

Special Double Issue featuring  
B.C. Women Writers & Artists

# THE CAPILANO REVIEW



# THE CAPILANO REVIEW

Dear Reader:

We're very proud to have produced this special double issue devoted to B.C. women artists and writers and hope you are as impressed as we are by the range of talent and energy in these pages. *The Capilano Review* will publish the first issue of its 20th anniversary year in the early spring of 1992.

If this seems a long time to go without a *Review*, you can fill in the gap by taking advantage of a special pre-Christmas offer on our back issues. Choose from one of the special issues listed below or order one of our regular back issues for only \$7. (This rate does not include special issues not listed here.)

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# The Capilano Review

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# The Capilano Review

## FRIENDS & BENEFACTORS PROGRAM

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# STRUGGLE: LOCAL AND GLOBAL

"If we do not define ourselves, for  
ourselves, we will be defined by others —  
for their use and to our detriment."

Audre Lorde  
*Sister Outsider*



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Struggle: Local and Global  
Special Double Issue featuring  
B.C. Women Writers & Artists

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Haruko Okano

Front Cover:  
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# STRUGGLE: LOCAL AND GLOBAL

*We feel strongly within ourselves a hidden momentum that can't be located but comes from our interest in the world that we live in and the way we see the world.*

*Struggle: the collective process, (the collected writings) the ability to change, to shift the existing state. It is the multi-potent forces that meet at the point of intersection where the moment of inertia is transformed.*

This special issue of *The Capilano Review*, whose reins were generously handed over by Bob Sherrin, had its difficulties. To begin with we were four women, from diverse artistic experiences, racial and cultural backgrounds and all very active members in our own communities. In these seven months we were all in the same city for only four weeks — when the actual decisions about the work were finalized. Between the four of us we struggled to keep the ball rolling from Kenya, England, Nova Scotia, Haida Gwaii, Saskatchewan, Alberta and our answering machines — because they seem to be a country unto themselves at times.

As women we have so many struggles. As Women of Colour, as lesbians, as part of the working class, as a woman with disabilities, we each have particular concerns. Nicole Brossard once wrote, “to write *I am a woman* is filled with consequences.” The work in this issue reflects some of what B.C. women artists are thinking and experiencing.

As editors we struggled. The process of selection — what a difficult and implicitly powerful privilege — be given, assigned, allocated — to accept the position to select or reject. To recognize the challenge of these actions. One would prefer not to be positioned as ‘judge’. How can one speak for many? To be democratic whilst acknowledging the pinched budgets inherent to a small

periodical. To never shelve the too often unacknowledged interest 'informing' any editorial process. How do we name these?

We discussed and considered the advantages for younger writers, though considerably less polished or sometimes less precise in their presentation, of having a valuable opportunity to be neighbours with the more experienced.

Our decisions which had the appearance of organic revelation perhaps were not as organic as we would have liked. Somehow we knew implicitly what we sought. Direct address rather than ambivalent evasion. Simplicity yes. Attentiveness of detail yes. Generalized reductions no. The local. The specific. Humour. Passion.

At one point in the proofing stage the question arose about the capitalization of the words Black, Asian, Women of Colour, and the non-capitalization of white. One of us said that the *Globe and Mail* doesn't capitalize Native or Black. Does that make it right? We could have looked in the *Chicago Manual of Style* and found that Native, Black and Asian are considered adjectives and must not be capitalized. The question is: says who? White is considered an ideology, a given, whereas Native is an adjective, and not a race or a proper noun. Who made the rules? White must be in lowercase to pull readers out of their complacent and safe look at the world as "White is Right." Why can't white be capitalized as well? Perhaps there will be a time when White and black are equal, but not now; they aren't. We need to redress the imbalance, and it begins here. And now. We must make the familiar, oppressed position of seeing black, in lowercase (lower case) strange, by standing it in uppercase, Black. Likewise we must make the familiar White, strange by putting it in lowercase. White looks unusual in any type because white people have never looked at themselves as a colour. When we say woman or man, we assume white automatically; our racist roots are deeply embedded under this patriarchal ground. Both white/black or White/Black are constructed meanings. We need to subvert these creations. We must deconstruct the patriarchal, racist language, the syntax, the form which

we have so uninvitingly inherited. In this issue it might have been Black and white, in some other magazine it may be women fighting to be called women and not girls. What does it matter, you can hear the voices saying, they're just *words*.

*Caught between loving and hating the language of imperialism, and the possibility of subverting its power, oppression is met creatively with many forms of resistance as is evident in the works in this edition: humour, parody, anger, subversion. Colonial imperialism: not just words, but violent acts that we [have] experience[d].*

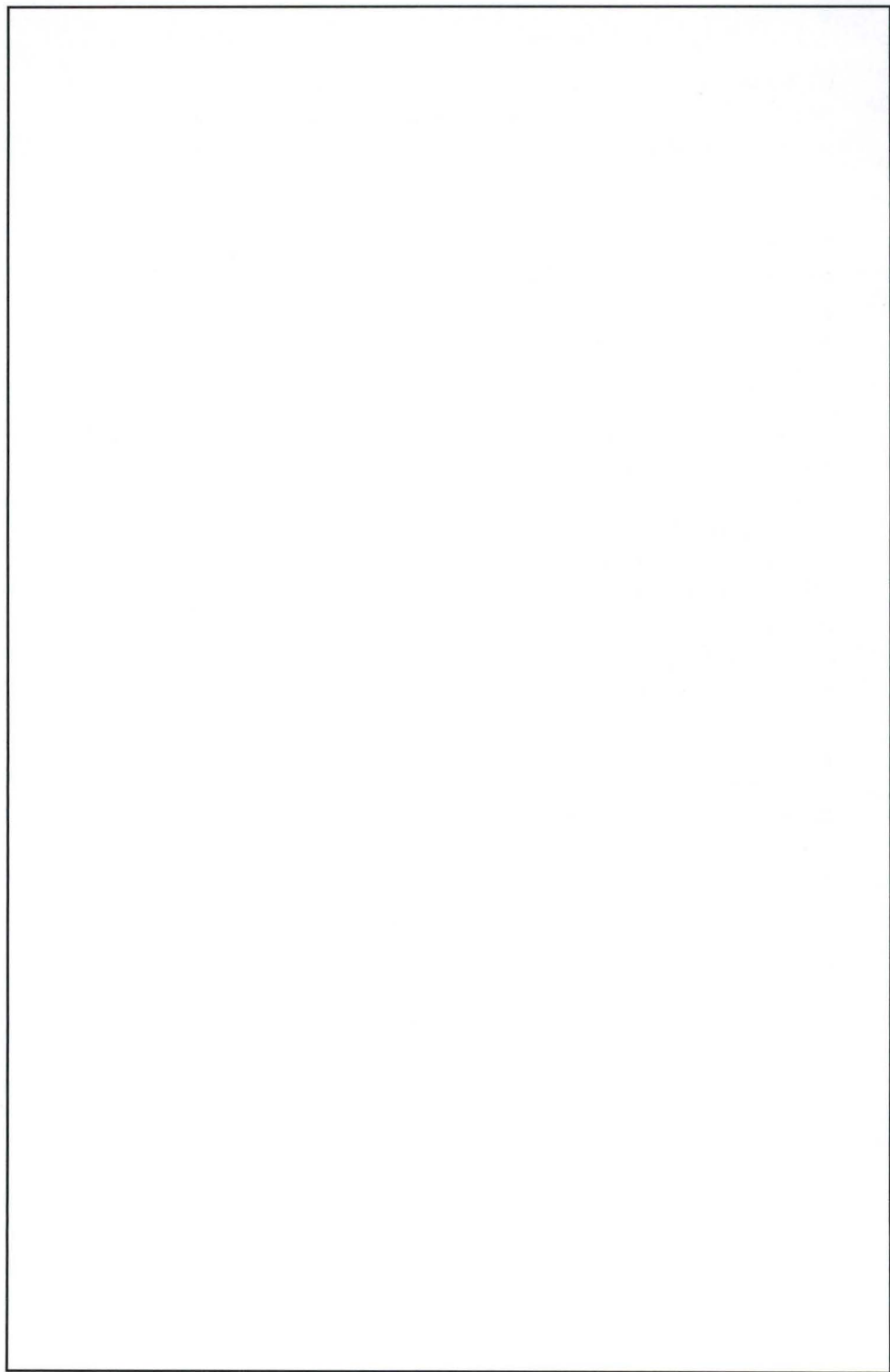
We want to thank Bob Sherrin for being patient and “hands off” with this issue. *The Capilano Review* is seen, at least in the literary world, as a publication place/space to aspire to. Over the years it has published many writers and until recently most were white and male. How could an Asian or Native woman who hoped to be published by this magazine ever be included? Not to belabor the obvious, her work wouldn't have reflected the white, middle-class editors' reality. The publishing world is changing and *The Capilano Review* knows that. Our hats are off to them.

Jane Hamilton, you have the patience of a ... buddha? saint? Thanks so much for all your invisible and heartfelt work. It doesn't go unnoticed.

This special issue of *The Capilano Review* is not meant to be comprehensive. We would have needed years, not months to compile such an issue. This is just a slice of time. Here it is. As it is. Take it. Enjoy.

Marcia Crosby  
Angela Hryniuk  
Zainub Verjee  
Carol Williams





## Grace Sanchez / UNTITLED

creating a fist  
requires several  
fingers well-coordinated  
different colours are  
okay  
there is no rule against that  
mothers and sisters  
are  
the best fist-  
makers  
because  
anger is required  
for this  
and they know  
what this is about  
as well,  
they have  
spent  
several  
generations already  
just flexing those  
digits for  
action  
making a fist  
would be  
a welcome release

## Janisse Browning / TWO POEMS

### RACE TO CULTURE

I see  
see this child swingin' in the playground  
jumpin' rope, singin'  
    "who stole the cookie from the cookie jar"  
light as a feather  
                                yeah  
but she always tensed up when they picked  
who'd go first to jump rope  
'cause they'd all put their fists in a circle and  
someone'd go  
    "eenie, meanie, miney, mo..."  
                                would they say "tiger"  
                                or... "tigger"...or...  
Even, even when she was in grade four  
Teacher walked in and said  
    "we're going to learn about multiculturalism today"  
and he printed three words at the top of the blackboard  
    Caucasoid...Mongoloid...Negroid  
(and this was the '70s when *Black* was Beautiful)  
and he asked everyone, starting at the front of the class  
                                (Teacher had curly, red hair)  
working his way to the back of each row, he asked  
    which word they belonged to  
    which category they fit into  
and she got real scared  
then remembered her mom said she was "a quarter Indian"  
    (they didn't know about *First Nations* people back then  
    ...still don't)

and Teacher finally pointed at her  
but she turned the table  
and didn't know she was egged on by trickster  
    (she didn't even know what a *trickster* was, but learned  
    ...about court jesters in history class)  
So she said she was Indian  
and everyone turned around to look at the new Indian in their class  
but Teacher didn't believe her  
and her name was  
the only one printed under *Negroid*  
    "we don't have a list for *Indians* here," he apologized  
They didn't believe her  
    (even though she was... "a quarter"...) *Indian*  
She didn't like Teacher's categories  
'cause it reminded her  
of what she *wasn't* and  
of what she *was* when some of the kids put their fists in a circle  
    and started singing  
to pick who was going to jump rope first



## SUNDAY MORNING JINGOISM

three sunday mornings  
    in  
    a  
    row  
going to the baptist church  
all us kids marching in step,  
    in time  
in a circle 'round the chairs  
where we sat for sunday school  
preparing for easter's pageantry  
    numbly chanting,  
    singing from the hymnal:

    "onward christian soldiers  
        marching off to war  
        with the cross of  
(blonde-haired, blue-eyed, his-picture's-on-the-wall-for-proof)  
        Jesus  
        going on before  
        christ the royal master..."

master...mmmmmm...massa?  
sunday school Teacher telling us                   "put some spirit into it!"  
so she had us march around  
instead of sitting straight, hands neatly folded in our  
(the Church's) chairs

all these little soldiers  
marching in step,  
in time,  
naive, little war machines  
ready to fight for whatever cause...  
and didn't I wonder  
"who are we going to war with," or  
"why?"  
but was too shy to ask out loud, so  
marched around the wooden chairs  
with my battalion  
anyway  
upholding the tradition  
yes, all we like sheep have gone astray

## Larissa Lai / TWO POEMS

### ARRANGEMENTS

The restaurant boy  
quit it  
with the extra fries  
the day he learned  
she was a rich Hong Konger  
Jackie Chan running circles  
in her eyeballs.  
Today she leaves  
a two-dollar tip  
on just a red bean ice  
accidentally lip printing  
the napkin.  
Little does she know  
he's halfway through law school  
but can't save enough  
to buy his grandma back  
from loneliness. She still  
misses China  
fingering the chipped dishes  
in the kitchen  
and trying to forget  
the shocking gray head  
of the husband  
who met her boat.

