

BOSTON WOMEN'S POETRY ANTHOLOGY

I LEAN OUT my WINDOW

LOOKING DOWN AT THE STARS

AND MY UNATTACHED AUNT VIEWS MY

UNATTACHED FUTURE

"SOMEDAY SOMEONE WILL RECOGNIZE YOUR WORTH...

PERHAPS IT WILL BE ME.

a
bread
and
roses
publication



Much modern poetry tends to confine itself to the strictly personal, to feelings which may be shared by many people, but which do not go outside the bounds of private experience, and a solitary approach to the world. For this reason, probably, poetry has been considered almost irrelevant to radical political activity; considered, if it cannot be subordinated to the struggle, rather frivolous.

But the women's movement has discovered that the personal IS political, discovered that our most intimate relationships are power relations too, and that most of the time, women are the oppressed and exploited parties. Those of us who participated in the struggles of others now find that, in more subtle and insistent ways, we are victims too, that as women we have been taught the mentality of slaves and lackeys, who, by despising ourselves and one another, remain slaves to men.

The poems in this book were the result of that discovery, and in many cases were written, quite simply, as a form of therapy. And gathering them together, we saw that what we had still thought were our own "private" fears and pain were not that peculiar after all. We share much more than we had thought; our isolation from each other was based on the fear of each woman alone that she was somehow different from other women, somehow flawed. We don't believe that any longer.

There is no reason why poetry should not be useful as well as amusing. We found the writing of these poems useful to ourselves, and so hope they will serve the same purpose for our sisters, and break down more of the barriers which keep us from each other.



WOMEN'S DETENTION

in greenwich village,
the shops filled with girls' long hair,
where our class turns on,
is a square of freedom,
pastry, policemen, and costumes

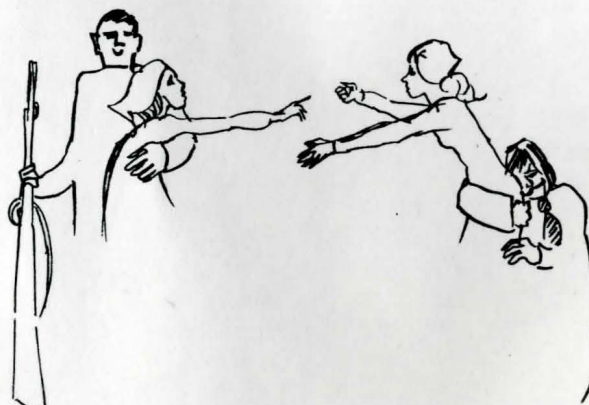
from the huge jail above it
screams cross through the traffic
the sainthood of my other sisters
driven off their streets

I, too, in my home town
loiter where I feel natural
and my sex gets picked up also
by radar-balls of a cop

they smoke under new signs
put up always for me,
stare until they have me wanton
and warn me of some man with a gun

if we scream that we are pure of heart
they only come better

Wendy Towner



1

As I throw aside the old forms of womanhood
 And they crumble beneath my feet
 Scattering on the sidewalk in front of me into tiny, jagged pieces
 I know that I must for moments retreat
 And hold tight to the forms
 Until all the passersby leave
 And I am alone to cut my feet

2

I know he loves me very much
 And that's what makes it so hard
 To separate my soul from his
 But my soul cannot breathe
 when it is so tightly closed
 By his soul
 And so I must wrench my soul out
 Ripping his to set mine free

3

They (the men with the help of my sisters) threw me out
 Dumped me
 Tossed sand and spit in my face
 And hurled tacks at my toes
 And so what's left of me
 is only

The very inner guts
 The thing that was
 And it's somehow something
 very delicate
 and sore
 and hard to understand

4

i just want to disappear
 from this room
 where there is this man
 whose hands reach out
 and squeeze the life out of me perpetually
 just his voice
 and his manner
 and his body
 all try to overpower
 the soul in me that seeks to reach out
 and grow
 and become the beauty
 that He won't let be

4

CONCERNING CERTAIN SENTIMENTS

In the heat of It

his cry "You're so beautiful"
reminds me I am not.
I recount

(distracted)

(to myself)

(forgetting orgasm)

the long familiar list

thinking: you won't know, I won't let you find out
hair in all the wrong places, I finely tweeze in secret: chin,
cheeks, breasts, belly
thinking : it's dark and I won't tell EVER
breasts droop

stretch marks circling nipples,

mapping

hips,

belly,

thighs,

my first lover remarked on it

I was sixteen.

It comes most clean

in fluorescent mirrors

of public toilets

gouges everywhere

tell the history of face battles

between black and white pimples,

stretched pores

big as golf balls

" You look like you've been through a lot"

And maybe I have.

