to dry it. Their laughter excites me. I want to move. Help me!

The days are endless, the machines never stop their rhythm and the smiling eyes are always here. Many faces are here, but these two are special.

Today is special. I am leaving the security of the warm, moist atmosphere of the dome. I'm frightened, SING TO ME! I cough and cry. I hear the song. I CAN BREATHE! The air is clean and light. I'm going home.

Today is my FIRST birthday. I take a deep breath and look at all those loving, smiling eyes. I smile and they sing to me. I can breathe! I BLOW OUT THE CANDLES!

*Sharon Gordon*

## **COURTNEY**

She picks the flowers ever so carefully  
Choosing only the best nature has to offer  
Her long hair blowing in all directions  
The sun's rays clinging to her hair,  
creating an aura of purples, golds, and reds.

She is just a speck of movement in the garden  
Swiftly, like a chrysalis, she flutters back and forth  
Mesmerized by her graceful beauty,  
dancing to the music within herself  
Soon to be awakened by her angelic smile beaming at me.

*Maryjane O'Connor*

## **A MOTHER'S REVERIE ABOUT HER CHILD AWAY FROM HOME ON HER BIRTHDATE**

Since you have left for Disneyland  
(And other famous spots) we can't  
dispatch a lighted birthday cake  
and pose the risk of fire en route.  
Yet in your absence, you must know  
within our hearts six candles glow.  
You're very fortunate to be  
away from this vicinity.  
Removed, we hope, from bullet's harm  
absorbing San Francisco's charm  
while clinging to its cable cars--  
a thrill unknown to you thus far.  
The grandeur of the redwood trees  
should sooth you with its awesome peace.

According to the tourist's log,  
the life down there's unlike the flawed,  
and bloated ego named Manhattan  
which needs fierce piercing by a hatpin.

So romp and play, dear. Late tomorrow  
your train returns to new gomorrah.

## **HIGH SCHOOL DAZE**

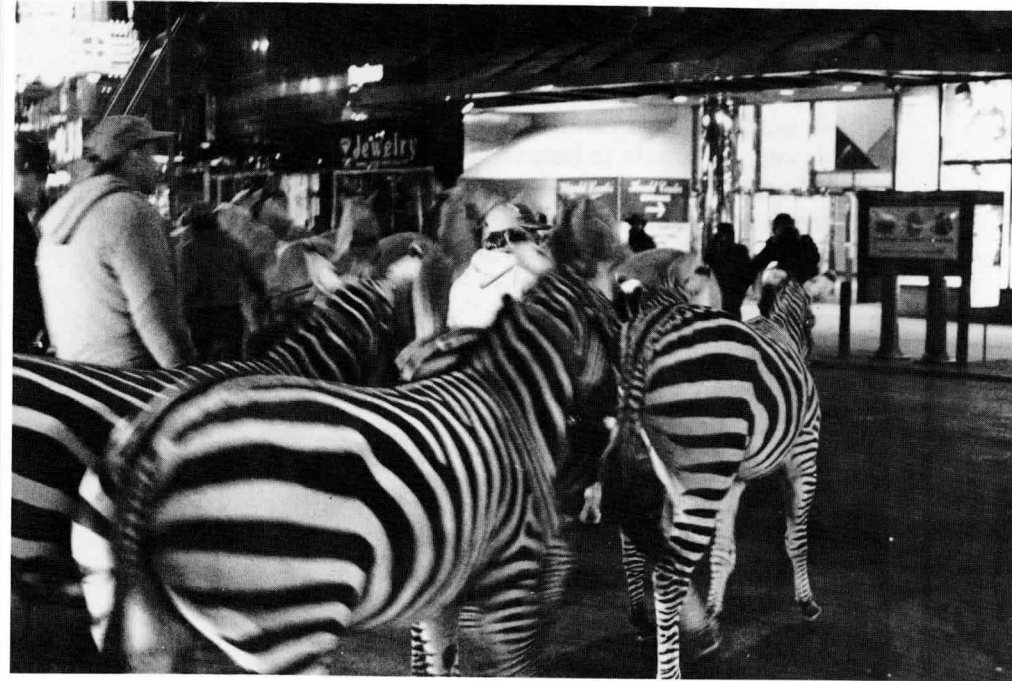
Everyone entering a new school for the first time has feelings of apprehension; I was no exception, especially since I didn't want to be there in the first place.

St. Peter's High School for Girls had originally placed me on their "waiting list" (in other words, I wasn't exactly their first choice either) but after numerous phone calls from my mother to the principal, I was one day greeted with the news I had been "accepted." Doomed, I felt, was a more appropriate word. My fate had been sealed and I was sentenced to four additional years of parochial education.

Despite the good things I heard about Catholic high school I still had hopes that St. Peter's would lose my records or some such thing, so that I could attend a "normal" (public) high school like everyone else in my neighborhood. Since that was not to be, I donned my new armor and marched fiercely off to do battle with yet another institution that would attempt to mold me into the model of a Christian young woman.

My first year of high school was difficult and I got off to a peculiar start. At freshman orientation my family name --Jakubowski, was so completely disguised by the principal that I truly did not recognize it myself! She called Jabawosky, Jabkuski and a few other tongue twisters to which I did not respond. Being the last freshman left in the auditorium, she asked me my name. "Jakubowski," I replied. "I called you," Sister Mary Virginia insisted. "No Sister, you called..." and I attempted to imitate some of the guttural noises she made. "You did not call Ja/ku/bow/ski," I said (annunciating every syllable so she could hear the simplicity with which the name was pronounced.) Needless to say, we got off on the wrong foot. I later discovered that my last name intimidated not only the principal but my various other teachers as well, who were also unaccustomed to lengthy ethnic names.

As if that wasn't bad enough, my "senior sister" didn't show up at orientation. A senior sister was a member of the senior class who was to escort you around the building





during those first hectic days of school. So I got lost--a lot! Of course while I was wandering the halls Sister Virginia would magically appear. "And where are you supposed to be?" ( I was tempted to answer "Port Richmond High School" but I figured she wouldn't get it and for sure I would!)

I suppose the most memorable event of freshman year was my first music class. It had nothing to do with music, but rather a lesson on the art of sitting "like a lady." Up to that point I didn't realize there was any way other than to plunk down in a chair. But our music teacher, a somewhat effeminate gentleman, taught us, en masse, to feel the chair behind us with the backs of our legs and then glide quietly into it (which he demonstrated for us). For the first few weeks he refused to begin class until we could get into our seats without being heard.

If I thought the Felician Order had a unique approach to education (they seemed to believe learning was best accomplished by a sturdy rap on the head), the Sisters of Charity proved to be only slightly better. We were no longer physically abused but "charity" had little to do with their methods. Even the lay teachers in the school, though dressed in civilian clothes, were bound in the "habits" of the Sisters of Charity.

In my sophomore year there was one English teacher, however, who was very different indeed. First of all she came in from Manhattan, always late, always very disheveled, and often on Mondays with hickies on her neck! But she made the classes enjoyable, encouraged creativity and seemed very attuned to our teenage minds. I loved her! Unfortunately, her teaching career at St. Peter's was very short-lived.

