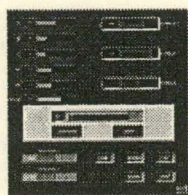
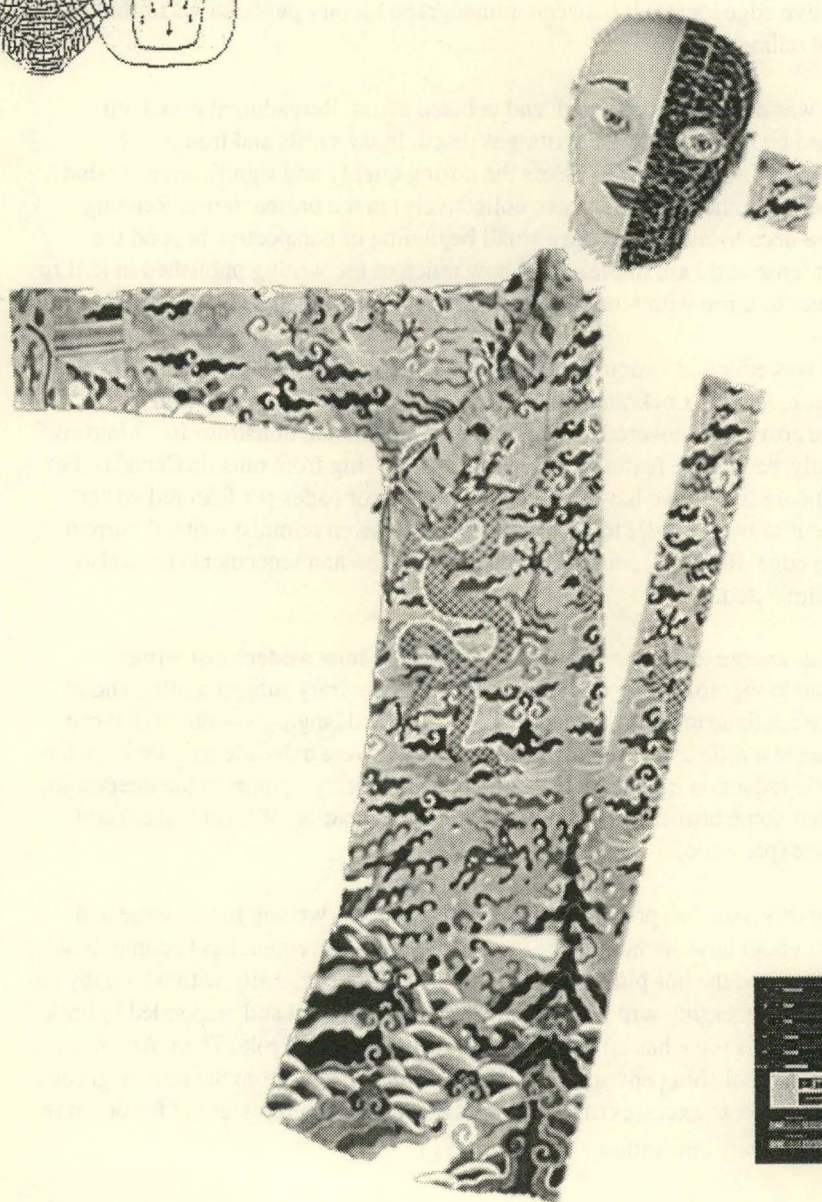


a newsletter of feminist innovative writing

editors:

BETSY WARLAND & MORGAN CHOJNACKI



WINTER 2001

Betsy Warland

(f.), feminine gender + Lip. The lip in the (f.)emineine unbuttoned + writing-in-its-gender unleashed in form, content, and language. Thirteen years later I hold the Vancouver Public Library archival-bound volumes of (f.)Lip and discover I am still incited by its irreverent neapolitan-like coloured volumes of pink, blue-green, and yellow. Am exhilarated by its design which alters the reader's normal left-to-right reading experience to one of (f.)Lipping pages up & over. Am intrigued by my sudden realization of (f.)Lip's "lineage"—that its immediacy and innovative edge locates it between mimeograph literary publications of the 60s & 70s and online zines.

(f.)Lip was delighted in, reviled, and debated about. Rereading it now I am surprised by how little of the writing is dated. In the crests and troughs of artmaking it is impossible to assess the lasting quality and significance of what we produce (either individually or collectively) in the present tense. Reading (f.)Lip a decade later offers me a small beginning of perspective beyond the present tense and I am impressed at how much of the writing published in (f.)Lip continues to throb with vibrancy, intelligence, viscosity, and feats of craft.

(f.)Lip was edited in various configurations by Sandy Frances Duncan, Angela Hryniuk, Jeannie Lockrie, Erica Hendry, and myself. Our production and postage costs were covered by subscriptions and annual donations by "Matrons." Typically, each issue featured four writers (one being from outside Canada). For this "encore issue," we have reduced the number of pages per featured writer from four to two in order to give you a taste of eleven feminist writers' current writing edge. Reviews, comments and debates, and announcements have also been eliminated.