Maybe I was meant to be

a warty old Grimm witch, with gnarled nose
and webbed fingers,

seething snot and bad teeth,

hairy,

turning virgins into caged crows in my castle ha ha ha ha ha

Maybe I was meant to frighten

little children by night

rather than bearing them

as the virgins freed by their princes will do.

No one know. I never say a word. I lock the bathroom door

and run the tub. Men at table, women by the sink think

I am cleaning my body with soap. I keep quiet. Destroying, inch

by inch, deformities which will, anyway, resurface tomorrow.

Black man (stranger to me)

on the Ashmont subway

says : "What's that thing

you got there ?" "Where?" I say. "There, over there," he says and

touches my lip. Thinking about it later

there is murder in my heart.

I would like to kill my self.

Best friend (lives in my house)
 returns from her travels : "What'd you
 do?" she asks. "You look so good. So clean." Later
 realize
 it was the hair above my lip, turned blond by chemicals
 made her see me anew.

Doctor says: "Boy your face is a mess," and charges me twenty-five dollars.
 Lover writes: "She's very beautiful in an ugly sort of way," I
 weep. "But you don't understand," he says. But
 there are
 pristine women
 I have seen them
 in movies and magazines
 and
 you wouldn't say that
 about them
 would you?

Beautiful woman : "I always thought Goya was mocking those ladies
 with flecks of black hair
 on pale, pale skin
 above their lips,
 but really
 that was considered
 a mark of great beauty. It's
 hard to feel that way
 about yourself
 though....."

Hard
 to blame
 the collusion of
 Vogue magazine and imperial capital
 I do the best I can
 tweezers
 the Vietnamese war
 bleach
 black panther massacre

dandruff rinse
 starvation
 in the seventies
 tweezers
 my father weighed down

by the bill collector
 and his own labor
 bleach
 my brother beaten by cops

dandruff rinse
 the Cuban revolution
 tweezers
 collective action
 skin

softener
 the massacre at My Lai
 bleach
 dead soldiers 19 years old

rinse
 ben sook may lai eldridge cleaver song my lee otis bobby seale jane alpert
 VO₅.

WOMEN GOSSIP

The conspiracies of grandmothers
whisper warnings

from under the porch

where they rock in silence.

In a secret language

coded messages sent

through a network of telephones

to the oldest underground.

—Don't those women

ever get off the phone? —

Men walk on the roads

through irritating flickers

of whispers from the caves,

only their feet visible

through the slit of light.

—Now I suppose

you're going to go tell her

everything I said

Don't I deserve some privacy? —

The smooth faces smile

while the hand is a pickpocket

darting in fear

around the corner

to feed the money to the baby.

Disappearing for twenty minutes

to consult the grandmothers

in dark absorption

then walking in

lightly with kisses

wearing visibility

like a mask.

Carol Ramey



IN INVESTIGATING THE RIGHTS OF THE SLAVE,

I HAVE COME TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF MY OWN

angelina grimke

I used to get very big.

I used to be in rooms full of strangers
and questions made me into

China and Russia and Cuba
ten thousand teenage draft resisters
the history of the Communist Party
a lone terrorist in Oakland
the entire black population
and Marx and Engels.

I got so big

there were miles
from my mouth to your ear.

Now

in my small natural body

I sit and learn —

my women's body

like yours

target on any street,

taken from me

at the age of twelve

like Venezuelan oil

with the same explanation

You are ignorant

let me show you

then sold back drop by drop

in pink-frosted bottles

by tiny merchants with big shadows

sitting behind the screens of Oz

and buying armies

with the profits.

I watch a woman dare

I dare to watch a woman

we dare to raise our voices

smash the bottles

learn.

Watch me learn to dare

my arms and legs feel awkward —

we came to ask your help.

Carol Ramey



1

Eleven
eighteen
twenty five
it still comes back to
five o'clock winter dusk
walking along under trees
smelling dinners
looking in lighted windows
wondering

2

Heavy black lines
selections
The belt moves
you miss you lose.
The street is full of children.
Year by year
they disappear into houses, apartments,
a wedding
a name on a bell
then what?

3

Little girls sitting in a tree
swinging legs talking,
I remember.

Adolescent confessions
don't you think?

It's very awkward.
of course we would ask her
to come along but

of course

so busy

my husband

awkward

lets

get

together

for lunch

sometime

next

week.

4

Come out and play
damn it.
Walking - winter dusk
throat ache tight
hands close on nothing
fading away.
Shabby slum sidewalk
flashing broken glass
glittering swooping wheels around
spinning foggy night.
Lumberjack freight-train images
bars full of Irish poets
trading songs, plotting revolutions,
shipping out of Partland,
slipping through New York.
A car slows down
—Hey girlie wanna ride?
better get off the street,
I guess I'll go home now.