With all the clubs and activities St. Peter's High School for Girls had to offer, one would think it was easy to fit in somewhere. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Basically the school was divided into three main organizations; the basketball team (St. Peter's claim to fame during the years I attended), the cheerleaders and the honor society. Since I was not cut out for any of those elite groups, I found myself in the company of the "pumpkins in the petunia patch" as my friend Joan appropriately dubbed us. We just didn't fit the "Peterite" image.

Individuality was difficult to express in a parochial school uniform. Ours consisted of a plaid pleated skirt

(meant to skim the floor when you knelt down but best worn hiked well above the knees, we thought), a plain white, open collar blouse and a gray blazer. We were also required to wear, both to and from school, our school hat and white gloves. Our shoes resembled something my Great Aunt Annie found fashionable in her day, and were purchased at Styl-O-Pedic! But we were the class of "69" and there were ways to overcome the obstacle of traditional parochial school garb. We relied on accessories to display our individual preferences.

Again, we were divided into groups; there were toughs, collegiates (now known as preps or preppies), hippies and a handful of freaks who insisted on making the rest of us look bad by wearing only what was permitted by school policy.

I tried each of the various looks at different times to find the right me. Like the toughs, I teased my hair (it collapsed); I tried black eye make-up (on rainy days it ran and I looked like a raccoon). When I purchased black textured stockings, my mother intervened. Obviously, the look wasn't easily achieved. All I got out of it was a sore head, black eyes and a lecture on what kind of girls wear those kind of stockings. I also could have gotten lung cancer, as smoking was the epitome of toughness.

The collegiates wore cable knit knee socks (mine fell to my ankles due to my underdeveloped calves); they wore tortoise shell glasses (my father's eye plan didn't cover that style and there was no way he was going to spend \$35 to make me feel part of the crowd) and they had a bopping gait that I never could get right (many of them were on the basketball team). Besides, they had this incredible sense of school spirit oozing from every pore of their bodies that I definitely did not possess!

The hippie trend popular at the time was punctuated by long straight hair, wire rim glasses (a la John Lennon), rings on every finger and anything else no one would be caught dead in! The look worked well for me: my hair was pin straight anyway. I didn't have to change my walk and it was inexpensive. Also, the nuns hated it because it represented beliefs not in keeping with Catholic doctrine (which was probably another reason I found it so attractive).

My own personal mark of distinction among my peers included a red felt scalloped-edged cape that completely covered my uniform (worn Monday thru Thursday) and my Friday special was a short black cape. I wore so many rings that I couldn't close my hand to write, and I wore little brass bells on a long red rope around my neck. I also attached an assortment of buttons up and down my jacket lapels that stated my newly acquired carefree attitude (some of which the meanings escaped me, but raised a lot of eyebrows among the faculty). I became a kind of colorful character among my classmates.

Despite my "flower child" appearance and attitude, I was basically a decent kid. I was still too young to "tune in, tune on and drop out" as the counter-culture suggested. I went to school, received passing grades (most of the time) and volunteered my opinion only when asked; which leads me to a final incident that taught me about academic freedom and the parochial education system.

As we matured in years we were encouraged to discuss and debate different aspects of our subject matter. In one economics class, I was assigned to prepare a view opposing democracy. Apparently, I made some very convincing points because a vote revealed that most of the class agreed with my argument. Sister Helen went crazy; she screamed that we were all "communists." It was not my intention to provoke Sister Helen: I only wanted to make a good presentation and receive a passing grade. Her reaction (or over-reaction, I should say) should have taught me a lesson right then and there, but in my youthful ignorance I continued to believe that these were open discussions.

A senior year "marriage" course offered another opportunity to express our views. It was given by a handsome young priest named Father McCarthy. One of the class discussions involved prostitution, "Any thoughts on the subject?" Father asked. I volunteered that since it had been in existence before Christ, I was doubtful it would ever be eradicated and perhaps it should be legalized and thereby controlled. Father's face turned ash white, then blazing red. "Blasphemy!" he shouted back at me and demanded I leave the auditorium. But I finally realized that our opinions were acceptable only when they were in keeping with Catholic

doctrine. Unlike a TV station, opposing views were not welcome.

If I sound like a disgruntled alumna, it is largely because I am. Since graduation I have discovered academics had little to do with my education; I learned more through the strange experiences and observations I made during my four years at St. Peter's.

I also know my funny stories about "surviving" Catholic school are a mask for some of the more traumatic experiences I had at the hands of those dedicated "educators", just as I know that today I am (if nothing else) a well-disciplined individual because of their endless efforts at getting me to adhere to their rigid rules. (Which, by the way, is the reason you're reading this now and not at a much later date than I ever anticipated!)

*Vera Saverino*

**NEVERMIND ME**

Nevermind me  
or the trees that never  
get the chance to  
kiss the sky  
hello or good-bye.

It's a lovely day  
to rape animals of their  
dignity but they don't  
know any better, so  
nevermind me, just  
forget what you see.

Didn't anyone ever tell you  
that fish don't drink oil  
and the color black  
is the shade Jesus saw  
when he closed his eyes.  
The word is Negro--  
Didn't anyone teach  
you  
how to spell?

Lists are listless  
and it's easier to  
nevermind me, and  
forget what you see.





## LETTING GO

That day she was born  
the feeling started  
and every day since  
it's grown.  
I know what she's thinking, saying, feeling,  
she really is my clone.  
I can look in her eyes  
and see her thoughts,  
I can look in her heart  
and feel the beat,  
the beat that now skips  
when she talks about him,  
the beat that I know is not mine alone,  
but belongs to a world,  
a world I'm afraid of  
because it can hurt her and I need to protect,  
to keep her from harm.  
My love has sheltered her,  
perhaps too much,  
but how can I help it,  
when miles away I can feel her touch,  
when miles away I can feel her pain,  
when I want to hold her as if my arms  
could stop the world from coming in,  
could stop the world for just one moment  
so I could have my child again.  
But the world won't stop and neither will time,  
so I give her to life  
with the wish that the love she has chosen  
will care for and cherish her  
as much as I.

## IT'S ONLY FOR A YEAR

"It's only for a year," she said.

Denise left three weeks ago for Nashville, Tennessee. It may be the Country and Western capital of the world, but Nashville's gain is my loss. As of last May, Denise had yet to pass the grueling three day Certified Public Accountant exam in the compulsory length of time required by her large New York accounting firm. So she decided to transfer to their Nashville office because one of the firm's large corporate clients had recently moved there.

"It's only for a year," she said.

Already she's purchased enough furniture for her apartment to last for five years. I hope she doesn't like the Country and Western capital of the world too much because Western music is not my favorite kind. Could one year lead to five years and then ten and then ten more?

I still can't open the black and white marble composition book I kept as a journal during our cross country trip last summer. It sits quietly where I placed it over a year ago because I can't seem to open its pages to relive that ten day adventure of ours. Denise and I travelled side-by-side in her little blue Toyota Celica crossing each state's border together from San Diego, California to Staten Island.