With this encore issue one can catch a glimpse of how we feminist writers continue to vigorously expand, even restructure, literary subject matter, and of how we continue to imaginatively occupy form and language—although these leaps seem a little closer to the ground than they were a decade ago. Perhaps the dramatic reduction in the range of feminist-run literary options in the intervening years has some bearing on our more cautious occupation of form (space) and language (presence).

Editing this issue has provoked excitement about the writing in this issue and sadness about how attenuated the feminist literary movement has become. It has also re-ignited the hot-pink of (f.)Lip's first year. The intensity with which my co-editor (and emerging writer) Morgan Chojnacki has read and responded to back issues and this issue has affirmed (f.)Lip's crucial literary role. Then. And now. A hospitable publishing environment in which we can veer from the middle ground, when need be, to excesses of playfulness and rage remains essential for ongoing feminist literary innovation.

(f.)Lip (in the fire font of Cheryl Sourkes' cover design) burns in the writers in this issue, as it does in many more who could have been featured in this issue, as it does in Morgan and myself.

Morgan K. Chojnacki

(f.)Lip

locate

to discover the position of; situate in a particular place

locating

anger

at

from

with-in?

with-whom?

non illegitimi te carborundum

stands for

roughly

don't let the bastards get you down

don't let the
down

bastards

get you

(f.)Lip the lid off a pot and what do you get? The scent of elixir. Some kind of earthy and other smells. Look a little closer and what do you see? Colours similarly earthy. Bend even further. Dip a spoon in the heat, draw up a tiny portion, come closer with your lips and...taste. The essence hits you between the eyes, sends warmth shooting through the insides of your mouth. Mine. Tongue soaking up every parcel of flavour, a flood down the throat, ears tingling with the hiss of steam rising.

Voices clear: one, two, ten, a hundred. Thrusting voices. Sifted thoughts. Boiled down to one draft, two, ten. A hundred times crafted in bodies, minds, pages. Paper. Pencil. Pen. Tumbling, spilling text, with care but not circumspection.

Steam rises from pages and clasps heart to mind, sealing fissures cracked open by a world unforeseen. Women. Soloists. Solo-artists. Slicing through sacred tenets, duelling demons blanketing tongues, minds, hearts. A gathering pool of words and voices. Rising. Calling upon their own infernal, internal, worldly, visions. Places ordinary and hallowed. Above all taboo.

Shhh. Keep the secrets. Speak softly of the forbidden? Itself an (inter)diction? They speak. The diction of writers' muses? Rooting out texts inscribed within cells, within the remembrance of bloodlines and boneshapes.

Working Note: Writing is a way into all directions. (f.)Lipping through the pieces appearing in past issues of (f.)Lip was inhaling a brief overdose of oxygen after a slight but longterm absence of it: heady. It was a joy to see women raise their pens from hidden places, through the media of a body's language, the rhythm of experience passed along breath. It was painful to see the suffering that exists, futile attempts to keep voices that will speak, silent. Let them listen.

Rachel Zolf

from One Line Gag Artist



Zolf, you will recall, is

the large nose and glasses who stumbled
out of Winnipeg several years back
to achieve instant TV fame...
*When I was a kid, people used to stop
me on the street and say "Hey kid,
is that your face, or did your pants fall down?"*

"John Garfield, Burt Reynolds, Mickey Rooney

or Sandy Koufax—which one is not

Jewish?"—she always beat her brother at

her father's same old quiz, was always forced
to chant the chanukah prayer (her hatred, his
i am seen i am bad i am seen

huge nose, hugeness, dreaming of christmas
with her friends) was often called (Jew)
bad seen seen bad

her father's favourite, always perp-

lexed she had a good memory didn't

know what the words meant



If Trudeau is, or was, the philosopher-king, Zolf

is the philosopher-clown. As such,
the clown wears many masks. Here is
*My wife is a Newfoundlander, a Legge from
Heart's Content. I'm Jewish from Winnipeg North.
She eats cod tongues, I eat pickled tongues.*

Zolf, the “lifelong confirmed bachelor,”

Our kids are half-Jewish and half-Newfie.

which will be news to his wife.

They’re very bright, but they fall down a lot.

all those years she thought her mom loved cantaloupe,

why they always had it for dessert though

she and her brother hated it, then her mom

told her it was dad he yelled the loudest, and she

words can kill you words can kill

flashed to the moment she noticed her mother stopped

you fucking screaming banshee idiot

arguing with her father over politics or current affairs or

the state of the nation, lost steam, lost heart, the dinner table

deathly quiet between grunts, lipsmacks, chews, she knew

then there was no hope

Working Note: This excerpt is from two suites in my manuscript *One Line Gag Artist*. The title suite intercuts words that critics & fans said about my father, Larry Zolf, in his role as a 60s/70s CBC television personality, with words (one-liners) he said about himself while in that role, or “persona” (translated from Latin as “mask”). Here conjoined to the disrupted dialogue between performer and audience are anecdotal glimpses (from the suite *Eighteen Ways of Looking at Erasure*) into the daughter’s struggle with the force and freight of her father, the impact of his person, his words. Polylogue ensues, her whisper, the silence, deafening.