5

Look at that poor lady
waiting at the counter.
One pork chop, half dozen eggs,
skinny quart of milk,
cat food.
Going back
to some little room
somewhere.

— Yeah

wonder shat she does
with those cats

She's not so old

—bet she thinks

she's real sexy

with those earrings

Did you see her flirting

with the counter boy?

I wonder what she
used to think about.

Obituary:

a dance

to keep the rain away.

6

When I was nineteen
I sat in my father's study
crying.

He said —

When you get older you'll realize
your only real friend
is the person you'll marry.

It was July,
the last summer I spent at home.

He said —

I never talk to women
at parties.

If they're not married,
they might get the wrong idea.

If they are married,
what's the point?

He was smoking a pipe,
wearing a green and brown shirt.

Sun slanted in the window.

I felt like a broken toy.

7

It always gets back to
walking alone in winter dusk.

It always gets back to
sitting together in a tree

October Saturday
orange and blue,
legs swinging, talking.

Survey:

"Why do you want to get married?"

One hundred high school girls
sixteen and seventeen

answer instantly:

"For security."

8

I'm going to stand here
and lean against your doorbell
til you give me an answer.
Why can't we all run away
and live in a big house
all together
with lots of music
and stay up talking
as long as we want?

Carol Ramey



INSIDE OUTSIDE

I want to be very clear
rough, careful, a broad-boned face,
brown curly hair, eyes
and a forehead.
heavy leg bones, very clear
sorting out, exercise, talking
making people laugh laughing,
walking on the street
eating cheese, orange, salt
dry grass brown dirt warm sun
cities, typewriters,
looking is easier for me than listening
why is that?
wondering

A girl in a mirror,
lady chick broad skirt bird
young thing, slip of a thing
mirror

a man smiles, he
moves, he lights a cigarette, he
stands up, he moves closer, smiling.
Girl in a mirror, who grows
small, smaller, little
pretty light and a blue
skirt, delicate, the top of her head
fits easily under the table.
She looks up, a man
smiles
hand on her head, light, floating far away, mirrors and fading
music, going away
Girl in a mirror, smiling pretty,
very small

I can't find it.
it's lost it doesn't fit
stay go away
inside outside
where is it?

He didn't mean to
he didn't mean to.
Did he mean to?
Get him out of here
Leave the room.
blank mirror
sleep
breathe
walk
it's all right
it's all right

I want to be very clear.
I look at my foot.
My foot looks at me.
We are friends again
A person might say hello.
My foot and I together
might say hello back.
Walking slow
breathing
I would like
to be very clear
about my arm
I would like to feel
that the top of my head
will not suddenly begin pressing down.
A man smiles
he moves, he stands up
he moves close, smiling,
I want to be very clear about this.

Jean Tepperman



COCKERROACHES

No, No, Stop.

You can't fuck in my kitchen.

No one fucks in my kitchen anymore

Not since I gave my stove away.

ECOLOGY

the good men do lives after them.

the evil is interred with their bones.

watch out for bones.



I'm twenty-one years old and I sleep alone
 That is when I do sleep
 Most nights I toss and turn
 Trying to find a comfortable position for my mind
 Some nights like tonight
 I give up to lonely words on my typewriter
 One day if I'm not careful
 I'll be grown up
 With pink checkered bathrobes
 And wishing I'd stayed awake longer

I'm twenty-one years old and glad I sleep alone
 Until the cat comes all furry
 And lies against my head
 Reminding me what a warm body can do
 And I already own a pink checkered bathrobe
 A present from my mother
 Who probably thought nobody would ever see it anyway
 I'm practicing to be nocturnal
 So I can leave when the cat does
 And no one will ever catch me

Dotty LeMieux

I have no patience with that part of me that has no patience
 That part of me wants nakedly to run down the street
 Wild and screaming
 Defying all codes
 And sometimes dreams of smashing them
 Like the tablets of Moses
 Over the heads of monster men
 Who would weigh us down with stone
 For Eve's sin
 Eve is my sister and they have told her story wrong.

Dotty LeMieux



I used to be a woman
And men came courting me
For my golden hair and fair skin
Then I had to choose
The man I would wed
I chose a man with fire in his eye
And a dream of scaling mountains
And saving lives
But times were hard
Work was scarce, and children were our only comfort
I bore him five
To feed them he took work
On a construction crew
And I worried for the height and the danger
The years have taken my golden hair
And turned pale the blush of my skin
But I've walked no closer to the clouds
I've never seen the places we wished to travel
He's retired now and spends his days
Watching the ships sail out to sea
Even that I cannot share
My children are grown
And their babies need tending
My daughters follow their husbands' dreams
It's too late to teach them
To make their own

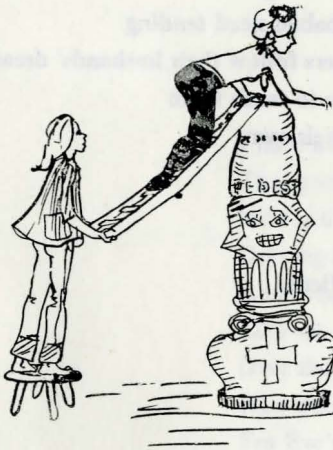
Dotty LeMieux



I lean out my window
 looking down at the stars
 and my unattached aunt views my
 unattached future
 "Someday someone will recognize your worth"

Perhaps it will be me.