On the very first day of our trip we were stuck in the burning desert with an empty tank of gas and paid \$1.69 a gallon when we finally reached a lonesome gas station surrounded by sand, cactus and tumbleweed. Endlessly, over hill and dale, we drove every day. We drove up the California coast to San Francisco and down the Crookedest Street in the World. We drove through the mountains of Yellowstone Park and Cody, Wyoming to the Mojave Desert and the Salt Lake flats of Utah before we seemed to reach civilization. Mountains and deserts were everywhere as far as the eye could see. We relied upon each other to drive five hundred miles each day even though I asked her to drive the turning and twisting roads of Big Sur and the narrow ones of Mount Rushmore.

On our journey Denise showed me the culinary

delights of Arby's , Little Caesar's, and Pizza Hut. A big smile always crossed my face at the sight of the familiar golden arches of McDonald's. The yellow beacon was a welcome vision after driving mile after uninterrupted mile and brushing off the desert dust of Vacaville or Winnamucka, Nevada.

"It's only for a year," she said.

A year she'll be in Nashville. I wonder how it compares to Lake Tahoe or the Grand Tetons. Perhaps it's like the vast Badlands of South Dakota or the hustle and bustle of Sturgis where we saw a motorcycle rally and 300,000 owners from all over the world gathered for the annual event.

Mile after mile we watched our country unfold before our very eyes. The majesty of it all. The vastness of the mountains and the immeasurable rivers and lakes cannot compare to the deep void in my heart. But "It's only for a year."

The envelope with the CPA results came at last and sat silently waiting to be opened. Yes, the last two parts had been passed, and today she has three new initials after her name.



**“OH BLAH DI, OH BLAH DA, LIFE GOES ON  
LA, LA, LA, HOW THE LIFE GOES ON”**

He came into the house knowing he had missed curfew, but he also knew he had a good reason and she would understand as always. Seeing the glow of the television set coming from her bedroom, he went to the door and stood there whispering her name. “Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Thompson, are you awake?” he called quietly, not wanting to wake her husband asleep in the bed next to her.

“You missed curfew by an hour and a half, Michael. I’m a wreck, and you’re asking me if I’m awake?” she answered tightly.

“I’m really sorry, but I have to speak to you.”

“All right, just give me a minute to get my robe on and we’ll talk in the kitchen. Put the kettle on.

He had been living with the Thompson family for three months now and knew where everything was in the kitchen. He filled the kettle with water, put it on the stove, and got out her favorite coffee mug, the one with the pink Florida flamingo on it. He measured out a spoonful of coffee and emptied one packet of Sweet’N’Low into the cup. By the time she came into the kitchen, the kettle was giving out its low whistle, and she filled her cup, savoring the aroma of the coffee. Sitting down, she took a little time to pour some milk into the cup and stir it awhile, studying Michael.

At seventeen years old he was almost a man, but still a child in so many ways. When her son had first come to her and said he had a friend, a good friend who had told him he was being beaten at home, she didn’t believe it. Teenagers, she knew, exaggerated and dramatized everything that affected them personally. But when her son continued telling her every episode that Michael had told him, she knew her son was about to bring home yet another stray. Charlie had been bringing her hurt animals, birds, kittens, puppies, anything that needed help, for years now. She finally had to put a stop to it, explaining that she couldn’t possibly care for every hurt or abandoned animal in

the neighborhood, and he would just have to learn to let nature take its course.

But this was different. This was a boy who had nowhere to turn. He had just moved onto the street eight months prior, and he and Charlie had hit it off immediately. She was glad Charlie finally had a best friend since he was so shy and always had trouble making friends. So when Charlie said Michael was running away from home and didn’t care what happened, she knew what she had to do.

This wasn’t just taking in another stray, however. She contacted Family Court and found that she could probably offer shelter to Michael with no repercussions. She also called a friend at a local teen counseling center and got Michael into their program. The counselor told her he would work with Michael, and that Mrs. Thompson should also try to draw Michael out of his shell. “Never forget that our main goal is to try to fix dysfunctional families and put them back together.”

Over the past month, this once quiet boy had finally started to talk to her. He seemed to find a niche in the family and was soon roughhousing with her two other children just like the older brother would, teasing, and eating endless peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

She kept in close contact with the counselor and progress was being made, not only with Michael, but with his family. His father, whom Michael was the most afraid of, was also in counseling and a family reconciliation was in the not too distant future. So just as she was mentally patting herself on the back, feeling pretty good that here was yet another successful healing story, Michael backslides and stays out late. She knew from her conversations with Michael, that the beatings had been his father’s way of disciplining him for the normal infractions that every teenager tries to get away with--missing curfew, playing hookey. When he had first moved in, she had laid down the rules of the house--no missing curfews, no truancy, and helping with chores around the house. He had been pretty good about this and it surprised her that tonight he was so late.

“Okay, Michael, I hope you have a good excuse. You know what the rules are and I won’t put up with this.”

“Mrs. Thompson, I’m sorry I was so late, but my

friend Chris wants to run away from home because he thinks his parents' divorce is his fault. I tried to talk him out of it, but do you think you could talk to him?"

She thought to herself, Oh, no, here we go again. But she said, "Of course, bring him around."

*Sharon Gordon*

### **BY HER BED**

By her bed

I stare

The bare walls gaze back at me

I think

Perhaps today the sun will poke through the waning clouds

I listen

For the machines and its rhythmic beeps and bleeps.

The courtyard is an array of colorful spring flowers

I watch

As the once magnificent flower is drooping

Its petals falling daily

Soon to be no more

I wonder

What happens when the machines grow silent?

I look

Outside dusk has begun

The colors are vivid

Like the flower that once was, but no more

I think

Soon it will be night

And the blanket of blackness and quiet will tuck us in.

*Kathleen M. Carbone*

## THE HANDS OF MAGDALENA STEIN

When Pop, who came from a rather wealthy family, proposed to Mother, she spread her fingers palm up before him and said, "I have nothing to give you but these two hands." In their cramped chilly bedroom, with one baby or another snuffling in the crib, and two or four or six more children in the other bedroom; or in the cold dim light of the elevated station, did he ever lift one of those hands and kiss it with tender awe? In the days before washing machines and steam irons, refrigerator-freezers and vacuum cleaners, she bore nine children and buried two, and sent every one of us off to school impeccably clean and neat.

Mother never owned an alarm clock, but she got up at 6:00 every day of her life until she was too ill to care if dawn ever came again. She would hurry into the kitchen and light the coal stove, and quickly wash and dress in its slowly expanding circle of warmth. Then it was twist up the long light brown hair that Pop forbade her to cut and hurry down to the bakery around the corner on First Avenue for sweet rolls and milk.

I would wake to her small noises; the rustle of petticoats, the muted clash of pots on the stove; the soft "tock" of the door as she went out. Louise would already be up, fussing with her hair and clothes, while Madge and I drowsily watched, fascinated as younger children always are with the unutterable sophistication of the elder. Carl and Bill teased us and Eddie, and began bouncing around the room like a couple of springs set in spiraling perpetual motion; into the kitchen, where Mother would be nursing the baby and Father would be shaving at the sink.