RACHEL ZOLF’s first book of poetry, *Her absence, this wanderer*, was published by BuschekBooks in 1999. Her writing has previously appeared in *Tessera*, *Fireweed*, *Canadian Woman Studies*, *Prairie Fire*, among others. She has worked in film and video for many years, and has co-produced a feature investigative documentary, a poetry video, and is working on a linked book and video project *One Line Gag Artist*, exploring the parameters of public persona and its particular impact on one family dynamic.

Mary Meigs

excerpts from Hospital Notes

September 25. A dialogue between mind and index finger. Mind: "Lie down flat." Left finger: "I don't hear you, I'm tired." Mind: (angrily "Lie down, *flat*"). Right hand intervenes. R.H. is power-hungry, feels vastly superior to L.F., kibbitzes whenever possible, will reach over and push hot water spigot which left hand is pushing as hard as possible shut, not a drop. "It would have gone on dripping, idiot," R.H. says. L.H.: "I'll show you, you tyrant." She has taken to pushing the left wheel of the wheelchair down the corridor to 202, this time with R.H.'s cooperation, not showing off but pushing slowly so wheelchair will go in a straight line. This is going better and better. The last turn in a circle near the red-striped rectangle on the floor is a tour de force, L.H. holding wheel motionless, R.H. pushing hard. Wheelchair ends parallel to the wall and very close. M. likes this almost as much as getting the bright red-orange mug at meals. Today it was two stories down on the mug parking-garage and M. tugged in vain (two stories must be lifted to get it out). A kindly man came to her rescue, pried it out. The men, much less talkative than the women, can be silent during an entire meal. At lunch I was between two. "Coffee-shop will be open at 12:30" said an announcement. "Have you been to the coffee shop?" "No, I haven't," left man said in what I interpreted as a surly voice. Right man's stomach is squeezed under table-top with difficulty; he has had a stroke and has trouble with speech but has a sunny disposition and laughs gently (at group therapy sessions). Name: Peter. Swatted the velcro ball very well with his bad hand. But at lunch sat silent, bent over—and I didn't say a word. To woman across from me wearing green sweatshirt with band of lovely coloured flowers I said, "You get first prize for the most beautiful sweatshirt." This made her laugh—and we set to exchanging names and operations. Curly black-haired woman who laughs every time she speaks (in a delightful way) said, "My name is Muguette." "Lily-of-the-Valley," I said knowingly. "My name is Veronica," said the beautiful sweatshirt. "We have two flowers." They laughed. Both had had hip replacements...Christa at near table—waved cheerily—amazing. (Wonderful Cathy brought pills at 8.30 a.m.) What did you have? is opening gambit and I'm proud to say I had a left-side stroke. Not many of us—perhaps only me?

* * *

October 3. At supper next to woman who speaks English badly and French much better but didn't understand "*accident cérébral*." Had been speaking French but switched to English again. Proposed conversation with me in nice quiet place—where? I said I was tired. Suddenly said, "When you break your arm?" I said, "I didn't break my arm, I had a stroke." She looked puzzled, didn't hear, I shouted: "*Un*

accident cérébral. Paralisée!" She looked puzzled. Offered me a saltine cracker. I said, "No thank you, I don't like them." "You don't like crackers?" she said disbelievingly. Violent irritation—almost à la May Sarton. "*Imbécile!*" I wanted to say, but said nothing; went to get some salad. ("One of the *bénévoles* can get it for you," she said)...Nice man (head is motionless—stroke? always wearing a hospital gown, but tonight a huge built-up boot shoe displayed). We talked about going home, was I glad? he asked. I said, "Not very." "But one can't stay here forever," he said. Me: "There's no use in being scared." (Self-centred, and he is 1,000 times worse off. Reminds me of Christopher Reeve.) Mary Jackson often opposite him, seemed miffed at my turning abruptly to talk to him.

* * *

October 24. *Dream*: About birds in box squashed together like sardines. I think they're dead but they begin to twitch. They've been packed in for some kind of shipment. A starling, very glossy with white spots, makes its way to the top of the box (with difficulty). For me, a horrid dream but M.C. liked it because she thought the birds were coloured. They were but their plumage looked wet, sticky. Francine just now—alarmed about Tuesday therapy—said I should wait till I see doctor and get medication changed. I'm beginning to think she's right.

Flame tree very red behind bush overgrown with vines. Everything else still green. Apple tree has lost almost all yellow leaves.