## GLORY

Another Vietnamese waif  
claws across the screen  
as always, frail and pretty,  
black eyes, black hair  
bare skin.  
She has escaped the bloody mess  
of My Lai  
only to dangle her poor  
sweet breasts  
before all these  
popcorn crunching GI Joes  
hanging on  
to dubious glory.

In the back of the Granville bus  
a man touches my hair  
asks from what country  
I have been refugeed  
again  
I crack my gum  
and say  
the USA

## Manisha Singh / MY WAR AGAINST RACISM

Once I longed to be white. I couldn't wait to fall asleep. Maybe this was a caterpillar state and tomorrow I'd emerge a butterfly. Maybe one day the good fairy would come and purify me — a dream that never came true.

I was manure then. The other children called me manure. I was the color of manure. I smelled like manure, or curry — same difference. Every time India was mentioned in class, every time I heard an imitation of the accent, I turned browner. I couldn't even turn red. All the children teased me. They flushed my gym bag down the toilet. They flushed my spirit away.

I was dark; the beautiful people were fair. They had colors: blond, blue, green. I was only muddy brown, devoid of light, of spirit, of love. My vision darkened. I hated looking at myself.

My heroes were Charlie's Angels. I worshipped them more than any white girl could have. Blond hair meandered seductively through my dreams. Blue eyes were the pools where I tried to scrub myself clean. I prayed to be white like them. Why were there no beautiful Indian women on T.V.? No beauties with thick lips, plaited hair and tea-stained skin — nobody to look like me.

I began to clothe myself in imaginary white skin. My appetite was insatiable. I straightened my hair, hungered for the styles. I turned against my parents' food, hungry for white nourishment. I was consumed by hatred for everything Indian. I remember my mother's tears when I told her I wished for a white mother. I told her this as she combed the knots out of my thick, rough, black hair. Her hands trembled only slightly.

When a white man liked me I was thrilled. When men my color liked me, I hid from them. I was afraid of the dark. It angered me when my white sisters (my friends), tried to match me up with my kind. My kind smelled. They were unattractive. My kind were manure. I was "white" then.

It wasn't until I graduated when one of my friends held me in a cold embrace and whispered, "I never even notice that you are



different. You are white just like the rest of us.”

I cried, because I couldn't see myself in the mirror anymore. I was invisible. No one could hear me, because I couldn't speak. I hadn't spoken for years. I was silent. Silence is starvation. Silence is suicide. I resurrected myself that day ... my Indian self. I still bear the scars, but I survived because my mother cradled the silence, nurtured me when I wasn't looking.

Today I see. I have a vision and a voice.

## jam. ismail / from SCARED TEXTS

- a. 1. at dinner they sit facing the tall windows. hillside's  
pulsing & billowing trees.  
i like that so much (one thinks).  
there must be much life there, & families (two murmurs).  
of course there is (three chimes), what d'you think,  
only families have trees?
2. flora was kettling water for herbal tea & assembling caps  
of greenstuff & earths of several colour.  
elder said: each morning, when i wake up, i consider  
how i should feed myself today, i think of what i've  
eaten yesterday & other days.
3. hibiscus mentioned that mushrooms are good for  
cholesterol.  
jaggery scoffed: what d'you mean, good for!  
chestnut dehisced: she means good against, good against  
cholesterol.  
flame-o'-the-forest said to jaggery: we know you speak  
better english & that you know what we mean.
4. . mean pause .  
said : menopause .  
said : hm . men pause.  
said : me no pause!

5. visiting a married couple, ivy got all wisteria about couples.  
cypress observed: you seem to think that married people practise marriage.
6. swordfern said to the family: i'd like you to meet my frond, aloe.  
papaya said to the clan: this is aloe, sword's companion.
7. your grandchildren are better behaved this year, laurel said, they're less rambunctious.  
no, holly demurred, they have their own beds.
- a. 8. gardenia the mother of friends phoned from afar: have you heard the one about the ventriloquist who was dying & wanted to say a few words to her family?  
chickweed smiled: alright, tell me.  
gardenia concluded: so they gathered in the room next door.  
not long afterwards, chickweed attended the funeral.

- b. 1. on waking in the mornings he would first hum a little.  
looking around the cot from its turned wood spindles to  
the carousel overhead of animal-shape pastels, he would  
remove thumb from mouth & practise language.  
hello, he would say to the air.  
a little bit more.  
not yet.

one day, age 2, he said: what's in a boook?  
a b c d e f g , he continued, his little  
hand twinkling star.

2. in chinatown whenever bosan said (in cantonese): can't  
read chinese, chinatown storekeepers would scold.  
in cheung chau\* they would say: oh another (denatured  
returnee from overseas).  
in hongkong marie-claire said: you should say you don't know  
how to read, not, you don't know how to read chinese.  
  
oh, sorry! the waitress apologized, rushed back with  
the english-language menu, & waited on bosan most sympa-  
thetically.

\* long island, an hour by ferry from hongkong

3. in vancouver, the professor from lebanon spoke infuriated  
impassioned english about the war-torn condition of his  
country, the lack of education, the he said *illitricity*.

in the audience bosan lit up.

4. hah? bosan crossing georgia street said, to the driver  
who'd muttered something.  
the light turned amber.  
he stuck his head out the window, yelled: hey ricie!  
grinned, & zoomed off.

bosan cracked up: ricie! it's pretty-funny!  
sum wan said: hey, you just got insulted.  
ginger smiled: we've always had to tell bosan how  
oppressed she is.

- b. 5. jianada 'canada' seems wellliked in this part of china.  
hun how (very good)! said the pork-pie hat  
in the muslim eatery in dali, thumb-up.

canada hah? nods the uniform in kunming. china likes  
canada number one! he says.

on the street the money changer hustles: you from where?  
bosan said: jianada.

jianada? she points to bosan's hair & lifts her own in  
rhyme rhyme.

katib translates: she didn't know there is black hair in  
canada.



6. we've during a break at the gathering of first nations  
in vancouver, they say to bosan, come along,  
we're going to the sub (student union building) for lunch.

jeanette orders rice with her bacon & eggs. stories are  
swapped of food combos that boggle anglo-cans. robt is  
seen wandering, plate in hand, & waved over. to make  
space, chairs snug up, it happens, all to the right.

is this how the wheel was invented, bosan flashed.  
round table laughs.

7. staring at the typo 'accumiliate' made by a chinese from  
zimbabwe, bosan grimmed: yeah, accumulate + humiliate.

another time someone returned from paris said: we saw  
the agh de triumf.

it often happened to bosan  
this way: new word one  
day, twinning another.

accumiliate: agh! de triumf
-----------------------------

- c. 1. ratio quality      young ban yen had been thought italian  
in kathmandu, filipina in hong kong,  
eurasian in kyoto, japanese in anchorage, dismal in  
london england, hindu in edmonton, generic oriental in  
calgary, western canadian in ottawa, anglophone in  
montreal, métis in jasper, eskimo at hudson's bay  
department store, vietnamese in chinatown, tibetan in  
vancouver, commie at the u.s. border

on the whole very asian.

- c. 2. rubber could never remember the meaning of 'aporia' (a  
moment of difficulty or contradiction or doubt).

magnolia said:    you don't remember the meaning because  
you doubt it!

3. remarks had been exchanged about the irish epicist james  
jokes.  
in between turns at pingpong, the talk turned to local  
(canada) poetry.  
a transplant from hunan asked:    what's happening in the  
united states?  
xylem twigged:    i like your name for the government !

4. the newspapers were full of praise about a head of state.  
 gee, periwinked, is he really squeaky clean as all  
 the journalists say.  
 ohyes, peregrinned, rats squeak.
5. cockleburr hooked up with this word 'autonomy': *autoe*,  
 that's greek for . . . self. *self* in north american  
 means . . . me. does *autonomy* mean . . . *metonymy*?

the dictionary slipped, as if its heaviest corner wanted  
 to thump toesie, but burr grabbed the small print: *me*  
 is a . . . pronoun, nagged burr. so, is the ques-  
 tion: autonomy, what am i *pro* ?

6. it had come to a vote.  
 willow swayed & bent & shivered with strain before snapping  
 upright into a stand.  
 cascara saged: there is beauty in struggle.
7. cabbage said: the students were unreasonable. of course,  
 that's not how newspapers sell, but many folks in chinese  
 street think so. the gummint had already been so patient,  
 letting them mess up the capitol so many weeks without  
 punishing them. really, what did they expect!

sorghum laughed: ya, the radicals certainly succeeded in  
 forcing the gummint to show a bad hand. you think people  
 now wanna shake that hand?

d. 1. what, déjà sighed, do you have against the word 'consciousness'?

bonsai frowned:     anglomerican cultural imperialism.  
mediacrity!

i prefer the word 'awareness'. i like the where in awareness,  
i like the space & nothing of it. 'consciousness' is too  
visible, positivist, also i don't like the sound of it, *shush*,  
it's sticky!

doji said:     i like it because that sound is like where one has  
to go, deep, inside. to me it has the same meaning as 'aware-  
ness', it's everything!

binosa said:   going into the whirlpool may be why i don't like  
the word.     'awareness' seems cleaner, airier, roomy.

dai ji said:     aware*shush*!

you sniper!     biosan laughed, a bit wet.

2. bison got into trouble & was hurting pretty badly. effendi  
rallied round.

syringa said:     you     love     pain  !

nettle said:     repression & rationality are your specialty.

bramble said:   feeling that you're learning something is your  
historical way to cope with being shat on.

juniper said:     the world is very big, bison.

3. bassoon  
transmutes  
*analects*  
9. xxx  
with the  
help of a  
morning-  
glory in  
kathmandu

a r d e n t , f l o w  
er , of the mil k  
wh it e throa t, morning  
glo ry bl oo  
m ,  
sweet art ?  
smaller than the purple  
how i've not . missed . you

4. batter batter batter batter batter batter batter batter: buffoon  
couldn't take the boredom of waiting to die from a broken  
heart & one day a vowel changed: better.

- e. 1. moby dyke turned sceptic around the harpoons of erudition.  
merlin said: what marlin said to me was, you must  
learn to use the master otherwise he will kill you.
2. another time off brighton park a wave rose & dipped with a  
duck. it was fine day blue light muscly water.  
sea-squirt burbled: i don't know how to see better.  
be-bopped beluga: in order to see, you have to love looking.

- e. 3. sapporo      they noticed it on the way to the airport, name of  
                                 a restaurant.  
strange word,      kenjie prairie mused,      those letters p p  
                                 o o.  
yeah, as if they're a different language,      abu hong pondered,  
                                 then caught the drift:      korean.
4. this work is magic,      native said,      except for that  
    part about 'shush' being sticky. how can you say such  
    a thing, i'm really angry! shush is the wind in the  
    trees, we have that sound a lot in our language! whereas  
    'awareness', is, maybe the sound a      horse would make,  
    but it's not one of our sounds!  
nomad winced. 'salish', 'snohomish', 'squamish', came  
    to mind.  
native smiled:      just because you're scared, doesn't mean  
    this work isn't sacred.
5. llama said:      consciousness is what we share with everything.  
uh!      camel oofed, & wondered:      is that what 'universal  
    consciousness' means.
6. a master announced failure, disciples sluffed it off as  
    senile depression.  
i have not conquered mount avarice,      the master said.  
drop-out hummed: the up-&-coming should heed this, legacy.