Sometimes it was eggs for breakfast, with the yolk, despite its sunny color, bleeding drearily and messily onto the plate. I would dawdle and poke at it until Mother's firm "Eleanor" made me slide it nearly whole down my throat. (Many years later, my youngest daughter told me that I had cooked her eggs the same way, and she hated them too.)

After kissing each one of us, Pop would leave for his job at the piano factory across the street. Mother, cajoling,

caressing, tweaking, patting, smoothing and straightening, readied the older children for school. She never had the luxury of being sick, and I doubt she sat down for five consecutive minutes on any day.

I remember once, in the delirium of some childhood illness, calling out to her in the night. Softly she came and rearranged the covers, stroking back my damp hair and murmuring comfort. How cool and strong, were her hands, seeming, even as she sat quietly clasping my own, to be poised to take up some as yet incomplete task; to begin again the symphony of purposeful movement that sang through all our days.





*Margheurita Turner*

### **WOMAN AGAINST THE WIND**

I bluster and blow with all my might,  
Far into the still of the night.  
Scattering all the leaves and debris in sight.  
A crying child's balloon or a loose kite  
soaring high into the air,  
The destination only heaven knows where.  
A woman scurries by to get in from the cold,  
And oh so cold the wind doth blow,  
Causing tears to form in her eyes,  
But audibly she does not cry.  
Hat askew, she covers her breasts and gathers her skirt.  
Seeing this..., the wind blows stronger, obviously the flirt.  
As higher and higher he blows her skirt...  
With the swiftness of a matador she straightens her hat;  
And like a dove that's been hurt...,  
Again covers her breasts and gathers her skirt.  
Challenged, Mr. Wind blows harder,  
Wildly, wildly he blows, but..., the woman defiant now...  
Resists the wind and hangs on to her clothes.  
Blow Mr. Wind with all your might...,  
For unlike a lover's caress...  
No matter how hard you blow...  
The lady you cannot undress!

*Jean Genet wrote that dreams are nursed in darkness.*

**MEDITATIONS  
ON A PIECE OF CLOTH  
IN THE DARK**

When I touch the fabric, I imagine sailing on a boat with my boyfriend, wrapped in a dark blue blanket. We caress one another and the blanket keeps us warm; we become one.

In the morning, there is no sign of him but I am still wrapped in the blanket. It takes away my loneliness; It is my strength.

**CHRISTINE ALLEE**

As I roll the silky fabric gently in my hands, I can feel its serenity. Perhaps it is the color of the bluest sea which forms gentle crests and then breaks. From the shore, far off in the distance is tranquility, silence; restful.

The texture is smooth, glides easily over my skin as blue waters do the shore. It flows back and forth without harming the shore, then flows away.

I sit and watch the ocean to feel its peacefulness, and touch this fabric and feel the same essence.

**PATRICIA BARONE**

I can't help but run my hands along the scarf. Its coarseness stirs me, the fibers almost sharp, gently pressed to my skin. I rub it across my face and it feels like rough, masculine hands after a long day at work. I want to feel those hands all over my body. I begin to caress myself with the scarf—I can feel the sweat of his body in the moistness of the scarf; I can smell his manliness, want him pressed against me and inside me. My heart is throbbing... I thrash wildly, the scarf wrapped around my body like a snake; I can

feel him, taste him and he is inside me, penetrating deeply.

An explosion inside me, followed by another and finally, a third. As I lay there breathless, the scarf between my legs and up across my breast, I feel my sweat along with his in my bed.

**KRISTEN BERGEN**

As I run the warm, soft scarf through my fingers, all I can think about is the color blue; a color which gives a sense of inner security, helping me overcome any fears I may have of the unknown.

**ANDREA BIANCO**

It feels blue, a deep dark strong blue, soft and silky. Like the tip of his cock as I lick at his thighs. It is sensuous as I run my fingertips along it, smooth yet rough at the same time. It has crisp lines like hair running through it; I would love to feel it against my face to get the smell and the taste of it.

It is cool yet warm like the feel of him when he is about to come. It is gentle, even with its dark color, as he is even when I allow him to suffer well past the point of dark blue and he is still gentle, yet demanding.

It is in control of its every molecule; our love brightens and floats above passion, then the blue disappears until I touch it again.

**PAT BORSILLI**

Stroking the coarse fabric, I can feel my fingers throb as they move. Slowly over the rough fabric; the faster I stroke, the more heat I feel.

The rough, lumpy, bumpy surface gives me a sensation of a black and morbid color. Yet, as I squeeze it, it feels as fluffy as a white cloud. Squeezing, I feel relaxed as if I were floating. Stroking it again, flannel comes to mind. Yes, flannel—a hardworking laborer's suit; red and black plaid,



white and black plaid. Sweat it accumulates during the hard working hours, the smell it obtains during the hard working hours.

Coarseness and morbid black, white fluffy clouds, hard worked sweat... the impression, shades of grey.

*MARIA CALDERELLA*

Without opening his eyes, the man has a complete view of the object he holds. The piece of cloth he holds makes him see red--blood red. As he runs his hand along the cloth, he can feel it flow freely, like blood. The cloth has made him angry and he is literally seeing red, the color he imagined would be in the depths of hell, the color of the devil himself. He should fear this color...it makes him think of the blood he has spilt, both his own and others. He thinks of the anger he feels toward the rest of the world--those thoughts fill him with fear; he drops the cloth and runs.

*GREG CUSICK*

The smoothness of the fabric gives me the impression of warm red and black. The red is like the blood within me and the black like the darkness which surrounds me. The tiny fringes of the fabric feels like little needles going through tiny fingers.

There is blood everywhere; death is in my hand. The soft ball of fabric is taken away...I am free. You saved my life.

*PINKY DAS*

The object placed in my hands feels purple—a deep, violet. I touch it gently with my fingertips because I sense it is delicate. Its smooth, silky texture gives me the impression of a pattern; It is a piece of light clothing and makes me think of the spring season, so I see a pattern of blooming flowers.

*STACEY FLESCHER*

My eyes are closed and all I can see is darkness; all of a sudden, an object is placed gently into my hands.

I cannot see the object as it is, but as I imagine it to be. It feels soft and innocent and I feel comfortable, touching it. I like how it is smooth underneath my fingertips. I imagine that the object is some sort of bluish color, because it is as smooth as ice and as gentle as clouds in the sky. I believe it is some sort of clothing, possibly a silk scarf that would feel nice to have wrapped around my neck. It feels dainty and delicate to the touch, like a petal of a flower.

*AMY GOTT*

I feel that the piece of cloth is light blue. Many colors pass through my mind, but light blue seems to be the one color that is most familiar. I suppose this is because the texture of the fabric reminds me of some old bed sheets that I had when I was younger. These sheets remind me of a cool morning breeze. I remember snuggling up under the sheets because of the cold air coming in from the window or the fan. As cold as I was, I was too comfortable to get up and shut the fan off or close the window and actually rather enjoyed the chilling sensation that ran down my spine and throughout my body.

I suppose that feeling a slight chill is more pleasurable than to be hot and sticky with sweat. I know there may be times when feeling all sweaty may be the greatest thrill in the world; but when you are a little girl, you don't know about these things. I suppose light blue is a color that reminds me of innocence and simplicity.