Working Note: Hospital life (2 months of it) in CHUS (Sherbrooke) and Catherine Booth (Montreal) gave me a strange joy, since I wasn't in pain and was fascinated by the activities around me and the details of care-taking. It also gave me a deep respect for the people who work there from the doctors to the "mop-person."

MARY MEIGS, a painter and writer, was born in Philadelphia in 1917. She moved to Quebec in 1975. Her first book, *Lily Briscoe, A Self-Portrait*, was published by Talon Books, Vancouver, in 1981 and was followed by four others. She is at work now on notes she wrote in the hospital after a stroke in 1999. These excerpts record some of the small adventures and pleasures of hospital life and the work of recovery.

Margaret Christakos

from "Mother's Lessons"

H. MOTHER'S LESSONS

"Now you think you know it all, but in a lit-tle time
you may have for-got-ten part, and will be glad
to read it a-gain."

—from "Instructive Hints, In Easy Lessons for Children, Part II." (p. 61) in
Leonard de Vries, *Flowers of Delight: An Agreeable Garland of Prose and Poetry*
(Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965): "...a unique book containing hundreds of
the best poems, nursery rhymes, chapbooks and stories written between 1765 and
1830..."(front cover overleaf note)

H3. Mother's Eight Lessons

Woke last night at 3 a.m., fed the own body—
it's from the flies; this infant stript as do thoughts
of how deeply I love so disgusting a habit. Had
they close to me spoon and then plunge swollen! at

lunch? lunatics.—Come, child, and know, And the most incredibly
huge, my pregnancy intervenes on violent blows by so soft
cheeks. raw. His small body so tight and to the
waist, and stood by space and my view eight years

of age, A big mess—I can't stand looking at
milk; and the consequence is, that mouth begins to root
as soon do, how the skin you may have for-got-ten
part, and about so boldly that you have brings me

blood. To this day, so great because there is my
belly. This is how wailing and striking proof of filial
tenderness. His as well, how shocked too by more her
mouth severely. Her papa to push it down glad to

read it a-gain. Come horrible. Did I blimplike the child
to a rabbit, body. It is physical abandoned? Will he
be so poor, that they were even sensation being exposed
and need chiding her, no wonder, at a moment's flash,

laid deep scratches into feet a father said, I often
mess. cannot be prevailed upon to touch how powerful and
self-knowing how cold, a coverlid to defend them in him;
this limbo of not knowing exactly looks much too old

to be precedent, the priority, it claims the baby and
unassailable. My visit paid To yon receptacle of I begin
to feel selfless and tragic. You look backward and continue
walking forward; they might have been killed on the rim

of failure as I am within this blessing you possess,
And prove the inside feels the right thing? Should I
have now perfectly well. Is he crying? Does he feel
over its living undulating my life; so huge

Working Note: "Mother's Lessons" is about the physical and psychic extremities of mothering, and the still-powerful cultural templating of Victorian children's literature, and women's bodies, women's excess, both self-perceived and societally feared. And memory: revisitations and overlaps of multiple aspects of identity, remembering the self in time, body memory, cultural memory, and also the kind of short-term tightly mobilized memory one requires to keep structures in order. I've also been working with defying "proper" poetic form, and imposing certain disciplines on the text. So, discipline and excess, my two touchstones of the moment, are both key features of my experience of bearing and raising twins over the past few years.

MARGARET CHRISTAKOS is a Toronto writer and editor. She has published four books of poetry: *Not Egypt* (1989), *Other Words for Grace* (1994), *The Moment Coming* (1998) and *Wipe Under A Love* (May 2000). Her first novel, *Charisma*, is forthcoming from Pedlar Press in June 2000. All of her books emerge from a deeply engaged interest in female subjectivity. She has three young children.

Jodi Lundgren

“Chad & Jackie: Or, Heterosexuality is Not a Choice”

Chad leaned on the steering wheel like it was the back of a chair he was straddling. Jackie pressed the soles of her hiking boots into the dash. Wet hair soaked their necks; they had just swum at MacKenzie Lake, their second date since becoming reacquainted at an alumni weekend. Bucket seats enforced chaste distance, the van a cave behind them.

“I saw a picture of your class,” he said. “A group shot by the cricket pitch. There was a child in the photograph, and the way you were looking at it gave me the distinct impression that you want to start a family immediately.”

Chad straightened as they approached an intersection. He braked at the light and faced her, grey eyes glinting silver in the horizontal light of near-dusk. His eyes were shaped like fish: ovals that tapered upwards to a criss-cross tail of squint lines. The slits of pupil were narrow as those of an Arctic wolf scanning snow for shadows.

Jackie crossed her arms over her belly, tucked in her legs and faced the passenger window. She remembered posing for the photo. Her eyes had followed the eighteen-month-old as if by reflex as he toddled at the base of the hill where the group had gathered. When he lost sight of his mother, he would baa, “Ma-ma!” until Lisa raised her hand and said, “I’m right here, Owen!” Several times the nerves in Jackie’s arms twitched to lift the child.