7. mice'tro long days late nights got nowhere. bosun fed up  
scrunched up sheets of writing & hurled them  
all over away. now the table was clear, bosom worked afresh  
till, tired hours later, one of the crumples scuttled across  
the floor. bazoom stopped typing & watched it dot out of  
the room.

the next day b. complained about mice  
gā je said: who are you that you shouldn't have mice in  
your house.

8. at cappucino in joe's cafe gā je said: what is this iridology.  
bassoon said: various organs & functions have nerve endings  
in the iris, so it's possible to read the condition of the body  
right there in the eye.  
dai ji said: that's why, looking is a lot of work.

f. 1. prism said: space is profound, it's the spiritual.

2. cirrus synthesized necessary tears with stories such as the  
following:

there once was a child-princes, whose random fought  
brutal forces. she comes to know that her beautiful  
princess belongs to another; so he becomes a little  
sad level kind & frees her to her chosen.

but it's too late! the princess cries, he's  
just been sent to the front!

up front, the princes is shocked to find he's saved  
the enemy agent, the big, top, spy. too much is at  
stake for her to go back on his word. how is it  
solved? he appoints a regent to carry on the good  
fight, & abdicates, goes off into the desert hills  
alone.

condor shook off the sunset: you managed, to forgive the  
child, & feel sorry for the father, & feel sad that the  
secession of the sexual & revolutionary from the moral &  
greater good meant you had to abdicate, & be free of the  
mother, &, did you have fun in the desert too ?

- f. 3. attic said: do you ever get tired of being clever?
4. they'd been talking about feroze, whose heart had failed  
just when the emphysema seemed to ease up.  
there's no learning how to die, bee mused. people don't  
come back & pass along the knowhow.  
pollen laughed: then there's no envy either.

g. 1. ginger, m.c: so we'll end up with a lil' more country-  
&-eastern:



tune by jam. ismail (1966) to 'tall trees there be in  
south countree' (I.I.ix. of *see ging*) by ezra pound  
(*confucian odes* (1954), 5 (new directions paperback  
1959)). transcription by diana kemble (1989).

g. 2. feeding rosemary, thyme, & grape, rice-washing water.

## Lorraine Martinuik / from WORK IN PROGRESS

### 8

Doing the wash the same day each week is my day to sit longer at the breakfast table, have another cup of coffee, another piece of toast with more honey than it can hold. Take a bit of time. Look out the window the valley narrows to the north, the hills all fold into each other.

Out the window the forested valley floor at the far end of the fields. One wisp of smoke over on the west side. All the mountains from here to Vancouver stacked up behind each other roll to the south, flatten into the river's flood plain.

Bring out my journal I keep in a drawer he never opens. Think about things to a rhythm the washer makes, waiting for this load to be done. Sound a kind of drumming underneath the day.

A person could not have thought this life, three boys off on the schoolbus and a man in the fields whose body belongs to the land, whose first memory is wheat and oats in seed in fields his father's father cleared, tree by tree. Who lives out his thoughts and dreams without much speaking; we hardly talk. Maybe I would have seen, if I hadn't been so young I might have known how silence falls upon lives bound to a particular place, a piece of land. Attachment so deep there's no saying.

Look out the window. My neighbour comes across the field, down along the fenceline. I can see in her steps some kind of trouble her face will show when I open the door.

She comes on washday though not every week. To get eggs sometimes milk. She comes across the field to the fenceline and down along the big ditch, carries a plastic bag with egg cartons in it, the empty milk jar.

After the first load goes out on the line the sheets and all the whites signal flags for her to get out of her house I think she comes to my kitchen a kind of sanctuary.

How many mornings she hesitates at the back door, face full with what she wants me not to notice, or notice but never ask about. How many mornings she sits and fingers traces of what lies deep, what she has no voice for. He caught her off guard.

She stays in my kitchen as long as she can safely stay. Some mornings talks quickly the last minute, voice low under sounds of the men from outside coming in hungry the signal for her to get home.

The story of last night. How he drank. How he fills her mouth with words not hers. Twists her words so she can no longer speak when he starts in on her afraid, anything she says can and will he hit her, again the way rain at times pours down relentless, the early dark of winter and waters rising in the ditches in the fields she slogs through next morning.

How she sends the children to be safe in their beds and closes the doors to keep out the sound of him putting words in her mouth. Maybe the sound of falling blows she has nowhere to hide from. And later, silent weeping I wonder when he falls asleep; later I wonder if she wanders the house, watches from the hallway the faces of her sleeping children. Or does she curl up somewhere, arms around herself, holding together.

Too much between them now there is danger between them and nowhere to hide, nowhere left, though she sometimes slips in

behind a quick hope, any hope for a quick escape from the recited and fugitive apology.

From a man whose father grew up in a dirt floor cabin, a place where the earth was rich, trees few and on the small side. Long sun in brief summers, cold short days, for months each year.

Whose father drank. Yelled and was rough with the woman he loved who birthed and raised his children. Cried then the pain he held down all the waking day, inflicted by his own father and his own mother, old too soon, who had to leave him behind, frightened. Who left fingering the scars his father placed on she who tried to work beside and pleaded with, as if he were her father, when apologies were no longer enough. Who slipped away the night of first snowfall the year the baby was finally old enough to get around on his own, do a few chores in the garden, collect the eggs. Who took nothing with her, wore her only clothes, who had to go even knowing her children abandoned, wounded by the escape.

Whose father grew up heavy in his body, had to work too hard to feel any hurt fall exhausted to sleep to dream of nothing but a good crop, new calves in the barn. Nothing but how to approach the ruined photograph of family with a woman of his own he turned out to be too afraid to trust. Who drank in still at night the pain handed on by his father who punished him to make him a man.

Too much between them there is danger and nowhere to go. Her face has started to fall; no one will want her, all those children. No one will give her a job, all those years of being home the way a person is lost; to herself nothing more than the place she holds. Mother to her children, wife to a damaged man. Woman with no name.



## Zoe Landale / THREE POEMS

### THE VASECTOMY

I have been much in need of comfort lately,  
my body light as a whelk shell  
sliding in the surf line  
whorled  
& only sand at home

so, I abrade  
dogfish skin does too  
& the rubbed lip of beaches on green glass  
spat out, left for the tide  
to suck

& mourn  
never again to feel the sting of milk  
coming down in breasts stiff as wood  
my body                    singular,  
not festooned with child

I shall have to take my body for walks  
encourage it to play in the seaweed,  
snuffle up softness of beach air  
good body, so obedient, it always comes  
when called

my husband takes bagged baby clothes,  
the stroller it took so long to pay for  
to the shelter for battered women  
our five year old teases for a sister  
& I am weightless, body a salt cadence

## NO COMMERCIAL VALUE

this poem is ashamed of itself  
refuses to develop muscles  
buy rubber boots & work in a cannery  
won't go out & get a *real* job

this poem is mortified its efforts  
are considered  
lunacy & bananas, red Valentine hearts  
in terms of serious employment

this poem would like to promise  
it will do better  
at some future, unspecified time  
it asks for credit!

though everyone knows poems are  
not exactly solid citizens  
they have holes in their hearts  
dribble words incurably

this poem is sorry  
it is not a paycheck  
you cannot grab it & run, counting images  
all the way to the bank

*"THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW"*

When my mother says this  
in a certain tone  
I dilate with dread,  
slow silver from cold toes up  
Something means        about family,  
she's about to pluck a dead  
bird-secret  
I don't want to see  
beside my toast & honey,  
clammy in pinfeathers  
(the horrible singey-smell  
as we burn them off)  
There's something  
she feels I should know  
to set the record straight  
I want to fly  
She wants response,  
to stitch the ripped bird        between us  
Family a carcass-mountain  
I don't want to struggle up  
Family a wound I can't heal  
Family coagulated  
Family too early in the morning;  
the whole day dangles  
from my mother's voice,  
approaching feathers

## Kate Braid / TWO POEMS

### WOMAN'S TOUCH

Lunchtime, sitting on a lumber pile  
in the middle of the construction site,  
my eye fell  
on Sam's 32 ounce hammer  
with the 24 inch handle.

*How come all our tools  
are longer than they are wide?  
I asked.*

Silence.

Feeling reckless  
with confidence because  
that morning I'd cut  
my first set of stairs  
at a perfect fit, I pushed on.

*How come the hammer,  
the saw, everything  
except the tool belt looks like  
you know what?*

*Don't be so sensitive, Sam said.  
How else could they be?*  
There was a chorus of grunts  
in the bass mode.  
*Besides,*  
Sam was on firm ground now,

*the skill saw is round.*

Ed raised his head slowly.  
*The skill saw was invented by a woman*  
he said, and took a bite of salami.

He finished the meat then sat  
quite still, contemplating his Oreos.  
*In the 1700's in New England, he continued,*  
*her husband had a sawmill*  
*where they cut the logs over a pit*  
*with a man at each end of a huge hand saw.*  
*She noticed they wasted*  
*half their energy, for hand saws only cut*  
*on the push. She had an idea.*

Ed took a chocolate bite and chewed.  
Even Sam was quiet.  
*She went into her kitchen,*  
*fetched a pie plate and cut*  
*teeth in it. Then she slipped it*  
*onto her spinning wheel,*  
*fed a cedar shake into it*  
*and the circular saw was born.*

Ed folded his brown paper bag.  
After a certain silence  
Sam spat.  
*I knew there was something funny*  
*about that saw, he said*  
and sulked off stomping saw dust.

## METAMORPHOSIS

Lumber yard. Tool rental. Tarpaulin shop.  
These are the clubhouses of the working men  
where they talk real loud,  
show posters of naked women,  
bump tattoos.

All morning I sneak on kitten's feet  
from one post to the other,  
purring  
so as not to offend  
the elected.

But where are clubhouses of the women?  
Where can a carpenter put up her boots  
slam her hardhat to the counter  
and roar  
like a lion in heat?

## Helen Potrebenko / MIDNIGHT SHIFT

It must have been the winter of 1972-73 that I was locked in that cage on the midnight shift.

In 1971, when I had only one semester to go to get my university degree, I owed the income tax, car insurance and several personal loans as well as, of course, the student loans.

I was already driving cab weekends for Henry Olson. Nobody would give me a weekday car because I was only a mediocre driver. About February, 1971, I got a job driving a delivery truck for B.C. Piston and Shaft for \$1.75 an hour. (A friend went around telling people I worked for Vancouver Screw and Gear.) The reason they hired women was, to quote the manager, because "women are better drivers and you pay them less." So I carried around tailpipes and mufflers and carburetors and crankshafts and drove all over Vancouver for \$1.75 an hour while men doing the same work earned \$3 or \$4 an hour. I still drove cab for Olson on weekends. It was the winter it snowed a lot and they only put snow tires on my truck after much argument. Snow tires don't help much in wet Vancouver snow. But women are safe drivers.

My feet were always wet but I thought I should pay off the most urgent debts instead of buying boots. I also thought it would stop snowing soon.

My best jeans, then my second-best jeans got ruined by grease from the stuff I was carrying around. So did my ski jacket. I was working seven days a week, I was always tired, and my feet were cold. I asked for a raise. Don, the manager, told me I couldn't get a raise because the other driver had been working there for five years and only got paid \$1.95 an hour. "You can be replaced by a boy, you know," Don said.

Both us drivers quit about the same time and were replaced by boys. Both the trucks were smashed up within a month. (There are always a few joys left in life!)

Then I worked for three months for a women's group run by the Young Socialist League and the League for Socialist Action



(Trotskyites) who had been granted an Opportunities for Youth grant to find out about the availability of abortion and birth control. I accepted this job because I thought at least my clothes wouldn't get wrecked from carrying crankshafts.

The Young Socialist League/League for Socialist Action had at the time decided that a concentration on the abortion issue was a way to draw women into radical politics. Through abortion, women would begin to understand the exploitative nature of capitalism. The Opportunities for Youth grant was to be used to stimulate mass politicization of women through education about capitalism as evidenced by the lack of choice on abortion, and cause them to accept Trotskyite leadership in overthrowing the capitalist system.