*CYNTHIA C. HALLAHAN*

As I touch this very coarse material, I get a deeply rooted feeling. It is a dark color. Its squishy, cuddly, rough but gentle surface touches my senses and deeply relaxes me. It makes me feel really sleepy and I would love to have it wrapped around my body. I want to be swept away by it and seek comfort in it. It gives me a feeling of warmth, that it can

protect me from outside harm. I can float away; and if I used it as a pillow, I would fall into a deep, tranquil, uninterrupted sleep.

Dark colors are not necessarily evil. They can be relaxing, like the night in which you fall asleep. The dark room actually helps you to forget about everything around you.

**BETH KELLENER**

I feel power when I touch it, so it must be black. A black, powerful scarf. It is plain cloth, no design whatsoever, not silk because if it were, it would not feel as powerful. It is very comforting. Like a powerful man protecting a weak one—I would be protected by the solid, black cloth. It has that fatherly quality.

I wouldn't be afraid of anyone if I were to have this solid, black cloth. I would keep it in my pocket and I know it would protect me.

**RAFAEL KILAYKO, JR.**

I feel the scarf must be black. The material is flexible but rough; I could tell as soon as I touched it that it must be a winter scarf, and black is a warm color. When the weather is cold, I always seem to have something black on. When the sun beats down on top of your shirt jacket or anything else black, it seems to heat you up as if there is a fire on top of you.

Just because I feel it is black, I want to wrap myself up in it and stay that way all night. Just to be snuggled in something warm.

The fringes on it makes it playful; you can twist them or braid them. The fringes makes it more exciting than a lonely, dull scarf.

**JUDI MARINO**

The cloth is white because it is new and pure like a bride on her wedding night.

It feels as if it has been recently cut, the edges frayed. I want to rub it all over my body, to feel it touch my skin.

**STEPHANI ROTHBERG**

It is a large cloth that I feel. The texture is rough yet warm; the pattern changes from red and white to black and white, depending on my mood. As I hold it, I long to have it envelop me, to sink into a deep sense of serenity. It screams out to caress me, its color changing with its intensity, red for passion, black for mystery, and white for purity.

It is soon a part of me, interlocked for eternity. I do not want to let it go. I have never known such a feeling of unity. As I feel it press against my body, the color turns bright red. My heart races at its touch. We are soon one.

**LEIGH SHEA**

When I touch the object, I think it is black because it seems to absorb heat. I feel the release of tremendous heat. In my mind, black is the deepest color and attracts me because it is unknown and secret.

Thinking about this object gives me a lot of fun. Because of its softness, I think it is possibly cotton. This softness is similar to my first lover's skin and even her hair, which was black. She's gone from my life now, but this object makes me remember her in my mind. Softness and warmth in both my thoughts and feelings.

**MAN WAI WOO**

**MATCHING LIFEFORCE**

Is this the game of matching lifeforce?

Does your heart equal mine?

Is my love the same color of your eyes?

Is your blood freed by my soothing words?

Do you really feel sure of your feelings?

Are you still alive?

Will you console my fears of love?

Will you cry at my death?

Will you teach me how to love you?

Will you accept my mind, for all its intrusions, during our  
love?

(Are you really me inside out?)

“Don’t indulge in human mating ritual, keep up the spirits  
of your own species.”

*Alana A. Novak-Edgeworth*

## **I FEEL YOUR TOUCH**

I feel your touch  
though  
you're not near me  
I feel the heat from  
your magnificent hands  
as they  
investigate me  
I can feel your lips pressing mine  
I can taste you as my tongue meets yours  
it promises me how delicious you'll be  
I surrender as  
I feel your hardness  
I invite your entrance  
I want to envelope you  
and  
hold you within me.

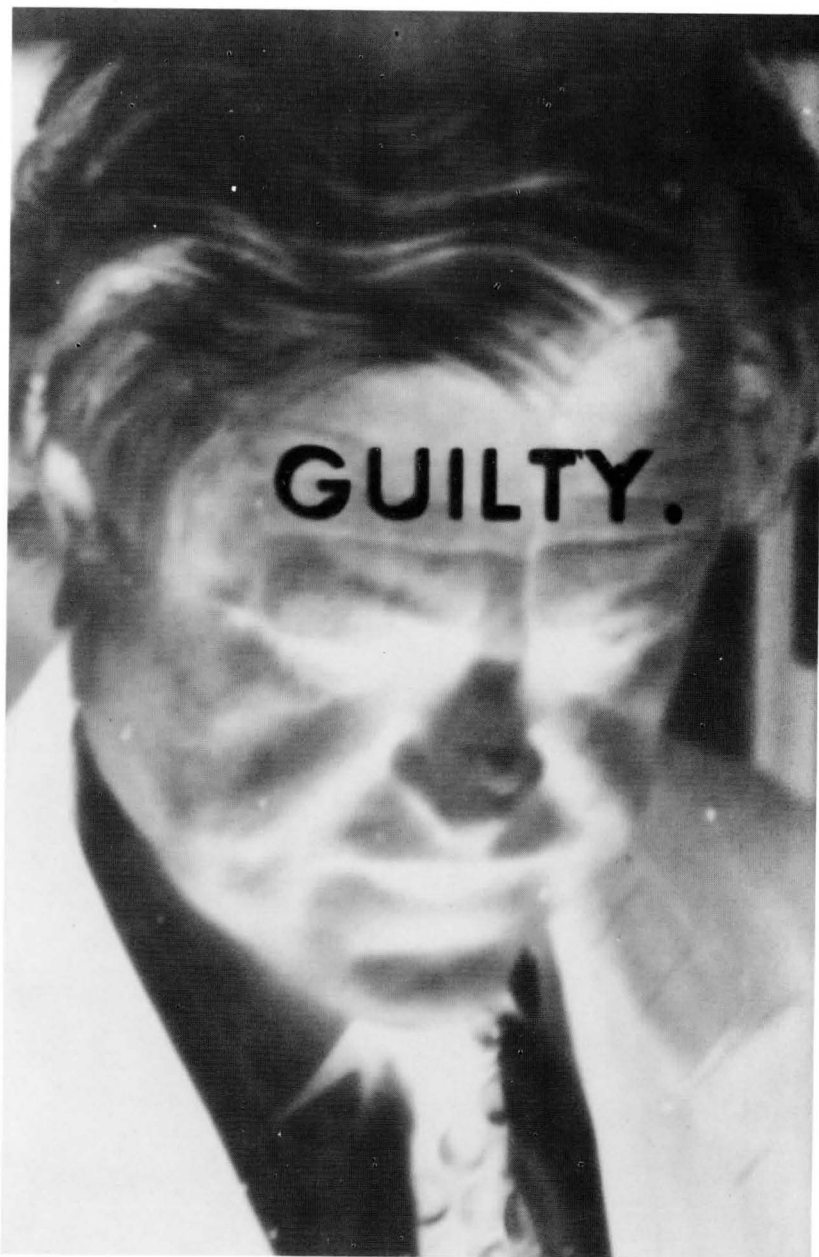
*Margaret Geneve*

## **UNTITLED**

The coos, the cheers, the gestures  
that overshadow her inner soul  
As though the resemblance of some  
alley street cat fight.