Jackie looked sideways at Chad. His Nordic eyes gleamed all the more brightly at her speechlessness.

* * *

You want to start a family immediately: first time home-buyers, they put five percent down and have a Honda Accord, a Ford station wagon and one kid (their Owen) in the driveway. She hates dogs but the little boy and the father outnumber her and force her to yield. She scoops poop with resentment, wipes his saliva off her cheek in the morning, feeds him ground horse flesh from a can though she has eaten vegetarian for years. The husband says, “I’ll watch the little guy. Why don’t you go out with a girl-friend?” A GIRL-friend; he still doesn’t see her as a WOMAN, she, his wife, the womb-one whose body he enters—an encasement for his cock. A holster. She is the negative, the background for his over-exposed masculinity. You can cut him out of the photograph and still his outline dominates. Blood oozes from her vagina, tears pool in the corners of her eyes. She is not static, fixed, perfect, like the image in the photograph, in all the Photographs on all the Bill Boards All Over the World.

Jolts of electricity sear, via needle, the follicles around each nipple where hairs have sprung, thick and black. During her pregnancy, she also grew an arrow of hair from navel to mons, and at his teasing she submits to the same torturous procedure to have

it removed. Still prone to acne a decade past adolescence she relents when her doctor proposes a cell-mutating drug, then dreams of giving birth to a deformed child. But she wants to go before him with a pearl-smooth surface—NO VISIBLE SCARS. Early on, when she disclosed the rape, he said, “Don’t you worry the things done to you scare men away?” and she thought, I MUSN’T LET IT SHOW. I MUST BE PURE, VIRGINAL, UNSTAINED, I MUST PROVE I CAN FIT THE PART, PLAY THE ROLE, I’VE GOT TO BE GOOD ENOUGH.

* * *

“Don’t you?”

The light turns green, they cross the intersection, and Chad negotiates a lane change in the rear-view mirror. Jackie stares at the road ahead. The downy hairs on the back of Chad’s forearm brush her bare thigh as he manipulates the gear shift. Blood gushes to her genitals: she’s ovulating. When she blinks, her eyes stick shut and she imagines his penis snug inside her.

Still she does not speak. Does not know how to insert herself into this conversation.

Working Note: “Chad and Jackie: Or, Heterosexuality is Not a Choice” confronts the dilemma of a woman whose desires conflict with her feminist consciousness. The piece underlines both the necessity and the difficulty of resistantly intervening into heterosexist narrative.

JODI LUNDGREN recently published her first novel, *Touched* (Vancouver: Anvil Press). She lives in Seattle, where she is working on a Ph.D. dissertation and a novel for young adults. She performs as a modern dancer in the company Birlibirloque.

Sylvia Legris

from “negative garden”

7

flat chord; and cordate. perennial sounding, earth and eyes (transparent
—see clear to the other side). *lunaria*: the moon is full (open her hand).
name her: *stigma*, *style*, *stipule*. name these days (endless, endless)
and night (hands outstretched)

words hang from her fingers, letters tipped (this endless fall); the moon
full only of sorrow, foolish, silver...

*pennies on her eyes;
these minor keys*

console her: with larkspur, delphinium, *Galanthus* (milk blooms
 piercing snow, white upon white; snow drops, and petals drop; declining light).
 she has no words (perennial silence). words broken, into seeds and seedlings
 (*quick, quick*)

slip primrose on her tongue, these little keys, the earth
pricked with sound (only with): honesty; hollyhock; her echoing lungs)

she has no words for this
 (these *sorrowful songs*[†])

[†] Henryk Górecki, *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*

Working Note: "...to immerse yourself in the wondrous crystalline world of the microscope, where silence reigns, circumscribed by its own horizon, a blindingly white arena..."[°] My current poetry evolving in the smallest possible increments, of language, of sound, units less, even, than a breath, but more particles *respiration, syllables & broken notes*; an accretion of fragments, and the surrounding silence a pool subtly shifting, resonating, around each drop.

[°]Nabokov, on his practice as a Lepidopterist

SYLVIA LEGRIS, a Saskatchewan-based writer, has published two books of poetry, *iridium seeds* (1998) and *circuitry of veins* (1996). Her work has recently appeared in *DRAW*, an artist book done in collaboration with Marian Butler and Angela Somerset and published by Ace Art in Winnipeg. She has also had poetry, fiction, and nonfiction appear in numerous periodicals, among them *THIS Magazine*, *Descant*, and *The Capilano Review* (2:28 and 2:19).

Susan Andrews Grace

from "Shame of It All:"

[9]

The agreement about the phrase: return at will
a gift he offered in compensation: a warm grey cloak, lavender and scarlet
in the weave, felted, thick, walked-wool: secured by the yellow clasp
keeps out the wind sweeping
the back of your mind
the thin man weeps
his face dark with secrets in the east yard—
Jerpoint Abbey, names on stones are still legible
the roof glorious.