Beth Anterni



I thought I had it all set,
 Then love began to decay all around me.
 Then you were shown to be full of corruption
 and I didn't know who I was.

Withdrawing from you
 Is as sickening, embarrassing, and heartrending
 As getting out of Vietnam.
 Behind, in your memory, I leave my dead childhood,
 My shimmering dream of marriage,
 Fifteen thousand smiles
 You would not know me now.

My body that used to be soft and waiting for you
 Is hard and ready for attack,
 And strong as the work that needs to be done.

Loneliness seeps in at night,
 I flinch, then remember, and straighten;
This time I will not run away.
 Your shadow is here, and it hurts me,
 But I will not run away.

Gail Murray



LETTERS TO SISTERS

Revolutionary Survival: Lesson one

More women
should throw
more dishes
at more walls
more often

Sad
is a clean feeling,
the pain of
setting
a broken life.

Being a young freak is sort of okay
But when I'm old
and my friends have gone off with men,
too tired to fight, taking what's offered,
Where will I be but very alone?
What is the place of my love for my sisters?

Overwhelmed by what you think I am
I lost me
in the shuffle

It's not that I miss you
But I got into the habit of loving
And I have to be
Retrained
In a usable skill.

Be gentle
with the broken puppet
while she tries to cut the strings

Children's Poem

The world is so full of a number of fears
I'm sure that we all shall be hunted as queers.

I never wanted rape in the night
But the warm sleep of a sister beside me
Whose eyes are like mine
Whose voice is her own.

We are the mad women,
Private property itself rising in rebellion.
The trees and flowers shall join us.
Power is doomed.

Mary Damon

I never learned to run fast enough
 All those years I tried and tried
 in the jungles of suburban high schools, urban colleges
 Fighting for my dead father's name
 I competed, went sleepless, fasted for days.
 And again and again, I collapsed
 just before the finish line, the rest, the rewards
 Sick before endless auditions
 Forgetting my lines in play after play
 Flapping like a fish on the sand
 panicked.
 Because I knew, they'd told me
 The people were running, the prized were fleeing
 Always faster than I.
 And I would be left alone
 And a woman alone is noone.

But I learned new truths, my sister,
 Through my love for you, the end to panic.
 Now I cannot run any more, my legs know better
 My body, crippled, rests in the kitchen
 edged by quiet
 I speak slowly, listen much
 To noone.
 You are a runner
 and you are gone
 The warnings were real, you know.
 I sit by the clock, by the plant
 singing a love song of bittersweet peace
 Building a poem for me.

Mary Damon



A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE

The evidence of my power is work.
 I look around at the rooms I have painted,
 The food I've cooked and I say:
 Well done, Miriam, without you
 Your family would not know itself for a family,
 Would not breathe biscuits in the morning,
 Would not find rubber bands and safety pins,
 Would walk barefoot into last night's jello.

O you are a slave my friend if you trade
 The wish of your heart for that power.
 Your husband bought your home, rebuilt it,
 Staked his design against his coming hours.
 To flesh out his dream is to be
 Proletarian, serf, extension, satellite
 Of his omnivorous loneliness.

We ladies buy our power dearly
 And our men treat us with the same
 Love they give themselves. As they hate
 Their unimportance, so they deplore us who disguise it.
 As we forsake ourselves, we take masters
 Who take us for what we say we are
 When we deliver:
 Riskless, gutless mercenaries.

But when we are ready to stand on our arching feet,
 Stretch our calf muscles, feel our strength,
 We will not mount the auction block
 Each day with breakfast tray.
 Nor will you, square fingered gentlemen,
 Ease your backsides to the daddy's chair
 Your wives have placed for you
 To seal the bedroom from the thin front door.

Miriam Goodman



MISE EN SCENE

let us first examine the furniture
eat this; eat that

is it the first time? Will it
matter to you, the bulb's exposed
Will it.

Will it work if you will it?

oh, throw that comforter (they call it,
grandmother - made, and she was, too;
legalities allowed it.

tents were razed; she led
then she faltered.

eat this, she said.
it was her way of winning)

have you glimpsed it, is there
a dodge in your future,

is there a way out of the gaping garage?

and this comforter, cross-stitched
colored in red

then to bed, ah you've said it

you will it.