Men who are content to frolic  
in their own being. With NO  
sympathy, NO guilt, NO cause.  
Just another gesture of their penile  
thoughts

Thus she overcomes with dignity  
and pride  
And reclaims her womanhood.

**VISIONEROS**

In the news tonight

...walking corpses in the library  
...snake infested castles in Scotland  
...ice chunks falling from outer space  
...campers being raped by trees  
...buildings collapsing without warning  
...obese alcoholic catholic priests falling off the life cycle  
...insane farmers marrying off their daughters to strange rich  
foreigners  
...dentists without anesthesi--where's painless Parker?  
...astronauts smoking crack on the moon  
...firemen become secret nocturnal arsonists  
...highways melting, liquidating, clogging the forest floor  
...all cattle causing cancer  
...vegetation dehydrating your body's liquids  
...consumption resulting in artery splicing  
...faith empowered by money or real estate  
...language replaced by numbers  
...emotions replaced by pleasure  
...death synthesized with bionics  
...adrenaline replacing water  
...everything in the oceans dying, diseased

Film at 11:00



*Lisa Ferrantelli*

## **A LONG WALK TO FACE DESTINY**

Every generation has its own affliction. My grandparents had to contend with tuberculosis. My parents worried about scarlet fever. And I have the threat of AIDS. It frightens me to death. Actually, it produces death. To think that one mistake, one carefree whim could cost me my life. This factor has been haunting me since my first pregnancy.

I was so ecstatic to discover I was pregnant that I began to plumb the details of this miracle called life. The more I learned about the aspects of pregnancy, the more I worried. I reflected upon my life and realized my husband and I had a responsibility to this child long before we thought about conception. I realized that actions and events which had taken place in our lives prior to marriage could have detrimental effects on our fetus. My most paramount concern was AIDS.

It was 1987 and AIDS was spreading rapidly. The more I learned about AIDS, the more I realized how callous society was. People treated infected victims as if they had leprosy. Their ignorance of how the disease is spread made them fearful to an irrational extreme. AIDS can not be transmitted through casual contact. People are infected through unprotected intercourse or sharing a needle with an HIV infected person. In some cases the virus is contracted through blood transfusion. The method of infection which concerned me most is passing it on to a fetus through the placenta.

I had decided that if I tested HIV positive I would have an abortion. I loved my fetus enough to terminate it. I preferred going through the pain of an abortion rather than make my child live through the emotional pain of losing his/her parents to the torments of this illness. And then, only to suffer the physical pain of dying in the same manner.

When I approached my husband with my fears, he quickly dismissed them in his usual pejorative manner. Knowing I wasn't going to get any support from him, I went to my gynecologist. As the words came out of my mouth, he began to laugh! He told me to go home and have a glass of

wine. I had my doubts that wine was the secret antidote for AIDS, nor did I think it was an appropriate drink for a woman in my condition. I was so frustrated. Nobody took me seriously. For the next seven months, I prayed that my husband's and my own past wouldn't come back to haunt us. After my son's birth, I thanked God for every day that it hadn't.

My worries didn't stop there because AIDS didn't stop there. By 1990, my daughter was born. We were surprised by the reality that anyone could get AIDS; that the disease was not just the problem of 'others'. Statistics were showing that nobody outside of a ten year monogamous relationship or celibacy was safe. Movie stars were dropping like flies. Basketball players and politicians were announcing their claim to this horrid disease. After a long, satisfying talk with my pediatrician, I decided to enjoy what I had, for as long as I had it. As time passed, my fears didn't. They lurked around in the folds of my brain, only to reveal themselves with each illness my family fostered. I watched to see how long scrapes and cuts took to heal. I also got a pang in my gut every time people asked me such questions as, "Is she sick again?" or "Why hasn't his cold cleared up by now?" By and by they always got better. But soon, my marriage took a turn for the worse. This had nothing to do with the children, and everything to do with AIDS.

Our prominent problem was trust. We both felt the other had been unfaithful. After a series of unproductive arguments, we decided to be tested for HIV antibodies. My husband called the Board of Health which declared itself to be the only establishment that truly kept the testing confidential. We had an appointment for the next day.

I was overwhelmed with ambivalence. This was it! I was finally getting my answer. I didn't know if I really wanted this information anymore. I was afraid. I was afraid of the fate that the next day's light could bring. I was very cold. I knew this was my last night of wondering. Wondering if the weight I carried for so long was to be gone or if I had to experience every birthday party and school recital as if they were the last. I was very cold that night. By morning I felt numb. It was very difficult to act as if this was a typical day as I shuffled my son off to school.

The ride to St. George was quiet. We parked in the

municipal lot by school. As I walked past CSI, I had to fight the impulse to leave my dreaded reality and create a less stressful one. I wanted one of my friends to call me over, so I could pretend to be there for class. I thought that if I walked toward the school, my reality would actually be an essay I was to read for English class. As I continued walking I wondered if the other people on the street knew where I was going or if they even cared. Although I was with my husband and daughter, I was very much alone. By the time we approached the building my stomach was knotted as tight as a clenched fist. My heart was pounding, vibrating throughout my body, echoing in my throat.

As I opened the door, I felt as if I was opening the sealed container of an incubator, releasing a mass of germs which had been multiplying at excessive rates. Instantly I felt dirty. I panicked, as I looked down at my daughter's milk white complexion and blonde ringlets. It sickened me to expose such purity to such filth. I didn't want her breathing the air. I wished I had purchased one of those white masks the doctors use to keep germs from entering their systems. I strapped her in the stroller and ordered her not to touch anything. Flutters of rational thinking entered my mind sporadically. I realized then that I was swallowing my own words—the words of a well-informed, well-educated person. **BUT THIS WAS MY DAUGHTER!** What if the doctors had been wrong? The entrance room was filled with people. The walls were dark ecru. I wondered if it was the painters intended shade. As I looked ahead, there was a desk with a sign-in sheet on it and a big, hard looking man with a visage of uninviting contempt. My husband told the man the room number and he replied with a husky, tenor voice that the department we needed didn't require us to sign-in, since it was the section which was under complete anonymity. He should have just put a blinking neon sign on my head, so if anyone there didn't hear him, they could have just read it.

While we waited to be tested, I couldn't imagine what possessed a person to give blood tests to possible AIDS victims. I reasoned to myself that either she/he was a blindly compassionate person, who was selfless enough to only see the need for such a test or she/he had nothing to risk since they were already infected.