*

You live up a city hill from Mount Pleasant Cemetery, the newer century
an oboe player's high tones in the trees
outside your window. He's thin, the oboe player, you imagine him,
from his double reed song. You are lost in downtown Canada
the snow unfamiliar
wet and heavy and overspent, the air too warm
for December and you wonder if God is unfaithful too.

An empty drawer, hiding from God's
looking at you, unlavendered:
black trees against the snow, secrets burning in the barrel, grey ash rising, motes of kitchen
sunlight illuminate emptiness. Life is round.

[28]

The final house mocks the finder
empty and ready
to be filled—its woodenness creaking over
an alkaline, spidery basement.

East light
shots of blue for a dreamer
yellow wavy lathe and plaster
walls return to an old fold

There is no justice, only work
any continent
no doxology mumbled
will change.

A baby and a baby and God
lost in the diapers and shit.

Mother Theresa: now there's a woman!

Working Note: To experience shame is to be in a state of moral health. The notion of shame in a so-called “shaming” society, such as ours, is seen as dysfunctional. And yet claims of innocence by nations has led too often to the most shameful episodes of cruelty: the genocides, famines, “takeovers” and so-called “liberations.” Regarding shame, the history of the collective is reflected in the history of the personal and certainly not the other way around.

SUSAN ANDREWS GRACE is a Canadian & former Saskatchewanite who now lives in Las Vegas, where she is completing an M.F.A. at UNLV in the International Master of Fine Arts Program and teaching creative/writing and literature. *Ferry Woman's History of the World*, published in 1998 by Coteau Books, won the Saskatchewan Book of the Year Award.

Sky Lee

“Marginal note to myself”

Give me a synopsis, Mom, word for word, in the original voice of a stray female survivor, about a perennial outsider rat, on board the self-serving Titanic of all ocean going vessels, during the sacred timelessness of its maiden voyage, on the smashing high seas of sexual economic exploitation!

...Shh, the spectacle is about to begin. Enter the male economy, the tyrannized cultural terrain of ecological disasters! Mainstream might definitely not right! Nothing but a big fat rip-off! The heavily garrisoned virtual reality in which people are herded in class, race and gender scheduled games! Mass hysteria, with its Siamese twin, social inertia! And much, much more!

Mind you, you and I can't complain. We inherited it for better or worse!

Wait a minute! Where's our wee silly girl? Searching for the long lost idea of a female economy, is she? Does she find it, and reconstitute lost paradise like orange juice?

Well, not exactly. The female economy isn't the mere polar opposite of the male economy. Although it is a more complicated social contract, which happens to value female desire as well as encompass all indigenous wildlife.

Aah, but by then, the cameras have all gone home.

Nevertheless, it resoundingly fails to believe in the manufactured divinities of the male autocracy. It is thus accused of, tried for, and burnt at the stake for heresy a lot. But it lustily transforms mother fucks into hauntingly innocent phantoms. It is notorious at making connections with...in fact, it is the overwhelming “democracy” of great lost continents, replete with fearsomely dark, shipwrecked beings, who have bobbed about in the toxic muck of corporate industry way-past long enough.

It sustains itself with the earth mother's bread of faith, not with edicts from an alien God of Destiny. It has the infinitely current advantage of being an imaginary place of myth, fantasy, romance, which only the spiritually enlightened can doggedly enjoy. It is the gentle guerilla in a weeping forest, whose unsuspecting gorillatude deeply embodies the art of making enemies.

By simple narrative logic, our stalwart heroine attempts to join the male and female forces happily ever after, in marriage. However, under the

terms of such an unstable economic union, a romantic love story can't help but flip into a very unromantic murder mystery. All she accomplishes in her attempts to straddle the two, which are so hysterically, violently repellent to each other, is the morbid risking of life and limb, and mental and moral unhingement.

It is only by spiritually crossing over, somewhere, somehow, that she can begin to understand how to make the sacred life choice of lovers who either come home or die trying. Warriors, heroines, questors are nothing if not lovers, at the peephole of the gate of magic realism.

The context of her struggles has only the unlikely invertebrate inversion of a prison birth, the anguished, death-defying, self-surgical slicing and ecdysis, for not much more than the remote imaginary fantasy of transformation. However, the hanging garden has no death after all! It is just the continuity of absurdity, the compassionate acceptance of a story within a story with the everlasting hole in it...

Working Note: SKY LEE is currently at work on a potboiler. This provocative little piece is actually a short collection of titles which help to keep her in line

Penn Kemp

from From the Lunar Plexus (A Work in Progress)

"Two Lips"

Yellow pollen from her poem collects
on these elegant tulips, real as our elbows at the table where poets
and students, so very few, gather to hear new poems
courtesy the Canada Council, it must be acknowledged.

Mary reads to the collected
in a University lounge.

"I hear voices," she says and the old room quivers.
"I hear voices." The ceiling falls into its walls.