As employees, however, we denounced the absurdity of leading women from abortion to revolutionary socialism on a three month government grant. We tried merely to fulfill the grant requirements which were to collect and compile information on the availability of abortion and birth control in B.C. and the Yukon, in itself, quite a job at the time. We didn't earn enough to live on because we had to pay all the attendant expenses out of our pay.

At the end of the three months, I was so completely demoralized by my inability to find a decent job that I got another student loan and went back to finish university, while still driving cab for Olson on weekends.

Olson was the only good boss I ever had. He spoke to me only once in the two years I worked for him. I can't remember what he said. I can, however, remember some of the volumes the Young Socialist League/League for Socialist Action spoke at their employees. It mostly had to do with them being true revolutionaries as opposed to me and my ilk who were holders of bourgeois values (like wanting boots in winter).

So I went back to university and did a brilliant Honours paper and got a first-class Honours B.A. I rushed into the Driver's Room one day waving the notifying letter and announced to the backs of the drivers who were there filling out their sheets that I was now an Honours B.A. First Class. Nobody said anything. I repeated the

stupendous news. Still silence. Finally one of drivers said: "Guess you'll be asking for a steady car now, eh?"

And so it proved to be. Although I asked for a steady car, I didn't get one and for most of 1972, drove cab on a spare basis which was only about forty hours a week. Another driver once asked me what I did with the rest of my time. I said, "You know, most workers only work forty hours a week and get coffee breaks and like that." He looked embarrassed; I don't suppose he did know. He never even went to the bathroom the whole nine or ten hour shift. Unlike me, he turned in really good sheets.

I applied for all kinds of jobs but nobody wanted to hire me. Several university professors propositioned me but none would give me a job. Nowadays you don't hear so much about "over-qualified" since most people are overqualified for the jobs they do. To me, in 1972, it became the dirtiest of all words. I was overqualified for everything I applied for. So I continued driving taxi.

In the fall of 1972, I fell in love with an owner/driver named Bob. He drove nights. I drove days. I started work around four a.m. whereas he finished work around four a.m. This had all sorts of comic possibilities which I must admit I didn't see at the time. I must admit I don't see them now either.

I asked Jeanette for a job on the switchboard. At first, I only spared for others a few afternoons a week, while still driving for Olson on weekends. Then Olson sold the car I had been driving which caused the second occasion for conversation I ever had with him. I don't remember what was said although he must have told me he was selling the car.

Jeanette said the only opening for a permanent switchboard job was on the 12 to 8 shift. I thought that was all right because I'd see Bob more often that if I was a cab driver. And that's how I came to be locked in a cage.

The phone rang constantly. I wrote down addresses and slid them down the chute into the dispatcher's smaller cage. His cage was to prevent the telephonists' voices from interfering with his dispatching. The reason for locking us all in was that drivers going off shift turned in their money envelopes through the slot in the

drivers' room. But there was a ground level window behind us through which any thief could leap, or simply point a gun. We were below ground level in our cage and could neither escape nor catch the thief, so the whole procedure was ludicrous. There was, in fact, no actual necessity to lock us in for safety because this lay in the dispatcher being able to call for help on the radio. If we had ever needed help, dozens of cabs would have been there in minutes.

Once trained, I found I could read while answering the phones. In fact, I had to read in self-defence against the way the customers spoke. At first I thought it was just the pre-Christmas madness, then that it was an expression of the joyous season, then that I was somehow personally to blame. At least every fifth person said either "shit on you," "piss on you" or "fuck you." (A few years later, the night telephonist told me it was about every third call by then.) Often it was because the customer was told that the cab drivers were neither pimps, dope pushers nor bootleggers. Or the cab didn't arrive within thirty seconds, or the driver didn't grovel sufficiently to suit some drunk macho jerk. But mostly it was because a taxi telephonist is, by definition, non-human, along with waitresses, telephone operators, domestic labourers and any other women service workers. All the decent citizens, nice family men, promising young men on their way up, budding entrepreneurs, and not excluding true revolutionaries with raised consciousnesses, feel free to pour filth all over women workers without fear of retribution. I went home in the morning out of that begrimed cage feeling like I was wading through heaps of excrement.

The first weeks in the cage, I read a biography of Leon Trotsky who apparently was a brutal and arrogant person. While very depressing, this biography did do me some good in connection with Lorne, the regular night dispatcher. Lorne held something resembling a fascist philosophy and was anti-communist. So one night when he was raging about "get the bums off welfare" and "people should be forced to work or be incarcerated in concentration camps," I was able to tell him he agreed with the great communist, Leon Trotsky, and read him relevant quotes from Trotsky.



But soon I became too demoralized to read. I cleaned the part of the cage I could reach while attached to the headset but the cage grew filthier. Bob grew more drunk and more destructive. I developed a sore throat which worsened each week and began to be accompanied by a mild fever. I was being paid \$2.40 an hour. We weren't given lunch or coffee breaks and as the junior telephonist, I had to get the senior's permission to go to the bathroom. The only break was when Bob brought us coffee in the middle of the night. He was, of course, driving cab and when he found himself downtown during a lull in business, he would come down to the dispatch office with coffee, handing it down to us through the ground level window. It was wonderful.

There were three of us in that cage on the midnight shift. Half the time, it was Lorne on dispatch, Cora as the senior, and me. Lorne made suggestive jokes until he found out I was an owner's girlfriend and then he even had to forgive me for calling him a communist.

Cora was a happy woman and kind to me. I never talked to her about politics, afraid to lose the only kind person I knew on that job. She was a buxom laughing woman of about 55. Now long dead.

The other half the time I was on with Milton Felgar and Danny Ravetti. Milton was a part-time dispatcher and full-time graduate student at Simon Fraser University. I was delighted when I first learned Milton was a student but he soon put me in my place by listing all the professors with whom he was close friends and explaining that he was a radical, revolutionary socialist who knew all about internationalism and correct lines. He had nothing but contempt for mere women, mere junior telephonists with unraised consciousnesses. Thereafter, he ceased speaking to me altogether.

Milton and Danny talked to each other all night. Danny was brutal and racist and sexist and not sane enough to hold down any job but a supervisory one. He told me that if I spoke except in answer to a direct question, I would get punched out. He told me to keep my head down and not look at him, Milton, or Milton's dispatch board, or I would get punched out. If I was forced to ask

the dispatcher a question as a result of a telephone query, Danny would yell SHURRUP. Milton would look pleased. So the customer waited on the phone while I wrote the question on paper and slid it down the chute to Milton who would then tell me the answer which I would then relay to the customer. Before Danny found out I was an owner's girlfriend, he tried to drag me into the washroom to "Cop a feel."

Milton had been taught at university that this brutal, half-crazy man represented The Working Class so he fairly worshipped Danny and they talked all night.

Danny complained continually because he didn't own the taxi company. He told Milton long and involved stories about how he was cheated in the early days of the company when it operated under a multiplicity of owners. Milton agreed that the company needed one strong man to run it instead of a group of small shareholders.

But, Milton, you *said* you were a *socialist*! I said in horror once when Danny went to the washroom. Milton said of course he was a socialist, but what's that got to do with the cab business? I couldn't argue because Danny had returned and would punch me out if I talked to anyone except the telephone, from whence emerged that myriad of voices proposing to relieve themselves on me.

I attempted to talk to Jeanette in the front office about the situation but Jeanette said adults should learn to get along and went away on holidays. I didn't talk to the manager, an ex-cop with rotten teeth, who also wished to drag me off to the washroom. I didn't talk to the union because I didn't know until later that I was in one. Bob was no help; he went to bed drunk, woke up and drank, and carried mickeys around in a brown paper bag to drink from all day.

I left that job in about March. Staggered away sick and dizzy and sweating, out of that filthy cage. Everything had turned grey. Leaning on the Unemployment Insurance Commission counter, dripping sweat, I explained to some grey person about being locked in a cage with madmen.

Then I went to see a doctor who said I didn't have infectious

mononucleosis and filled in a form for UIC. I spent the next six weeks on UIC sick leave because I didn't have infectious mononucleosis, or so it seemed to me in my dazed condition.

Cora is dead. She was killed by a car driver while crossing the street at a marked crosswalk. The next junior telephonist spoke back to Danny, got beat up and lost his job. Danny was promoted. I'm sure Greta isn't around. About once a month, Greta used to call for a cab in the middle of the night, drunk out of her mind. She never knew where she was. It's Greta, I would write on a note to the dispatcher and he would tell the drivers who would drive around looking for her from whatever clues I could obtain from her on the phone. She was always found and taken home. Drivers are a different bunch. I should have stuck to driving. Sheila might still be there; she was afraid to quit because the only other job she'd ever had in her life was worse. Years and pain later, long after Bob and I split up, he quit drinking and got married.

I got my unemployment sick leave cheques and lay in bed, a mess of debts and fever and fear. After a while, a friend brought me some crocuses. I carried this pot of crocuses with me from the bed to the couch and even to the bathroom. I discovered it was spring.

When I recovered, I started writing a new book and went to help picket Denny's Restaurant and was finally with people who were not paralyzed by fear as I had been in that cage — people who cared about struggle and workers' rights without questioning whether or not individual workers had the correct line.

Then I was notified that my Canada Council grant application was accepted, and that was a good year. After that, I got office jobs.

I had been a fervent student at university, bad-tempered and arrogant, but eager to study and read and discuss with those who said they knew. Much of what I was taught was just plain wrong, but in aggregate, it wasn't so much that it proved wrong but that it was inadequate. Nobody explained about cold feet or cages.

I learned a lot about politics, or thought I did. But I didn't know from university that the difference between working for the Trotskyites and working for B.C. Piston and Shaft was that the

Trotskyites paid less. The difference between Danny Ravetti, the aspiring capitalist, and Milton Felgar, the aspiring revolutionary, was that Milton used better grammar.

I have secured good jobs since and spend most of my days blissed out with the pure joy of life and work. I don't remember any more how it felt to be locked in that cage. I remember the physical details but I don't remember how it felt; I should remember because there are many people locked in many different cages. And I remember clearly that my feet were cold when I drove the delivery truck. There I was one day, sliding uncontrollably down a steep hill towards Marine Drive, where there was all kinds of traffic and all I thought about was how cold my feet were.



## Kirsten Emmott / TWO POEMS

### JAWS

there was a shark movie  
people got eaten by a giant shark  
a few reviews mentioned  
that there are no such sharks,  
none that size  
have ever been caught

makes a good story though

Of every 10,000 domestic assaults  
on Canadian women every year  
two men are convicted

Sarah who was brought  
from the Interior  
to a new transition house  
so her man could not find her  
when he got out of jail  
said she did not want him to know  
he had left her pregnant

by the time her child was due  
her fractures and cuts had healed  
she had some colour in her cheeks  
she had also  
started washing her hair  
using a little makeup

Dominique who knew  
she had a broken rib  
said he only hits her  
once a year or so  
everything is in his name,  
she's too old to get work now,  
to leave their comfortable place  
and go to a basement suite  
on welfare  
I showed where I'd once written  
"chic brunette Quebecoise  
looking much younger  
than stated age of 48"  
she smiled sourly  
"Now you know why  
since those days  
I've let myself get so fat"

Maria, who didn't know her dark skin  
was beautiful, her long nose was beautiful,  
she thought her arms were too hairy  
so they deserved to be bruised,  
I saw the row of finger marks  
where he held her  
as he broke her long nose

Diane who tossed it off  
— the broken bleeding eardrum —  
with her usual coolness  
he hit me, she said,  
first time and it'll be the last.