As the door of the office opened, we were greeted with

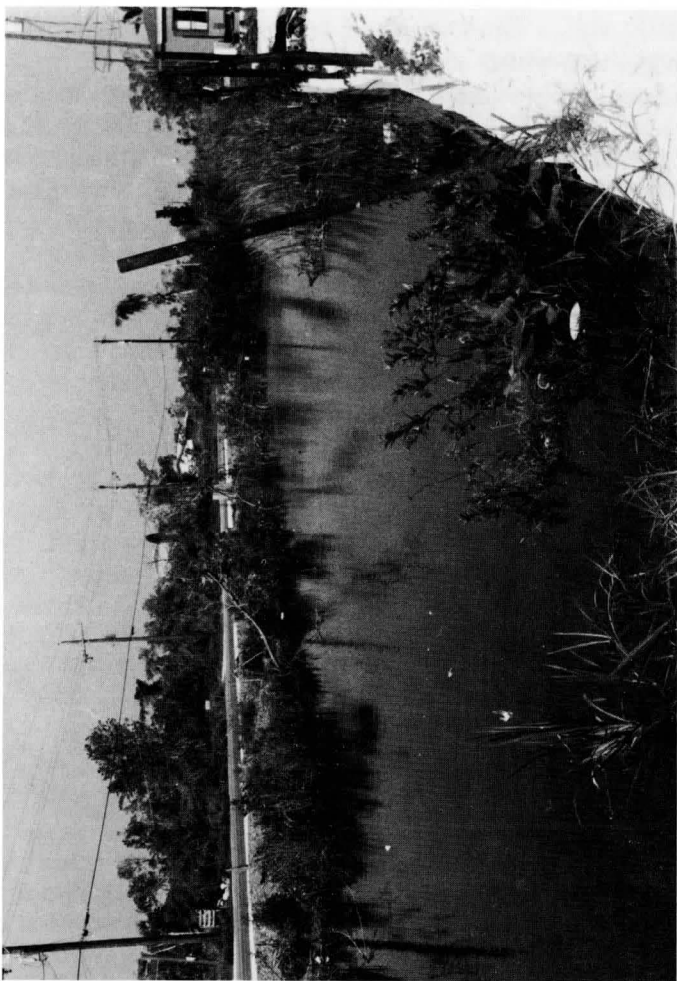
the very warm, confident smile of the woman that would be testing us. Had it been anyone else, I might have left. She was wonderful. We talked for awhile and as I explained my fears, she smiled warmly and nodded with an understanding I could feel. The test itself took only five minutes. All except the waiting.....

and waiting.....

and waiting for fifteen days.

To paraphrase an old adage, all good things come to those who wait.





*Marilyn Barker*

## TO GAIA

Nurturing mother--  
I no longer walk barefoot on your back  
Or swim in the once pure waters of your mouth,  
Nor can I lie upon your sandy tongue  
For needles, human waste and other dangers await.  
The sea-gulls, seals and others  
That basked on your elbows and knees  
Now lie submerged in oil  
Spilled by the Exxon Valdez.  
Your lush, mountainous breasts  
Are used by the military for target practice.  
The fruit that spills from your womb  
is sprayed with chemicals for us to consume.  
Your thick, rich hair  
which help us breathe  
Is chopped down and used  
Indiscriminately.  
Within the folds of your soft flesh  
Are garbage dumps filled with hazardous waste.  
Your children die needlessly  
Of cancer, poisoning and lung disease.  
For, Mother,  
The air that flows from you  
Is laden with carbon-monoxide and asbestos.  
They mine mountains and break your fragile spine.  
They seek ore and dry your feeble veins.  
Radiation in the soil, radon in our homes.  
The eagles no longer soar.  
The buffaloes have ceased to roam.  
The seafood is not safe to eat.  
Your pallor worsens and I fear  
Your demise will signal  
The end of the human race.

*Ash*

**UNTITLED**

...Don't think ...just feel  
Just feel every feeling, every sensation  
    that was ever felt on earth  
To breathe every first breath by every newborn,  
To feel every gunshot fired into a living target,  
    every orgasm ever achieved,  
    every tear shed,  
    every car crash, every kiss,  
    every burn on human flesh,  
    entire oralization all over your body,  
All the pleasure and pain  
Felt by everyone who ever loved and died on earth,  
    that must be what its like to be God, D'ya think?  
Yeah, and like feeling everything you ever did  
    all at once  
Is probably what it feels like to die  
    maybe

*Vera Saverino*

**STILL**

I only want to die  
if I know that you can  
still hold me  
after I am gone.



*Niles K. Dodd*

## **HER THROAT IS CUT**

Not so much  
as a sound she uttered  
even with her lips  
at full thrust.

Then he spoke again.  
his voice, gluttoned and arrogant  
blasting dogmas of past days,  
slicing at her-self.

He waited for her reply.

Resisting the pain  
from his words,  
she bled and spoke.  
But now  
her voice could not penetrate his barrier,  
a gaze as unyielding as stone  
and with as much feeling.  
But she cared for this one  
and held her heart out to him.

This must have been  
the final insult.

He lashed at her, his tongue a dagger,  
hands of cold steel,  
eyes fixed  
and reflecting not one bit  
of a man.

It is not always that actions speak  
over words.  
There are times  
when they have equal voice.

She lies there,  
her life glistening on bruised skin.

Contemplating her future  
she knew she would heal.  
He knew she would heal.  
But for now her face reflects  
no expression.  
For now--her throat is cut.

## WOMEN'S WRITTEN EXPRESSION

If I could be anyone I wanted to be, I would choose to be Sigmund Freud's granddaughter, Litz Freud. My life's work would be devoted to repudiating the hoax perpetrated on women by grandpa.

I have spent years poring over his work and that of his predecessors and have come to the conclusion that there is a gaping hole in their theories...What happened to men and their sexuality? Realizing I had the opportunity to become more famous than Ziggy, I spent the middle years of my life developing my own theory.

Along with several of my colleagues, I interviewed, in depth, approximately 10,000 men of all ages, shapes, and sizes. However, we learned very little from talking to them. They gave us the same psycho-babble pablum answers that Ziggy and friends had taught them so very long ago...What to do??? Then a light bulb went on. Why not interview them under hypnosis for a thirty day period? They agreed, provided their identities were not disclosed. Dealing with man's unconscious was quite another matter and proved to be extremely enlightening.

Here are some of the findings that will be published following my presentation at the Vienna Conference this summer:

1. We found that man, although not consciously aware, had "Vagina Envy,"--mother being his first love object. Yearning to become pregnant has become man's eternal dream. They have long felt that only the carrier of the child knows the true paternity.

2. We also discovered that man suffers from a "Vasterical Personality." Symptoms include: instability; anxiety; inability to acknowledge one's emotional needs; inability to communicate on a feeling level; masochism; self-centeredness; rage; over-dependence on females to replace loss of mother object; fear of abandonment, having never gotten over the separation from mother; responds either with detachment and indifference or anger to anything he can't

fix, ie: loved one's illness.

3. Illness most associated with men was found to be "Vasterical Conversion," with problems centering around the prostate.

4. It was further found that man's aggression was in direct proportion to his sexual apparatus. That is to say: the smaller the genitalia, the higher the aggression.

After much deliberation, my colleagues and I concluded that the best way to correct these problems was not, as you might suspect, psychoanalysis, but rather, brain by-pass surgery, bringing the brain from the scrotum to the cerebellum.



**UNTITLED**

There are times  
I must say  
when I envy you so  
over silly things you know  
like not having pain  
color your world as often as I  
like being able to soar  
with your ambitions  
to the edge of the sky

with no one there  
to clip your wings in mid air

There are times  
when I envy you so  
watching you thrive  
while I struggle to survive

In this world where you say  
we are all the same  
all able and free  
Tell me, do you envy me?