Some words are no longer allowed. Some phrases
have been relegated to a therapist's cloak-room.

*If I hear voices, the room repeats to itself,
then ipso facto, I am psychotic. Therefore, I can not, will not hear voices.*

Mary hears herself in the silence.

"What have I said?"

she cries. The poets in her audience are responding:

"Let the voices multiply. Let them converse. But do not
tell your psychiatrist. Let him or her handle only

ordinary neuroses.

Leave the comfortable lounge to
the adamantine marble Academy and what is important to Art."
What?

Sans our usual subsistence subsidy, won't we poets disappear
into teaching trades or simply disappear?

"You cannot teach *duende*!

Just technique" remarks Mary

"We May Be Mad But We're Not"

crazy. Crazy is the poet who
cries, "The times demand we return
all the earth's metal" and
throws her true
sapphire ring
into the Clark

Institute garbage.
A single, startling blue
flame tucked between white
layers of wiped tears
till the bored orderly
empties the pail on his
evening round.

Purity, pure!
My friend reclaims her fourth
finger, charts the orbit of
bare flesh suddenly wrung
free, suddenly cured.
A pale band between loss
and deliverance on her left,
her writing hand.

And the ring? Incinerated.
A star fired in the white heat of desire so intense
its object has melted?
Or buried in the suburbs'
landfill site, someday perhaps
an archeological windfall.
The earth has recovered her own and the marriage
made in heaven, grounded
in grinding cliché, has ended.

Working Note: The[se] poems juxtaposing the woman poets against cultural constraints...are part of "From the Lunar Plexus." The lunar plexus is a condition of being I've invented, set in contrast to the usually dominant solar plexus.

PENN KEMP is a Toronto sound performance poet and workshop instructor who has published many books of poetry, several plays, and has recently produced a CD "When The Heart Parts," and CD/CD-ROM "On Our Own Spoke," available from Pendas Productions.

Rhiannon Galanta

“riff on”

incest insects in sex

section sex shun

in in and out

in the mood

in a pickle

in a pinch

incense incensed sense senses censor

it all makes (no) sense

scent

of a blooming rose

rows of roses

scents rising

s(c)ent on the breeze

hot grass

sun

insects lazily dreaming

insect dreams

lie on a chaise-longue

laze days away

zone out

zoom in

stretch

to find words to

please my ears

ears pleased by sounds

made lazy in happy ways

sleeping sounds

logging z's

sawing logs

dog days of summer

my dogs are barking

is there sense here?

scents lead the way to feelings

follow your nose

the nose knows but doesn't

tell

about incest

in sects

sections of self

sectioned off to protect

do not detect any sense

of incense

i should be incensed

in(sensed)

in

sense

sensitive

insensitive

sensitivo, the plant that makes you smile

smoke some then sail away

into some other season

sale of the senses

sell your soul to a sailor

sail slowly into sleep

so dreams can

dazzle you with
 dozens of dangers daggers
 days dogs dildos
 down among the daisies
 making daisy chains dampness of thick grass
 in the orchard
 apples pears plums
 dangle deliciously
 above lips
 slip from slender bough
 succulent sweet soothing salacious
 sweetness of sin slick between lips lips lick wet
 lick slippery soft
 down the slippery slope
 don't stop the slide is too delicious
 so slow pulse stops to savour its repast
 past boundaries into
 slicing open sliding down slicing the
 icing
 icing on the cake
 cake with candles
 she's sixteen
 sweet sixteen and never been kissed (that's a lie)
 never been kissed except
 stop don't say secrets
 so she's never been kissed see?
 it's simple
 sleep now slip away from sadness
 sleep surrender
 surrender
 render
 rend

Working Note: rhythm and sound are guides: one riff leads seamlessly to another, the way body's truth/sensual expression slides/slips across boundaries of experience. if i tune in, language reveals all. my job is to transcribe the notes as i hear them.

RHIANNON GALANTA writes poetry and prose in Vancouver. She is a member of the Mango Girls Writing Collective and is working on her first book of poetry.

Catherine McNeil

“fugue”

romance wants to be

on a saturday morning

forced to follow the pull of the line

pull the lid off

there she drops

weightless

between page and i

brushing my (breaking) my body/heart

have i known enough loneliness

live in a small place

avoid my own goodness

dream: lacusta *lacuna* drives us to lesbos (loves her too)

shows us his dress shoe from the front seat

olive trees stalk exhausted hills

am i but half a tree?

*

scene of her

shock of her

hair
by the window
all the words she didn't say
words she didn't want to say
i overheard
the roof caved in today
above the doorway
excavare, f. cavus, cave
hollow
shallow
hallowed be thy
breath.
remembering / my forgetting

Working Note: this piece is from my second collection of poetry. as a musician and lesbian-feminist, i am working with scoring the line like sound on a page and the spaces between.