I am the answering service, I click.

one if I'm landed

two if by sea I choose to sail

in my leaky boat

from all your dockings. Drat!

will you make me?

time

will seize us, oy vay, so they told you

told you to tell me. Sigh, and

if that one doesn't work, advance

slightly, turn into the man enraged,

hurl spite into the clock

brandish comforters at my neck

wreck the pretty tunes

that we make our blood from

that our blood flows in and out of,

love

's your

trump card.

ah, lover

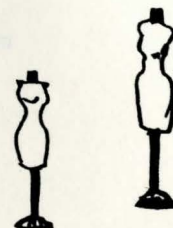
I got you.

I get it

click

click.

Elizabeth Fenton



EVERY WOMAN IS HER MOTHER"
THAT'S THE MAIN THING

--- Anne Sexton

cleaning the floor, the house vacant, and spinning
dreams out of the magazines, and hoping
for a whole day of this silence so
my images can grow in camera colors, shining, & wild, wild
as my daughter's mind, the one who talks to gnomes, the one
who kisses flowers.
clean floor, and then to the news and oven; even the gas
is shining, but I I am in other places,
in my pale dress gathered in folds, my thin feet graze
the bone edges of ocean, and a Marquis will take me up
on a mountain road that climbs forever. At the top we examine
our kingdom : so all of a piece
this 4 - color process media fiefdom, and my own. . . .
while the roast is baking, the snow melts,
and I think, I have chosen, *chosen*.

it shakes the house when the planes fly over, but
so near the airport, makes the rents cheaper,
and I'm not complaining, I love to be stilled
in the swirl of noise, as a drum delights to be beaten, so I
in the holy roar, can laugh, or cry. Once, I could have learned
to fly, been powerful in the candy clouds, pulled
out of earth like a hair, the pain, and then the drumming. . . .
but it cost money,
and money, is for futures, for cars, cribs & insurance,
he said. In case death
catch us desperate, in case one should wither, like a n eye
without its other. It takes both to see wholly, but
he saw it all, for me,
and I think, I have chosen, *chosen*.

once I wrote to the papers, what *do* women want?
goods for the children, I told them, peace, schools, just
safer streets, citizens, and I'm happy.
there is nothing but that. We're contented. I lied. oh,
I lied, all the same, and my dreams stayed unbroken.
Egg-white dreams, over shell and floor, are still sliding,
& the strands stick and cannot be gathered. I lied. I'd forgotten,
and I'm fat and not pretty. But a man in this house
slaps his thighs in loud laughter, says "hon" and "fantastic"
and joggles my shoulders. He says not to worry,
he's getting promoted. Planes roar,
and I think, I have chosen, *chosen*.

the floor is clean now. Is that some kind of triumph?

No other woman is mad as I'm mad. No one speaks
of such things in the bakery, the church. There are joys, breast
removals, errant sons, the split trees

that fell down upon us
that terrible summer. No one I know can be dreaming of being
friend to the Kennedys while dishes are soaking.

I read that a man in Death Row
used to do it. I was afraid. I took up crocheting. . .
But look at me now, at my sons and my daughters ! It's
tilling stone soil to raise them up decent!

look at me
as the friends of my mother, approving, were used to
they said: a good bust, sweet, and smart up at college, some
man would be lucky. Now why do they act
as if I'm decaying? and why do I cringe
at the voice of my daughter, so shallow & giddy,
a tyrant already, acts wise

and I think, I have chosen, *chosen*.

a man can't expect either the freedom I'm dreaming. Stuck
at the office, scared, taking orders. Treacle-toothed girls
refuse him appointments. He clutches in sleep,

I'm all he relies on. and little enough
he can take the boys hunting, fish at Blue River, build
his encampments; motorboats; flycasts.

I am the Indian
quietly spilling ashes to water because he has ordered,
herding the children, and asking the dry oak
why it withers like that in the middle of summer,
circled by saplings, the night rains still pouring,
the sky its warm tenting. It rots at the center.

and, touched, it can crumble. . . oh,
touch me !

oh, see if I grow yet, am living!

and I think, I have chosen, *chosen*.

mad? but how happy together we are. We're a couple.

We are US. And together, we're growing, and struggling,
and so, become One through a lifetime.

That's our nature, I'm told so. But
Nature herself knows no such arrangement: moss

on the live-oak, killing it slowly; mushrooms
that fester, the delicate barnacle at ease
on great fishes, the sweet vines

that strangle. Who lives together, unless one
kills the other? Who becomes one but to someone's undoing?
and who is the vine, and who is the victim?

And what do I chose, what have I chosen.