Allan George Foster in 1971  
raped and murdered his sister-in-law  
He was sentenced to life  
but paroled in 1980  
his case management officer  
at Mountain Institution, at  
Agassiz, B.C., called him  
“one of the sanest people I have ever met.”  
In December 1986, Foster beat his common-law wife  
Joan Pilling, 34,  
with a claw hammer  
for preferring another man  
stabbed her repeatedly in the heart  
with a kitchen knife  
killed her 12 year old daughter Linda Brewer  
and her 12 year old friend Megan McCleary  
for being female  
then raped the corpses  
for being female  
then went to bed and slept  
He was arrested  
Before his suicide he said:  
I should still be in jail  
This would not have happened

not  
I would not have done this

He sees himself  
as a shark  
we kill, say the sharks  
it is not in our power to stop

“Sometimes, uncontrollable impulses took over”  
says the magazine  
of the man who abducted, choked,  
stripped and fondled boys  
one of them was two years old  
Labelled a homosexual pedophile  
with sadistic tendencies  
he has been paroled again  
after only three years of his latest sentence  
After all  
the shark that takes your baby boy  
did not do it; it happened.  
Uncontrollable impulses took over.

It is not that I myself  
am unable to go swimming;  
I can certainly walk in the very park  
where Shari Ulrich was raped  
by a convicted rapist out on day pass;  
I can eat at the very same Dairy Queen  
where Dorothy Hoogstratten of this parish  
met her husband  
(who shot her in the head for preferring another man  
and then sodomized her corpse)  
I can buy a magazine  
right off a rack full of women’s pain,  
magazines that say on every page,  
you live in a society indifferent  
to pain and injustice  
as long as the sharks get enough to eat

I can lie down beside a husband

and never fail  
to embrace a human being  
I can open my arms to him  
sure that I will never bleed  
from the rasp of sharkskin  
In his mouth are kisses only

Come, examine my flesh,  
no three cornered teeth have broken off  
anywhere on my body

I have let my feet dangle off the raft  
year after year  
never been bitten

But do not tell me  
there are no such sharks

## ON BEING REPRIMANDED FOR BEING “TOO WOMEN’S LIBBISH”

We don’t like your feelings, said the boss.  
He was reading my file.  
His desk was surrounded by barbed wire  
and topped with broken glass.  
I knelt in front of it.

You feel angry, he said.  
You feel shamed by the official cruelties you commit.  
You feel.  
“I’ll change,” I promised.  
I rummaged hastily in my bag for a mask.

Your eyes are too blue, he went on.  
Be green eyed.  
“Right,” I agreed.  
“Contact lenses,” I jotted down.

You’re too tall, he said,  
raising his eyes from his notes.  
Be shorter. Your feet...  
“amputation,” I wrote quickly.  
But a thought occurred.  
“How will I be able to work?” I ventured.  
Live on your knees, he said.

# Carmen Rodriguez / HER MEMORY

*Translation by Heidi Neufeld-Raine with the author*

## Daughter

teacher and housewife  
middle class job  
suit and tie  
poor-man's salary  
housewife  
married to a man  
married to the dishes  
dirty laundry  
unmade beds  
floors to wax  
coins to stretch

## granddaughter

miner and washerwoman  
silicosis  
wages paid in food stamps  
thirteen children  
nine dead  
diarrhea  
hunger  
bare feet  
dirty laundry  
of the bosses  
collars  
table cloths  
sheets  
frills  
flounces  
of the bosses



tuberculosis  
of the grandmother  
washed away  
at thirty six

mother

of three  
all alive  
two fathers  
many lives  
countries  
the odd tear  
lots of love  
fractures  
ditches  
tangle  
fat braids  
morning laughter  
overwork  
single mother  
passports  
stories  
interrogations  
diapers  
two tongues

I stretch  
can't reach  
I break  
I spread  
arrive

two extremes  
the same continent  
contains me

contains  
me

axis  
elevator  
ladder  
multi-home

we are  
no longer  
the ones  
we were

and those  
still to come  
who will they be  
great-great-grandchildren  
of miner and washerwoman  
great-grandchildren  
of teacher and housewife  
children of the three  
children of  
daughter  
granddaughter  
mother

woman

working towards a definition  
in the light of  
two tongues  
many lives  
a continent  
stretched out  
from one end  
to the other

and one struggle

## SU MEMORIA

hija

profesor y dueña de casa  
pega de clase media  
ternito y corbata  
sueldo de pobre  
dueña de platos sucios  
ropa sucia  
camas sin hacer  
piso que encerar  
plata que estirar

nieta

minero y lavandera  
silicosis  
sueldo en fichas  
trece niños  
nueve muertos  
diarrea  
hambre  
pies pelados  
ropa sucia  
de patrones  
cuellos  
manteles  
sábanas  
canesús  
volados

de patrones  
tuberculosis  
de la abuela  
washed away  
de treintaseis

madre

de tres  
todos vivos  
dos padres  
muchas vidas  
países  
alguna lágrima  
harto amor  
quiebres  
zanjas  
maraña  
trenzas gordas  
risas de mañana  
triple jornada  
single mother  
pasaportes  
cuentos  
interrogatorios  
pañales  
dos lenguas

me estiro  
no alcanzo  
me rompo  
me extendo

llego  
dos extremos  
el mismo continente  
me contiene

eje  
ascensor  
escalera  
multi-casa

me define  
nos define

ya no somos  
los que fuimos

que será  
de los que vengan  
bisnietos de minero y lavandera  
nietos de profesor y dueña de casa  
hijos de los tres  
hijos de  
hija  
nieta  
madre

mujer

en vías de definición  
a la luz de  
dos lenguas  
muchas vidas

un continente  
estirado  
de punta  
a punta

y una lucha

washed away: muerta (en este contexto)  
single mother: madre sola



## Janet Theny / MADRE

On the balcony the morning ripens mango gold  
already dry and hot  
there are bodies in the ditch  
School childrens' feet are road dusted  
Their voices call

Madre madre mia

A car passes leaving an answer  
as barren as the dust  
as silent as the road  
where now only the roosters call cocksure

Madre madre mia

Wet hands on rough stone  
Hands work strong and bent  
To caress each bloodied face.

The balcony deserted at noon  
White shirts hang dry and stiff  
They hit against the railing  
Calling

Madre

And where there is no food  
There is no hope  
In your lap the children suck  
Their hands slap and pull the breast  
That offers nothing  
No comfort for the dying.

Night becomes the lilac bloom  
The balcony calls the Madre out  
The heavy scented blanket of the night  
Suffocates the scream  
For the children whose silence  
Is the memory of a schoolyard  
empty

Madre    madre mia

## Ana Chang / UNTITLED

### I. Who is your mother?

She is an ageing woman, whose children are grown and husband retired.

She is an eighteen year old woman who leaves home, 1950's China,

She is a young mother left with a young son and two babies to raise while her husband works in Canada.

She is a woman in her thirties standing at the Vancouver International Airport

with her three healthy children and lots

of luggage, waiting to reunite

with her husband, to become a whole family.

She is a quiet woman who speaks and understands little English, a Canadian citizen since 1976.

Does your mother work?

Yes. She has worked all her life. She helped her mother at home and alongside her sister, she worked in her sister's home.

For about twenty years now she has been a full time worker in a factory as well as the homemaker. My mother works very hard.

### II. My mother is tired. Her sight is not as keen. Her hands not as gentle or steady. Many years of factory and house work has made her skin hard and nails yellow.

### III. Dear Ma,

I'm sorry I haven't been home to lend a hand. Has my brother been helping you write the address on the envelopes? Does he thread the needle for you?

I haven't seen you since Christmas, not even on New Year's. It's been months since I've gone. In the time away, I've

begun to really feel the pain in my heart, hurting for many years. Suddenly so vivid after hiding in cool darkness.

It is very hard to be apart from you, Ma.

Since coming to Vancouver, we've been moving apart, so slowly, not apparent to our eyes. Until one day we looked into each other's eyes and did not recognize and the sounds out of our mouths sounding strangely unfamiliar, we did not understand.

Ma, I would like very much to come home, to see you.

I'll take you to Chinatown to do shopping and maybe we can eat a bowl of noodles.

## Susan Crean / HALF A MOON

Namu Amitabul   NAmu Amitabul   NAMU AMITABUL  
Namu Amitabul

The words become song as we chant them over and over together, our voices rising and falling in spontaneous rhythm, lilting cadences which slice through the brittle winter air. Like poetry where words dissolve into pure feeling, transparent as they float between this world and the next. Trancing.

NAMU AMITABUL   Namu Amitabul   . . . . .

Homage to the Buddha of the West. Honour to the Buddha of the Great Western Heaven who is the sunset, who is compassion; red, purple, russett.

Namu Amitabul   . . .

The words become solid now. Handgrips on an icy surface to hold on to as we hold on to each other standing together beside Tien for the last time. Our single voice deepens, strengthens to a crescendo, breaks and slips back into a gentle refrain just as the clear, febrile voice of Sunim the Monk arcs out over ours in searing lament. And so we continue. For hours, or maybe minutes, or maybe hours. Sunim in his long Korean robes, with shaven head and soft eyes rings the bell and recites the Prayer for the Dead. Go into the light Little Sister. We will accompany you on your journey across, for forty nine days we will be there. We will be there.

Overnight the first snow has quietly transformed the city and our early morning drive up Parliament Street to the necropolis was startling. Yesterday's bleak leafless trees, which so suited our mood of dim resignation, have been edged with silver and sit

softly against a landscape of pale blue snow. Like a child's remembered fairyland. But, for the first time in three days something external penetrates my vision, breaking through the despair which has engulfed us all since the news on Friday.



There was no explanation. Feeling strange on Wednesday afternoon, Tien went to the doctor who dispatched her at once to the hospital. The heart, pulsating wildly paid no heed to the drugs or the pacemaker and within hours, barely a day and a half, she was gone. A freak physical storm suddenly and violently shook the life from her small body. As Jacques sat beside her she left, clutching the small jade turtle Paul had bought for her in Chinatown.

The doctors wanted an autopsy, but knowing it would tell us nothing we refused, and instead dressed her in the ribbon-work dress she made and always wore on celebratory occasions, placed two brilliant parrot feathers across her chest and laid her in a plain gray coffin.



Her name is heaven in Chinese. Tien. Quê, her middle name, means fairy of the moon. And perhaps it was a fairy gift, something the little people of Celtic legend would know about that made her a wanderer. Born in South Vietnam in 1950, she determined at the age of thirteen that she would go to high school in the United States. But it wasn't the America of Disneyland, astronauts and double-dating she sought. So she cast off on a greater voyage which took her to Central and South America and eventually Canada. Here she settled, made friends, and became a mother. Then, in 1980, when she went off to Guatemala with baby Mai strapped to her back, she met a young Frenchman who followed her back north. She never did return to Vietnam though she talked of it, and at one point just before her parents emigrated, excitedly planned to go back with a friend who would film

her native's return after twenty years and that long and terrible war.



At the funeral parlour on the first day we file in in numb silence. Apalled at the trappings of middle class normalcy — rugs, lamps and paintings the quality of Muzak nailed to the walls — I wonder if the nondescript men in black suits who sidle noiselessly through the halls really believe that WE believe that this is just another cocktail party. But Paul has been here earlier and transformed the room into a ritual place. Out went the lamps, the occasional chairs and the paintings, all but one. “She wouldn’t have insisted on perfection,” he sighs with a smile. At one end of the room, the body dressed in its gay panoply; at the other end, a shrine where each place a memento, something reminiscent of her. Mine a sake bottle bound about the neck with a silken cord on which hangs a silver pendant shaped like a butterfly or sacred ank. Filled with dry flowers of the autumn forest, bittersweet and sage, it joins the photographs and beadwork, the brass bell and braided sweetgrass.

Incense fills the air and Tibetan bells chime softly from a cassette recorder. In the middle of the room, two candles sit on a long narrow table winking at each other. Thus we begin to take our leave of the earthly Tien, to see her instead with our mind’s eye, to sense her in our souls. And to hear her in her own words.

If you can retrace your past  
you can see  
    every step  
        has been a stone  
            one foot  
    leads to  
the other  
    until they meet  
  
    Standing still



And standing there, standing there so still as to halt time and eradicate history, Jacques, the image of abject grief. His tall body hunches over itself, sinking, sinking, and, one by one, we walk over to hold him for a while. Trying to pour physical strength into him to quell the pain. Quietly we weep with him, with each other, and quietly we watch as seven-year-old Mai arrives with her father to begin the terrible process of confronting her mother's death.