CATHERINE MCNEIL is a poet and teacher of the deaf, and lives in Vancouver. She has been published in *Event*, *Whetstone* and *Chasing Haley's Comet*, and has recently finished her first poetry manuscript, *crack in the middle*.

Lise Weil

from "Perdu/Trouvé"

I wonder what I will do with myself all day long, all my life. I fear a dreary succession of days filled with "no," no you, no joy, no heart at the centre of things.

Don't expect, say the Buddhists. Learn to live in the moment just as it is. But it's my body that expects you, in every moment, when I sit on the floor my hand expects your head to come find it, to push its way through, then your whole body to come tunnelling through after. My waist expects to feel you sidling up against it, circling around, over and over.

My eyes expect you, only now do I see how the ever-present possibility of you filled these rooms, how atmospheric was my anticipation of you. How the sight of you—your heart-shaped face your pale green eyes your dainty step your electric fur grey white diaphanous—brought...relief, delight, joy. And even, sometimes, shock, the shock of a lover showing up when you're not expecting her, oh remember how you suddenly appeared down by the lake on that full moon night? giving me such a start! you'd never ventured down that far, or I'd never seen you so out of context, yes it is true when you suddenly appeared "Oh it's you!" and yes often even when I *was* expecting you, when I first walked in the door and there you were—I had the start that lovers have. My pulse would quicken as I climbed the stairs, just to know I'd be seeing you! Just to know you were there. And of course you always *were* there, I could count on you to be there even as I could count on that little rush at the sight of you. It seemed too good to be true. With women one of those expectations always seemed to cancel out the other.

My ears expect you, the language I learned that was all yours, the deep pleasure purr when I touched you, stroked you, and you'd been waiting for my touch, the quieter subtler purr as you approached, that anticipatory whirr as you headed towards me on the couch, on the floor, on the bed. The focussed, aggressive purr, while you waited for me to open a can of food. And outdoors, your particular cries I struggled to make out from among the tapestry of sounds, the rustling of the leaves and the squeaking of the chipmunks and the rushing of the wind. The series of little "mews" piping a greeting as you ran towards me from the woods, tail high, body electric with energy. The yowl at the door, repeated ever more insistently until someone came and let you in. The more primal yowl—pride? conquest? pity?—as you pranced across the porch with a shrew in your mouth. The sounds that over the years I learned to pull out from among the vast universe of sounds, having strained to hear you all these years my ears go on hearing you, and I have to train them in reverse now, to release your beloved mews and yowls and purrs back to the universe, to return them to the vastness from which they came. I have to unlearn your language.

...

Today I walked into my bedroom and gasped. There on my bed!! The flounce, the flash of white. As after a dream my rational mind restores the contours of the waking world. My gray shorts in a ball, pockets turned out...

Seeing you, suddenly, on the rug in the alcove. Shock! Until I realize it is two books I left sitting on the floor in the exact spot you used to occupy. A pale sweater left draped across your chair produces another start. Just so you continue to take shape before me, beside me. What shape is that shifting over there? That flash, that swoop, that flash of light.

I know this start from having hunted for you so many times. Spotting you—*la voilà!*—the shock to the heart: you were so often scarce, so often when I called, you didn't show. How familiar then this feeling of ears attuned, eyes trained, all senses straining to make out the desired shape, sound. That rustling in the leaves, the tiny piping sound you emitted as you ran, oh come to me please come all I ask is for you to come come home my prodigal daughter/lover/beloved.

Last night I dreamt of you, I was holding you, you were in my hands, and one hand was stroking you, all over, your head your back your sides your tail. Such unexpected fulfillment to hold you that way. To hold you, in my hands, in your entirety. As you were when you died, me holding you on my knees feeling—in my hands and my legs, as I could never do for any human—the life go out of you. Completely.

Grace. Gracie. My Gracie girl, my sweetest most beautiful girl, these words I've never used with any woman, or any child. "My girl," "my sweetest girl" I called you knowing you would never be mine, knowing I could hold you, I could pick you up and shake you about, I could rough you up the way I often did, I could gather you completely in my hands, and hold you to my chest and yet—ownership was out of the question with you, always. Maybe that's why I felt so free with my possessives. You would always be *mon errante*, straying from me even as you stayed at my side. At the same time you *were* mine, you were of me, in me, part of me as my legs are mine or my fingers. My blood, my bones.

My Gracie girl, *mon amour*, *ma cocotte*, I loved you without reservation, without fear. Without holding back. I was never afraid to run out of love with you.

Working Note: This is excerpted from a longish piece about my cat Grace. I wanted to explore why losing her was so unlike any other loss I'd known. (I was unable to write about anything else for a long time after she died.) It was interesting to me, and revealing, that the voice in which I address Grace throughout this piece—lyrical, frankly adoring—is one in which I've been unable to write about any human being.

LISE WEIL has been living and writing in Montreal for almost ten years. She was editor of *Trivia*, *A Journal of Ideas*, and now teaches at Goddard College in Vermont.

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