Elizabeth Denton

MASKS

Somehow it should have been
not quite so still

I watched the panes pale
into the morning city
the way a poet should
and heard the horns blow
all the way up Broadway
while you beside me
leaned on one elbow. . . .

I'd learned the whole act
and all variations
so I'd be applauded soundly
roses all round, white.
Whitened sheets, same ones
on which I am seen alive
as if for the first time
every time it happens:

see, she is mellow & moves
see, she achieves her purpose
oh, most paradisaical!
oh, woman in all her glory!
Flesh makes me visible.
Nothing I am can do that.
The silence I sink in
is all you can hear now.

My nakedness the mask itself
covers the spirit completely.
I grow large and plastic
I am the enormous doll
and you dive into me
and hold on to limbs,
wriggling like a fish
and expire on my dry beach,
and never know I'm there.

My nakedness the mask itself,
Person and persona.
Yet somehow it should have. . .
In another country should have. . .
But you invented the word, *lovers*
You invented this body I wear.
The white rose closes on its wealth
My nakedness the mask itself.

Elizabeth Fenton

CLEANING

Life, said Betty, is a bummer.
 We sit in Cambridge, getting dumber.
 Avoiding houselife, baiting men,
 Cleaning out our heads again:

One crushed prom blossom
 One green chiffon lie
 And 729 small white ones
 One Belmondo poster, dart-pocked
 A packet of dried rue
 Eighteen outdated poems
 2 certificates of approval from lovers
 Several plastic opinion covers
 One badly knitted scarf
 One Chinese Communist aphrodisiac
 One Zen Buddhist aphrodisiac
 Three photos of frustrated nuns
 One graph describing liberated sexuality quotient
 One faked I.Q. test
 Three abortionists addresses
 One Mother voodoo doll, patched
 A psychedelic flycaster & rod
 Labels
 Emblems, stamps
 Masks, 3 sizes
 Body stock, down 10 points
 Birds in cages and
 The cages inside the birds
 A skin of snakes, blue, khaki, violet
 And grasses, the long quiet grasses
 And the wind that darts
 Furrowing the prairie
 And is still.

A basket of eggs.

Elizabeth Fenton



ADVICE FOR THOSE FELLOWS, THE BARDS

Oh, let us all shed poetic tears
 For the suburban housewife, solitary
 As Philoctetes on a pleasant isle
 Where her feet hurt too, and her womb;
 And the chintz birds fall like a sale price
 To her feet exactly, and the wide bed
 Is a reproach all day long, & grins unmade.

Yes, let us imagine her, fellows
 With some kind of beauty, sun on slums,
 With some pale reminder of humanity:
 Her teeth perhaps, a lot of money there.
 Let us be wry and kindly, speak *distance...*
 Speak, *My warm body once a cave...*
 But put words in her mouth to stopper it.
 A lithe poetic persona, make her into that.
 Or she will start to shriek in her true voice.
 She begs something of you. Her mind is wet.

But if her mind dries, if anger fires
 Her whole being to crackle in the winter
 Which is always her season, since Inoperable
 Is the tune of her house in all seasons,
 And, Not for Use, and Out of Order, where
 Order is the privilege of the furniture,
 Floors shine like ice, while the poor brain
 Slides into the somnolence of age & duty;

If her mind is flaming, and anger fires
 Her into plain words, *her* out of all poems
 That convention has writ, if she breaks out
 To shout: I will not be laughed at, nor crushed.
 I will destroy this image, my Bastille...
 If, of all horrors, she does not speak of sex,
 Admits the smile is fake, and the moans too,
 And that she has taken in mind to quit the stage,
 The constant turnings, and the fool's applause. . .
 If she takes your words and makes them what they mean,

Then run. It won't be fun, it won't be dominoes.
 She ~~is~~ no real estate, but a sleeping giant,
 Her ~~hills~~ are not hills, she will move you off,
 She ~~will~~ stand up. She concerns herself
 With herself. This time the revolution
 Will not be made by men. Property itself arises.

Elizabeth Fenton

TYPIST

No, not any of those things
Take your litho plates away,
And give me a moment please
I type well
There's money in the bank
But I can't fit myself
To your forms, those piled balloons,
Mannequins in drag,
Or stalwart dams on the barricade.
Here is my helmet, madame.

No, no more roaming
In the blue smoke of fall, not at all.
My syntax is fine, now all
I need is the analysis, and then
The uniform. Once, I had one.
I wore it all the time.
It was blue. So were the shoes,
And the shirt, starched.
A gabardine girl on polished floors,
I stood under the light of the stairs
To watch wasps consume the virgin
Painted on the dome.
All autumn long the wasps were dying
They dove at our feet, gold
Kamakazis. Shrieks split the hallways,
And sunset was eating the sky up.
We thought the world was ending,
We thought the prophecies of Fatima
Were now fulfilled. We ran about in snow,
Oh ! Oh !