The next day the blackness returns with the dawn. We congregate again, this time with Sunim and Paul leading the ceremony; a curious crossover of the Ancient and the New, of Vietnamese and English. This day is for the Cao family as yesterday was for Jacques. We chant, we listen to poetry written by a friend of Tien's father, a white-haired woman who reads such precise and beautiful words I believe I understand them. We talk then about Tien and how we knew her, while the children, over their initial fright at the silent sounds of death, play on the floor among us. Mai consumed in turn by sorrow and curiosity hurls herself into Jan's lap to cry, then trots away to show off her mother's shrine to friends. When it's time to approach the coffin for a last, formal farewell, she hovers protectively, watching. "Goodbye, dear friend. Go well," I say, caressing Tien's shoulder. "Touch her here," whispers Mai, eyes dancing with amazement, placing my hand on her mother's forehead. "She's very cold."



So now, unbelievably, it's Monday, and there is no denying that life goes on, that work continues and that Christmas with all its public merriment will arrive in two weeks. For the time being, though, we can huddle together in the nave of this Christian chapel, with our Korean Buddhist monk and his chanting. For a time we can hold this experience to our hearts. Vivid and splendid like the snow outside. No longer the people we were on Friday, we have come to know Tien in a way we didn't before.

Weaver, mystic, artist and friend, we know now she was also a poet. And when she died, she left these words she had written in 1975.

half a moon

half a life time

a handful of shells  
a trail of blazing stars

and now i've forsaken  
all the best

and even this moment  
full of bliss

full of uncertainty

Signed with a single name. Tien. Heaven.

Namu Amitabul.

Tien Quê Cao died on December 6th, 1985, in Toronto. Her poems are reproduced here with the permission of Jacques Oulé.

Betsy Warland & Daphne Marlatt  
SUBJECT TO CHANGE:  
A COLLABORATION

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE: ON THE PROCESS

we first began collaborating in our writing in 1982 when we became lovers - what else would two poets do? this is our fourth collaboration and we have moved from writing long distance love poems to each other, to sitting at the same table writing alternate lines or groups of lines on the same page.

the plan was (does anything ever go completely to plan?) to write for a half-hour stretch each morning for five days, then shift to alternating sentences in a joint paragraph, and end with alternate, individually-authored paragraphs. as we began the first phase, b.w. suggested that in addition to the poem we keep notes on the side of the page documenting everything marginal to the text (what we said to each other, our actions, etc.) the difference in language was startling, and most days our notes far exceeded our lines in the space they took up.

we have edited these marginal notes considerably. keeping everything in seemed too digressive, nor was everything recorded, so a certain amount of selectivity was there from the beginning. the rest of the collaboration has been edited very little.

on march 7th, a heated argument closed that day's poetic entry. this argument was partly occasioned by discomfort with the documenting, partly by issues of communication, and largely by our very different writing processes. d.m. suggested we each write down what we were feeling and saying about our collaboration and these statements (plus a collaborative "afterthoughts") have been included in the marginal notes. on march 9th, we wrote our final passage of the poem together.

we then decided to skip phase two and, on march 11th, went on to phase three, alternating individual entries of two or more prose paragraphs each. these gave us the opportunity to comment on the experience of collaboration, while still responding to each other in language-focussed texts.

issues of merging, loss of identity, the ownership of words (problematic in itself) surface in the decision about whether to identify our individual entries or not. our last two collaborations were unidentified and numerous people told us how they tried to establish authorship. because the poem in this one seems so much a dialogue between two voices, we decided to use regular typeface and italics to distinguish individual entries, without identifying authorship. this has been carried over into the marginal notes and later prose paragraphs. for those to whom authorship is important, it is possible to figure out who says/writes what. for those to whom authorship is less important than the text as a whole, there are no obvious identifying indicators.

march 20, 1991

# SUBJECT TO CHANGE: A COLLABORATION

March 4, 1991  
9:15 AM

“toss [origin obscure]”

*pre/occupation with*  
*what precedes* - its profound effect

we agree  
to precede  
          each  
              other

*occupied by sun, the day, the time*  
*mutually*

          circling around it  
                          - it?

          the loon or the Queen  
          keeping face or  
                          taking the dive below

- *two sides of the same coin*

why then the toss?

*to pretend*  
*there is difference? reed shine*  
*on the lake: hair shine on your*  
          *wet leg*



March 4

i want to edit this after & just write freely now

*you know how hard it is to edit a collaboration - you can't rewrite what you say  
without affecting what i say in response*

\*

you can't look

why?

you know how i feel about being watched

\*

i have this desire to draw a line and write down everything we say

*let's try it*

\*

what's this?

*reed.*

r-e-a-d?

*r-e-e-d*

\*

[the waiting, restlessness of your clothes shifting on your body]

*it's been half an hour by the way*

March 5  
11:00 AM

*not that precedence is everything*

we are always in response to

*light on the table, these drooping*

*tulips,*

*open onto death*

illuminated feathers

drifting down

*the dance of talons, hopping*

*wing spread*

always in response to

our hunger

fear

desire

*hawk takes precedence, makes off*

*with thought*

thinks only present

*(worry tingles*

*elsewhere...the cat?*

while early this morning...

your taste

*position makes the difference*

*hawk licker - crow licked*

*dying for the*

*rapture*

March 5

there's an immature eagle on that tree, defeathering its catch

[chair falls over as D. gets up to see]

you'd be great at bird watching!

*wonder what it's got?*

a bird - probably a duck, i first noticed the feathers flying

\*

*so far, this isn't a very lesbian poem*

\*

*that's the end!*

no, I don't agree - we haven't done half an hour

*otherwise we'll say too much - that makes a nice shape right there*

i don't feel finished

\*

*it just flew off*

it hasn't got a duck, it's a crow

it's landed on that tree, it looks to me like a hawk - a red-tailed hawk,  
that's the one i grew up with

\*

i can still smell you

\*

i'm not into sex & death

*but the fear is a bit like that - rapture [looking it up in  
the dictionary]*

*you know they all relate - a hawk is a raptor, then there's the rapture, rapt,  
seized by enchantment*

March 6  
10:52 AM

the lesbian writer's hands  
*form a procession thought em/bodies*

lead to one another

*leading words leading lips*

fingers 'round  
pencil or mound  
*penis still?*

no.

lead to one another -

*shake a lead or get it  
out*

*how the legs shake*

at each other's  
epicenter

epic

*in the act her story*

*binds woman to goddess  
with/in*

divine rupture

March 6

*is that leap?*

no, lead [lěd]

*oh, i thought it was leap or lead [lěd]*

\*

*i think that's the last word - sounds a bit pathological!*

March 7  
12:55 PM

*breaking out, you said*  
muscles working together in  
*leading you on*

*- more that than precedence*

a kind of birthing  
*womb the body's largest muscle*  
*making room in the language*

with the heart  
the next

*where's mind?*

where's mine?

*quack, quack retort of ducks nesting*

saving our queens?

*face cards close to*  
*your heart?*

struggle?  
re-enactment?

we do not birth ourselves

*under the micro*  
*scope insects*  
*writhe*

in sects

you've left

March 7

*do you want me to add another line? i've got one -*

do

\*

*you're not going to take off on "language"?*

you can do it

[repeated searching through dictionary]

\*

*i don't know what the fucking queens are doing in there*

are you stuck?

*well, this poem seems to be going in two opposite directions and i can't figure out how to re-unite them. I was really excited about something up here and we just keep getting further away from it*

\*

what are you doing?

*i'm making notes of what i was trying to get to*



March 7

the cat purred, walked all over the page, lay down on it. we stroked him. he purred (silky fur) then began to bite. us too. fight. your feeling it isn't a poem - just "blather," and that i wasn't picking up on what you were writing. my feeling your frustration, anger, and wanting to be true to the reader and our struggle for "mine." beginning too late in the day part of the problem - our minds needing their own idiosyncratic directions. the quotidian's power, even on our "day off."

missing each other's signals. my thinking your impatience is partly due to your anger at not having time to do your **own** writing (your novel) but having to respond to other deadlines (like this one). i felt betrayed as your impatience increased. felt it as early as when i wrote "where's mine?" why i wrote it. and then felt angry when you began writing, on another page. you left. i accuse you of wanting a "perfect poem," and of not wanting to make yourself vulnerable to the reader. you say it "isn't working." it's "blather."

i say it's being true to the process. i don't only want to present the reader with "perfect poems" but also the back & forth. the struggle for mine **and** the relaxing into, moving with each other into, something more than mine. that intoxicating doubling of anticipation and revelation. i didn't only intend "mine" as a possessive but also in the sense of mining. mining the mind throughout our whole bodies.

you say it's not poetry. i'm ok with that. don't want to feel controlled by form. "But people will look at lines on the page and expect poetry." i suggest we could write about this, these short lines, these unpredictable spaces - our riding the currents of one another's associative and symbolic thought. for me - that's what we're doing, and sometimes - not doing. both are equally of interest. both have the potential for meaning.

March 7

*where's mind?  
where's mine?*

*territory — & the terror at the edges of losing our way  
in the mind-direction of the other.*

*we talk angrily. you accuse me of leaving the collaboration because it isn't  
going the way i want it to. i accuse you of judgement when you say i'm  
getting too theoretical.*

*"where's mine?" the axe-split in the poem.*

*i want to follow the drift evolving through earlier entries, words, thoughts  
we nudge up to in various ways. the same and different, changing as they  
recur. i have a sense of something moving into focus in & through the  
drift & when we approach it i get excited, connections leap, though there's  
always the strain of contiguity — how much more that is disparate can  
touch on what's already there & nudge it forward?*

*you want to document the struggle our wandering, our mind-blather makes  
along with the flights when we soar together. for you, resistance to flying  
together is as important as flying together. all a part of the process —  
nothing insignificant. although you still use the word "significant" when  
you talk about the actions, the body-shifts you choose to record in the mar-  
gin. you say i want to write a perfect poem. we have a different under-  
standing of form & process — form is more organic for you, what happens.  
for me form is something we make in collaboration with the poem, a 3rd  
entity which develops its own process as we continue. for you the poem is  
the trace of our collaboration, the record of our ins & outs. for me the poem  
is something we collaborate in collaborating with. it doesn't have to be a  
poem you say, just because it's in lines on the page — form isn't holy. form  
is holy, in the sense that it is what gets revealed — and what it tells us  
then.*

*we didn't talk about this before we started. i thought we were writing a poem together with documentary asides in the margin. you thought we were documenting our writing together. the question of which takes precedence — & can we agree? or do we have to?*

March 7

afterthoughts

*up til now when we've collaborated we've each had individual control of our individual pieces so we could shape them according to our own sense of form. it's not surprising that we should have difficulty collaborating on such a microscopic level - it's the 1st time our senses of form have collided with each other and we've had to give up individual control.*

our forms like our fingerprints? the bodies we live in. even more indelible in their idiosyncracies than our words?

*giving each other the gears we are still engaged*

March 9  
9:40 AM

timing

*& the chiming words do  
lead us on*

beyond our intentions

*tending inwards, vortical -*

*let's give it a whirl*

how to keep our centres  
in each other's motion?

*mouths?*

all of them

*a flight of lips*

that balance  
not top or bottom heavy  
*leading somewhere?*

currents aren't maps

but they **move**

sometimes barely -

eagle floating almost still  
in high sky

*seeing the duck  
will plummet rapidly*

stillness sharpening vision

*tai chi: intention behind each  
movement turning circles*

red

tulip's drooping head against the table  
breast of House Finch  
have we read

*what?*  
?