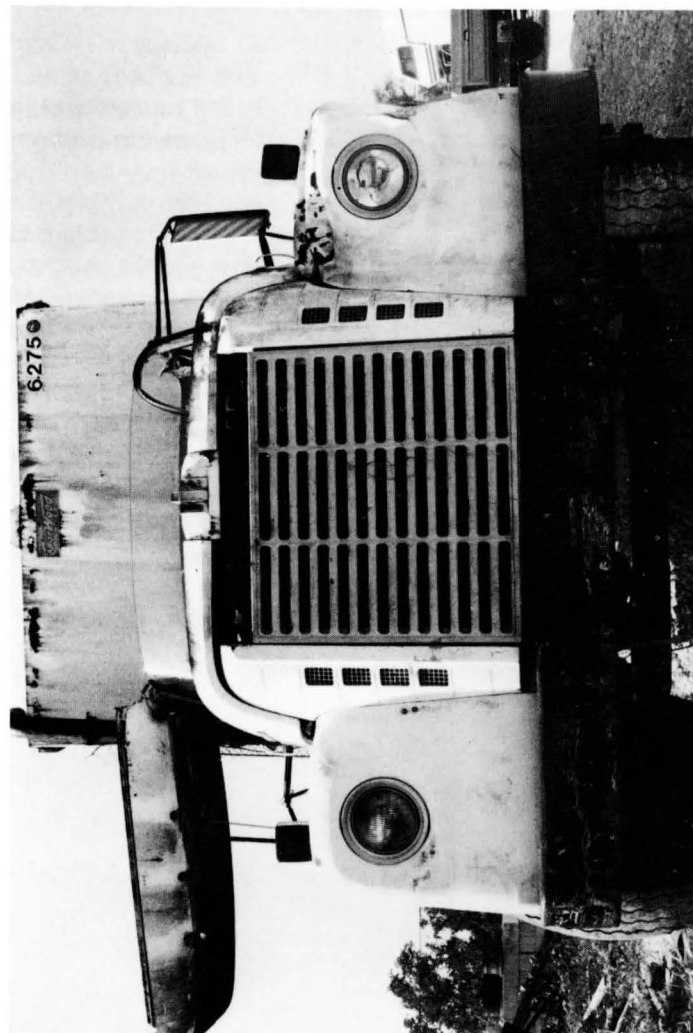
**THE PRICE**

I'm a woman in search of a world  
A windup toy, a porcelain doll  
A stewardess that never departs  
O' time, perpetually ticking  
Skin grows pale beneath this glass ceiling  
A smiling-faced clown, balanced on stilts  
I'm a juggler, a tightrope walker  
I'm a gatekeeper who holds no key  
Paying Purgatory with my life

*Kerri V. Dunkerton*

## **I COME WOMAN**

I come woman on this world  
without a knife at my cunt  
without a prayer on my lips  
without a man in my head  
whispering secret slurs of gender  
There's enough change in my pocket  
to ride your train of thought  
and I'm buying up the blood  
that paints the sky  
giving it back to my sisters  
who limp down the street  
lock the windows at night  
and scream voiceless into the sun  
I come woman on this world  
because I know that  
this life begins with me.



*Vera Saverino*

**PLEASE**

I never needed you  
to tear down my walls  
leaving my back  
raw, bloodstained.

Your love slashes  
like a knife over  
tracing paper redefining  
nothing, yet with  
probing fingers and tongue  
you please.

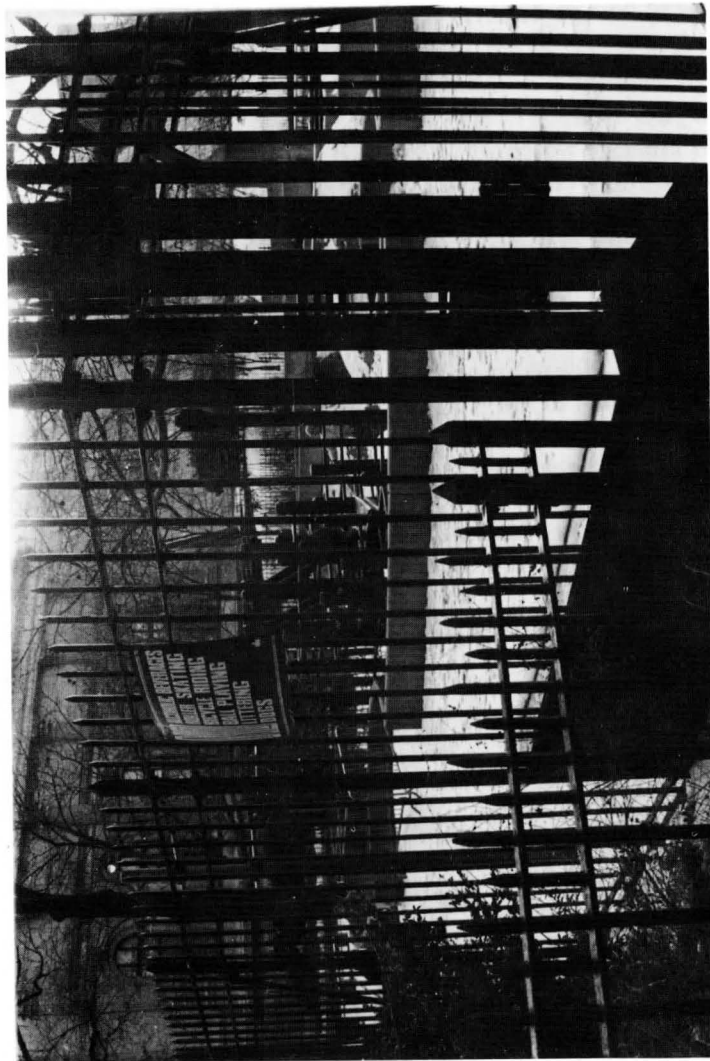
*Kerri V. Dunkerton*

**THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T TAKE  
NO FOR AN ANSWER**

So your woman left  
for another woman  
while you were feeding  
on her sex, swallowing  
the picture of the  
platinum, plastic wife  
She was swallowing  
the woman who  
looked in, licked on  
and listened to her soul  
She's wearing the love  
you didn't know wasn't there  
like a wedding ring  
married to the freedom  
from woman to woman

So you should shrink  
to think of  
getting her back





*Kerri V. Dunkerton*

### **SHE'S COMING OUT**

(for Sharon, who came with courage)

She's coming out  
of wet bread  
hot breath  
and the stretched out  
sticky sound of hate  
She's coming out  
like a big pink bubble  
gummed up from lips  
soft as a baby sac  
safe as an open egg  
She's coming out  
on a swing  
with the rushing wind  
against her raw  
sunless wrap  
and someone pushes  
hard at play  
till she skins a knee  
washes the world away  
She's coming out  
from church doors  
where seven pound secrets  
and crushed wafers  
kept her dry  
She's coming out  
with the hopes of hearing  
"I'm glad you came"  
She's coming out  
because she can't stay in  
anymore.