Now I live in a file cabinet.
Now I am dead at a desk, sweeping
Clouds aside to see the paper, but
I can't be made glorious amid executives.
Downwardly mobile, I must presume
Another view, another room.

2

On the shelves in my head
I re-arrange geraniums.
It is no dormitory in that dream,
No commune, no rattle of pins
No filing in for the mandatory egg.
I am shutting leaded windows there
Shutting out the daily incursion
Of voices: "Stay with the group!"

"Go to sleep, asshole....If you think you're any...
Such a lovely, quiet girl, never a word...Shit! ...
Remember that young ladies....Try smelling
Her closet sometime, she....fuck it, fuck.."

I pull

The walls to like a shutter:
Five layers of paint, siding, shingles
And lawn and sycamore hedges and fences
The pine trees coalesce into deep green
And I am lighting the kitchen
The voices glow faintly from pan-lids
Reverberating, they ring once
Then sign off.

3

The rules arose from nowhere
Inevitably as spite. Somebody, some-
One has to clean the john.
The girl who cleaned the john grew vicious
Everyone was menstruating at once:
The moon ruled us, en bloc
And her tides rose & filled us all
In the Spring, God turned away,
Smothered by lilac and terrible perfumes
We thought they rose from the river
Or the tidal basin, a lowland
Collective of drowning trees.
Gardens of algae blooming white as sin
On the dark water. We clutched
At each other & drank booze.

The vodka

Made us sick. We were discovered.
Angry fathers came, fathers,
Implacable in the dark driveway, &
The ugly girl who played accordion
Was beaten. He took her off in a truck.
We avoided windows, beat
Our breasts like true Christians
Beat bodies who dreamed the same
Only of freedom.

4

Tell me it's all a shuck then
That singular life, those dark flowers
Entwining shingles, & quiet growing.
Rectangles of strained light. . .
Even the marmalade in its painted jars?
Tell me there is a giant, humping mice under the foundations.
Cellar rot, tell me about cellar rot.

I believed that creed when the other wore out.
 Alienated, the trapped & trapper,
 Souls wrapped in wax paper,
 Roles for everybody, everybody gets a role,
 And yours, lady, is a doozy:
 To stare out the passenger's side
 At miles of windshield, to cry
 In the senseless suburbs for flags.

5

So I marched under the banners
 Wore a Mexican surplice and purple stole
 Made out of matted pigeon feathers,
 And sang. . . all in concert; counter-
 Point would be risky, they said
 So early in the game.
 We made the same strong tune
 Winding through parks
 Carving new symbols on the banks:
 In the communion of the faithful
 We drank blood from the streets
 It has never, they told me
 Happened like this, never before!
 We erased the names
 We erased the blackboards
 The children under the pretty flags
 Dispute whether to eat the pigs or the oxen
 Believe, Believe.

6

But you promised me a house
 Or somebody promised. Where is it?
 I am only a typist, I brush off the clouds from the paper
 I am the typist, and words travel through me
 Like minnows through water.

In the cafeteria

The secretaries munch lettuce
 A pear, some cheese, they don't need much
 They live on dreams
 They have planned vast kitchens in their dreams:
 Medieval labyrinths, spits & kettles
 Doorways lead into a wealth of larders
 Outside is all fog: children appear & vanish.
 Mine, say the secretaries.

Mine, say the men

Who pass their window: fitted
 Wool hips, widened eyes into which a man could leap
 Sleek small feet for the edge of my spine,
 Mine.

When the men watch closely
 They notice that the mouths of women
 Open and close, open & close
 Silently, like fish under water.
 But you're wearing earmuffs, the typists say,
 And I am asking you, *Where is my house!*
 Soon, they are answered.
 And the men continue to touch them,
 With darting fingers, searching
 As children do for lost pennies
 In the crevices of sofas and chairs.

7

I can leave my splendid office
 And ride into your room, dressed in cool.
 You nod. What does that mean?
 We are quickly spliced apart
 I issue from the left speaker, indistinct
 Among the louder voices.
 Your voice is on the ceiling
 You are not alarmed.

I fold my elbows over the vulnerable spot.
 That hum

In the background is my system,
 Shutting down. You have the map
 To show me the fastest way home.
 Why do I bother? I stand
 In front of cars

Singing my head off

Singing my head off

8

When I was five
 I heard the big kids cheering
 At the stadium, a mile away
 My mother said, Someday
 And the cheers went up in smoke & plaid linings
 And the leaves kept burning. . .
 Now we are out on the march,
 Waving leaves at each other. Hi!
 Nudging at the tentacles of that stunning monster
 The state. A dragon
 With horn-rimmed glasses who eats Time
 And exhales words.