- *whether there's an object to the verb* -

subject  
to change

March 9

are we not writing in the margin anymore? we have up until now —

*do we have to be consistent?*

well, i fell intimidated about it not

*i feel intimidated by you - you were writing **everything** down*

i wasn't writing everything down

*let's not do it this time*

but then we need to indicate why we're not

*we can add a note, besides, we might not even use it*

we don't know that yet

*well, let's write this down*

March 11

collaboration on this micro-creative level is a meditation. it insists on our sustained presence to the page and each other. when we did break away and write our own statements, our writing kept us in close contact, pulled us back to the same meditative page once again.

this process exposed our collaboration to also be a form of mediation "...an intervention between two disputing parties in order to effect a peaceful settlement or compromise through the benevolent intervention of *a neutral power*." but as lesbians and feminists, we know form and language are not neutral, and when up against the wall - they vie even more fiercely than we. there is no neutral, benevolent mediator - we must also assume this role. after fear and fight, there is our love. there is our paired flight.

March 12

*first there is not we but i + i. starting off on different sides (of the same coin), tossing our idiosyncratic perceptions into the ring (sand, circle, performance space, these various animals - read birds - the smell of fear and applause). these perceptions that perform almost arbitrarily it seems (will she see what i mean?) (does it matter if it means something else to her?) meaning the elusive bird, dies into dust only to rise again in a further line, aflame with connections.*



*connections: (we): breathtaking, when thought leaps the gap between two idiosyncratic fields of association two lives have accumulated in their separate dialects, diverse cultural origins, private value systems, unconscious dream hordes. we still argue about the pronunciation of certain words — not the same as mis-reading **reed** or **lead**. and is **mis**-reading the word? everything entered subject to change, subject to transformation in the reader's imaginary, the reader being she, after all, who constructs meaning.*

*so i fears being misread, the flagrant will (raptor) wants her field day, takes off on the wing to pursue **her** meaning. and we desires connection, (rapt) lead away, to wider horizons of each other's making, beyond limits (that first take) taken apart and given to possibility. this does not mean death, though i fears it, fears losing her way.*

March 13

yes, i + i. i for an i and i to i. my handwritten i looking very much like a semicolon, "... punctuation indicating a degree of separation intermediate in value between the comma and the period." **ii** - the Roman numeral for 2 or **;;** a double semicolon, where the separation between the comma and the period is amplified. double ambiguity. doubled possibility.

changing the subject - our feminist project. yet, the subject is always subject to change. from one perspective, we saw an eagle and duck. from the other, we saw a red-tailed hawk and crow. the difference a hundred feet makes.

how we sleep deep in trust. one side then the other, fetal fit  
'round each other like quotation marks

“ ”

“ ”

book-ending one another's *unconscious dream hordes*. buttressing  
each other's night-floating i.

the relief, delight of i being only part of (i)t all. the very real difference in this from how we are absented by the dominators. letting go of the notion of misreading is dependent upon our knowing the difference. “collaborare, com-, together + labōrāre, to work.” i abandons her introductory clause for a being *between* comma and illusory period. she needs their double jeopardy of discovery more than her differentiating declarations, but she knows old habits die hard.

March 15

yours reads in the shape of a sandwich (toasted), the soft intimate part in the middle “egg shelley” actually what we had for lunch in the cafe yesterday. our day off together a gap in the text. intimate, to intimate, a movement inwards from publish. though i don't know that our bodies bookend the hordes which ride on regardless.

unlimited scope for mayhem watching her body move. egg Shelley. maybe a-hem, without hemming in the fertile urge fiction is, re-reading everything...

*dreamwork: (to work) reality.*

*so that the object transforms into subject and back again. **i being part of (i)t** — the delight as you say, lighting up as perspective shifts, illuminating. the quicksilver way connection leaps the gap between subject and object in desire. she broke the thermometer; we are degrees of thumb and forefinger pooling of liquidities. a figure of telling,*

*egg shelley actually the name in play,*

*yours,*

March 16 & 17

a telling figure, the seduction of - she(')ll!

intimate/intimate. (p)art of each other. y - ours? generative power of our intimacy - this too must have a life on the page. degrees of desire - what we hold in our fingertips! yet, not to idealize. something in between lesbian pulp romance and politically correct silence (each puritanical in impulse). the reader needs more. we read these words with a double voraciousness. coming out

of our shells. the writer lesbian, the reader lesbian shell shocked?  
sexing the page lesbian. in our profound plurality.

“i, yōdh, hand.” this is a gamble. (the roll of...) possibly a do or  
die. egging one another on — sandwiches originated so gamblers  
could stay at the table

doubling the stakes at our tables of chance. “obsession, obsidere,  
to sit down before” each other’s writing presence is to risk each  
other’s inherent chaos — for here the erotic is endlessly born.

you/r bet

March 19

*so, letters (safe on the other side). you write downstairs on your computer. i  
type upstairs. we pass the pages back and forth in the kitchen. not the  
same as sitting at the same table, writing on the one page. we are not the  
same, not one, sitting side by side, **sam**, together. not is where desire  
enters...*

*knotting it together, as something different (to collaborate) in a body (of  
work), seductive, and resistant. currents at play. combatting old habits,  
shifting ground where we meet, quick tongue, sweet wit, cl- : not closing it.*

*each the other to each in our reach together. oxymoronic no doubt, in  
excess. yet, yes.*

STRUGGLE:  
LOCAL AND GLOBAL

VISUAL SECTION

Diana Li  
Skai Fowler  
Jin-Me Yoon  
Haruko Okano  
Marianne Nicholson  
Ingrid Koenig  
Kiki Yee  
Laiwan  
Lorna Brown  
Allyson Clay  
Catherine Stewart  
Katherine Kortikow

## DIANA LI

### *Long Live Hong Kong*

#### Left Panel:

Upper part: collage of photocopies from a book about Hong Kong 1997. Handwriting on top of the collage: "My mother is dying, She doesn't look sick, indeed still decorated herself in glamour and glint, still embraces you upon your every visit. And even promises you that her good health to be 50 years the same without diminishing but I know. I know my mother is dying, dying from a change, a change of her heart."

#### Lower Part:

Sand paper, painted burnt linen with unfinished embroidery. The long coffin-like framework tries to create a museum-like atmosphere. The "Hong Kong" that I've grown up with will be a history, a past after 1997.\*

#### Right Panel:

The image is from an antique photograph. Woman dressed in the period when Hong Kong became a colony of England. A ghost-like, half-dying face.

\*My view towards the future of my motherland is pessimistic.

### *Neither Banana nor Mango*

Banana: A common Chinese term symbolizes the Canadian- (or Western Country) born Chinese. Like a banana, skin is yellow, inside is white.

Mango: refers to the Hong Kong-born Chinese (or oriental country-born Chinese). Both inside and outside are yellow.

#### Right Panel:

Dragon symbol represents the Chinese culture. Lower division: Screaming faces. Window-like frame. Right top corner: a cloth clip hangs a small piece of paper torn from a Chinese novel, with a mango drawn on it.

#### Left Panel:

Rose symbol: represents the western culture: (eg: English rose, etc.) Lower division: Screaming faces.

Left top corner: the cloth clip hangs a small piece of paper torn from an English novel, with some bananas drawn on it.

#### Centre Panel:

An agitated self-portrait being bounded by the two cultures, yet belongs to neither of them, like Hong Kong itself. A mixture of English and Chinese systems and traditions, but never adapt fully to any of them. Lack of identity, being betrayed by both sides.





Diana Li: *Long Live Hong Kong*, 1989 mixed media, acrylic on linen, hand embroidery, sand-paper, 72 x 80"





Diana Li, *Neither Banana nor Mango* 1989 mixed media 60 cm. x 120 cm.

## SKAI FOWLER

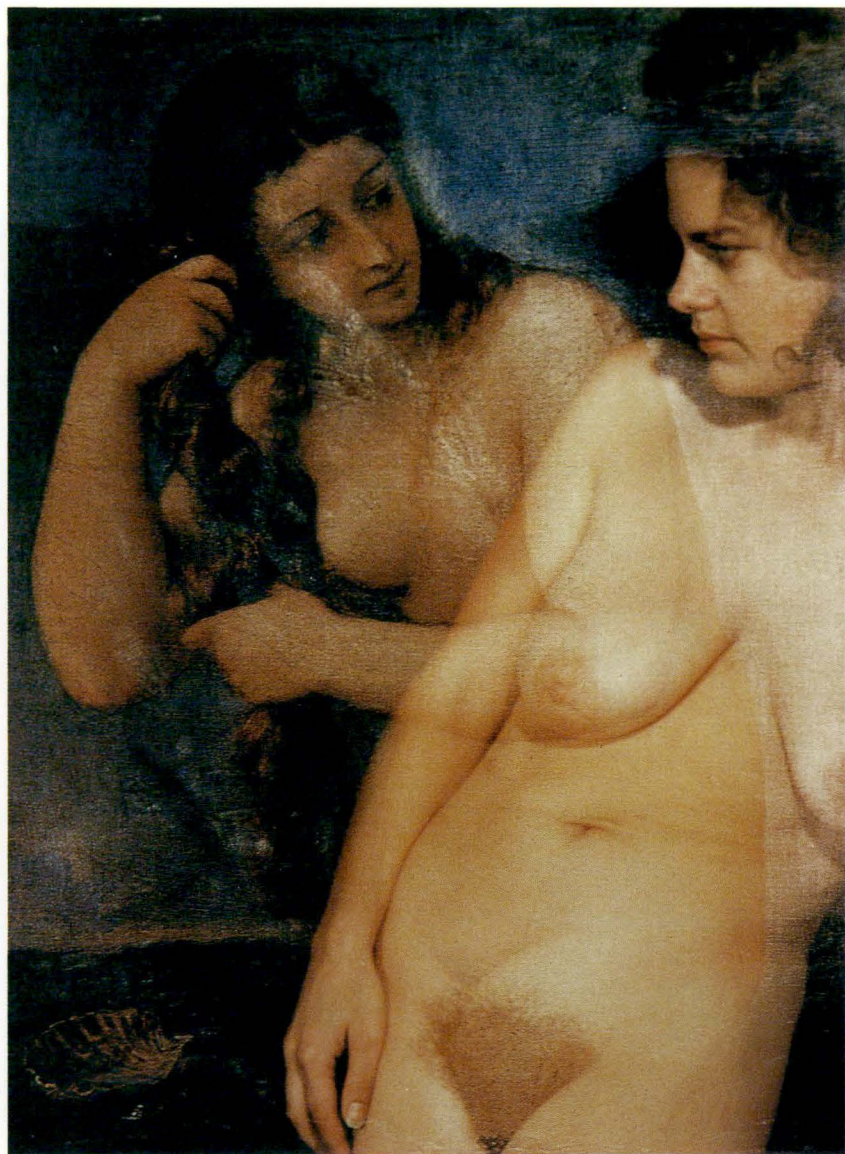
As I walk to the model's stand I take in the atmosphere of the classroom, more physically than with thought. I try to assess the attitudes of the students and instructor. I step onto the platform, circling, I search for the spot where I will stand to hold my first pose. With unconscious and accustomed actions I disrobe, unveiling I simultaneously retreat inward and propel outward a sense of presence. This state is a "caught in the middle" feeling which causes something of an out of the body sensation. Shielding my nudity. I sense the invisible threads of scrutinizing thoughts, pushing and pulling my body with brush, charcoal and clay: seduced into line, texture and form. Yet I remain seemingly untouched and untouchable, my silence contributing to this process of art-making. An artist's model, a cultural stripper.

In 1975 I did my first nude modeling job. At the time I was 18 and convinced that the only real reason nudes were used was to lure students to art schools. I'm now 34, still modeling and still convinced....