But I'm not

Any of those things.
 I haven't the software for dragon-roping
 And you'll have to go. . . oh,
 Men with lances and broken coke-bottles
 I am not a woman, sorry, man.

Take your false attentions to the postman
Justify yourselves to the managers
Send your poems to the museum
Where Maillot has found in stone
That pile of cocoons he calls Woman,
That wet-dream dried.

I am going to be
Some straight thing, lean.
A bean. Going to be one of those Other Women,
Shrews and furies, who heap
Brambles against the moon to spoil her face,
Who make their houses from the ribs of men
And decorate them with teeth.

9

Sure, there's a program.
You've heard the women talking,
Unraveling the bright wool of their oppression.
Their mamas said, fix your hair, be thin
Smile at the boys like *this*, pull in
Your gut, girl. Mama said it every day.
Cut it out! is what I told mama
What do you think I am anyway?
I don't give shit for all those other girls,
Those hopping crinolines, those birds.

Barn paint!
Screamed the nuns, hussy, cheap thing!
We washed the paint off in cold water
And dyed our hair to brown again,
Which made it green. That's better, they said.
And sneered at us with something more
Than merely conscientious frowns,
Packaging experts at the highest tier,
They knew the rule: Buy cheap

Sell dear.

And we of the box-shoes, & smocks
Pale as library paste in the mirror
Knew that somewhere under that was Glow.
A man would look at us
And *know*.

10

Not me, though.
Style was for simpering idiots,
For boy-crazy boppers, for oh, oh, oh
All night in the bunks till my rollers dinned
Not for me class rings worn like mojos
Talismanic bicycle chains,
Fits, tears, removable eyes, or
Mouths for 6 different sorts of persuasion.

I found clouds
For free in the library, read clouds at dawn
When the sun leapt out of Wisconsin,
Dripping butter, an implacable pagan
Shining through the ghosts of Ojibways
And the solid river,
Who mocked all the while the Church's hosts
Which only imitate it.

I saw through
The whole mad show.
A man would look at me, and *know*.

11

It gets harder and harder
To brush the clouds from the paper.
They are cumulous now, deliquescent
And they rumble like armies.
The house I would have becomes smaller and smaller
It is a toy
On the monopoly board.
It is a knot in my hair.
It is a shack on the flood-plains and the rains predicted,
It is the coffin we are carefully shaped to fit into
But who would disturb the secretaries at coffee
To tell them?

Naias



MINNEHAHA

We dared the cold water
 And stood on the ledges
 The waterfall veiled us
 We shouted in secret
 I considered the future
 It would bend like the birches
 I would wait till it happened
 I'd become Minnehaha
 When the flowers were dancing

I'd become Minnehaha
 I would be laughing water
 Hiawatha would lead me
 Through the elm and the birches
 The light would be dappled
 In praise of our moving
 I would be Minnehaha
 In the summer forever
 I would flow under bridges
 And the fish that I nurtured
 Would spill into the river
 Like flowers that are dancing

A breeze eased the grasses
 It still seems to be winter
 The waterfall's frozen
 As if nothing could wake it
 I touch the bronze statue
 It sticks to my fingers
 My hand comes back bloody
 From the myth by the water
 Only pain is unfrozen
 No flowers are dancing

I thought it would happen
 It would look like the forest
 I thought I'd be living
 In a love like the summer
 But I'd bent like the birches
 The ice was triumphant
 There was no Hiawatha
 No Chippewa Chieftan
 To lead me to places
 Where flowers are dancing

And some flowers were dancing
 I thought that I saw that
 A breeze eased the grasses
 I considered the future
 And the deer were unwary
 I thought it got better
 And the waterfall triumphed
 The clouds stayed in position
 And some flowers were dancing

There was love for the taking
 I thought by the river
 It would look like the forest
 Its light would be dappled
 I would wait til it happened
 Like you wait for the summer
 For the creek's overflowing
 And the ice disappearing
 And the flowers to be dancing

Minnehaha was placid
 In the arms of her lover
 Hiawatha would hold her
 And his tendons would glisten
 As they stood there in bronze
 By the bridge we walked over
 A myth by the water
 A bronze under birch trees
 And I thought it got better
 And that flowers would be dancing

The tourists were ghostly
 As they called to each other
 Only Chippewa heard them
 Who had died by that river
 And the waterfall tumbled
 To drown out their voices
 It had carved out its valley
 By traveling backward
 And the grass grew behind it
 And the flowers were dancing

The myth had seduced me
 I consider the future
 In the skull of mad winter
 I flow under bridges
 I become laughing water
 Alone in the forest
 The light is cold pouring
 Into the creekbed
 Where I touch my future
 Whose flowers are bloody.



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