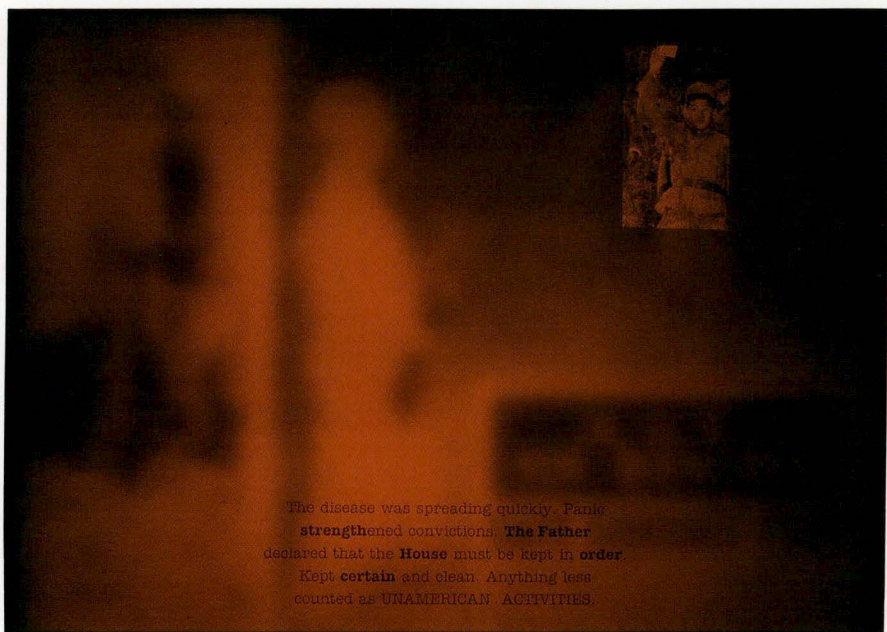


Skai Fowler, *Female Nude*, photograph





Skai Fowler, *Female Nude*, photograph







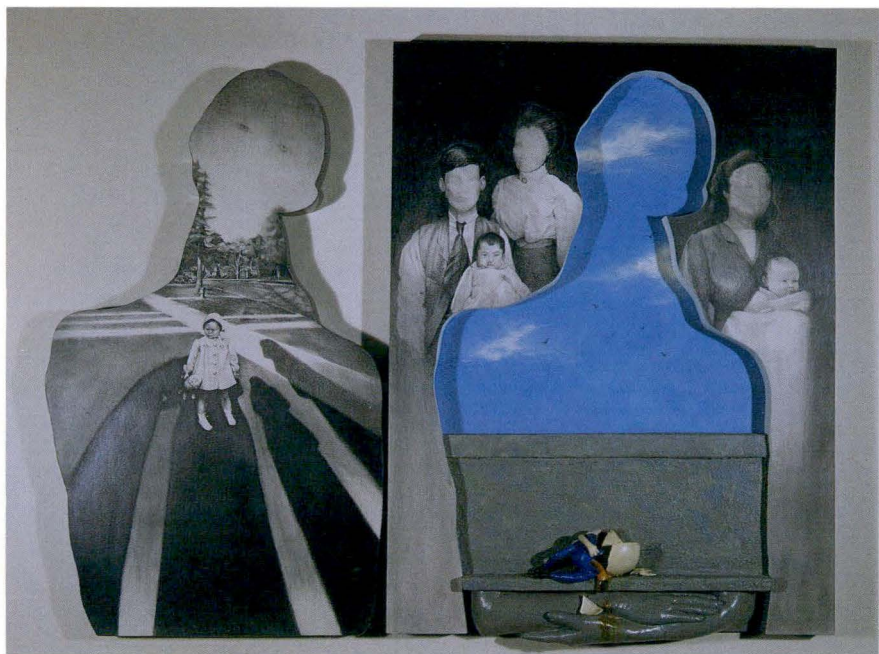
*Somewhere, always seems to be a place.  
Whispering, lure, she beckons you.  
Come closer. Come fly with us.  
Fragrant flowers in our hair.  
Confounded desire. She's looking at you.*



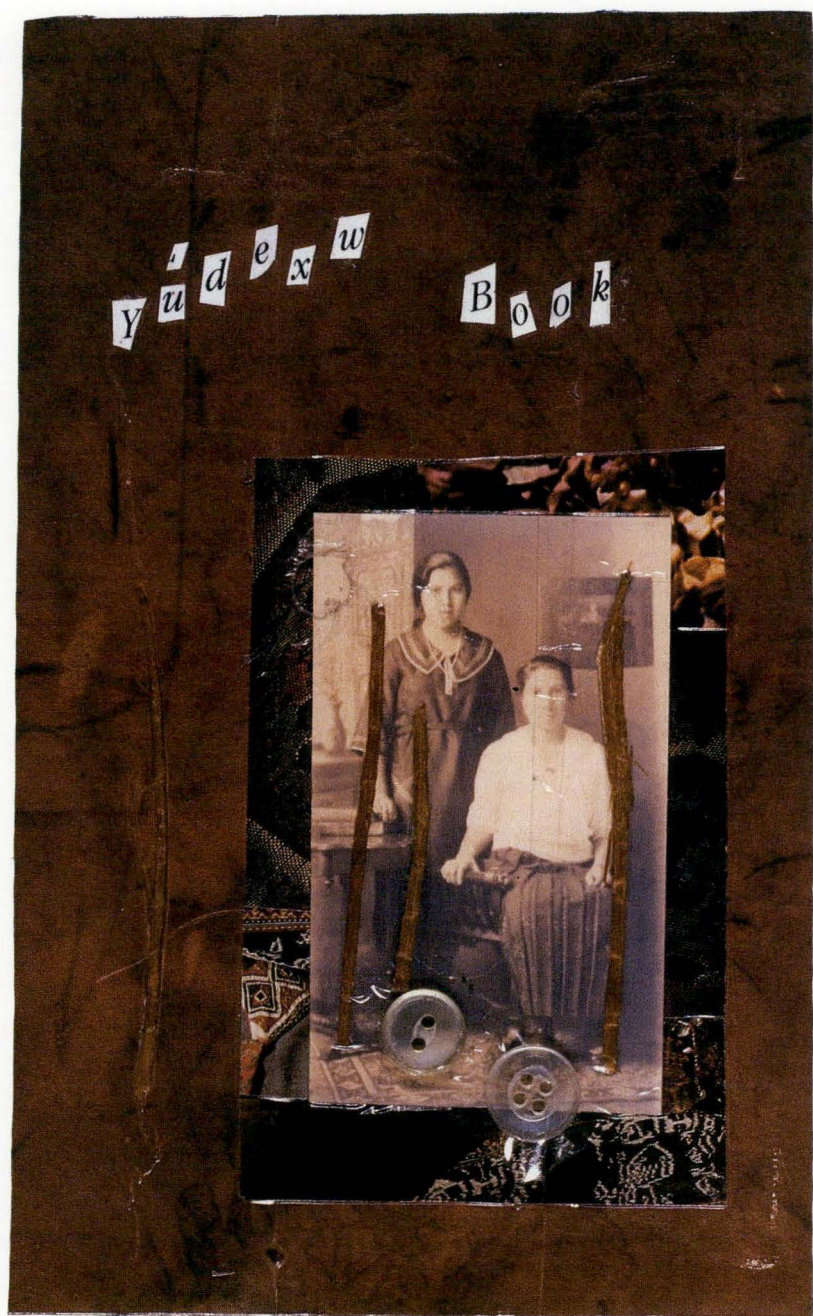


Haruko Okano: *Irezumi of the West*, graphite, coloured pencil and ink 30" x 40"  
Photographer: Brenda Hemsing



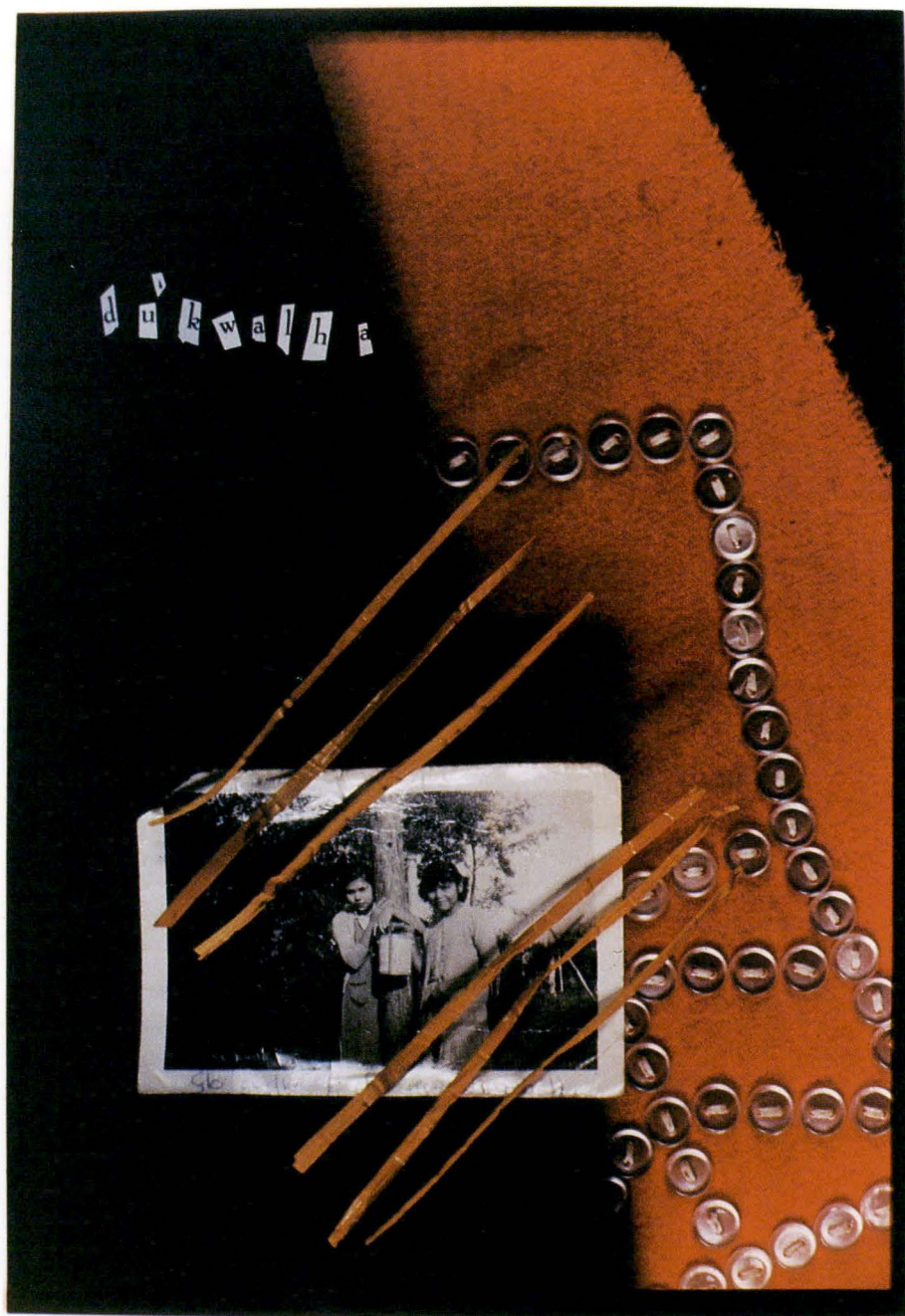


Haruko Okano: *Nursery Rhyme for a Lost Childhood*, diptych , acrylic paints, graphite, plywood and epoxy casts 57" x 40" x 4"  
Photographer: Brenda Hemsing



Marianne Nicholson: *Yudexw Book/Third Book*, photographic collage





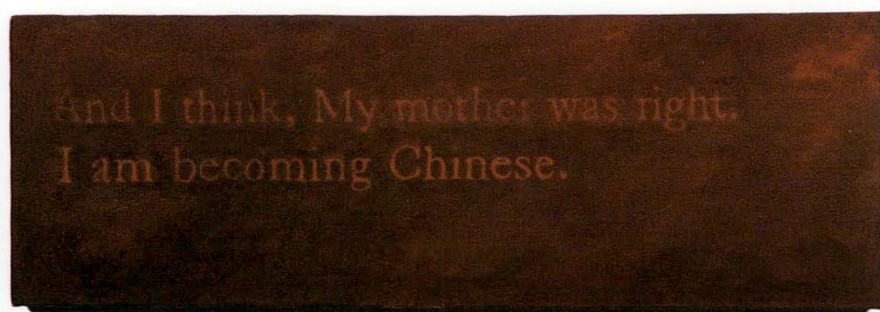
Marianne Nicholson: *Dukwalha*, photographic collage



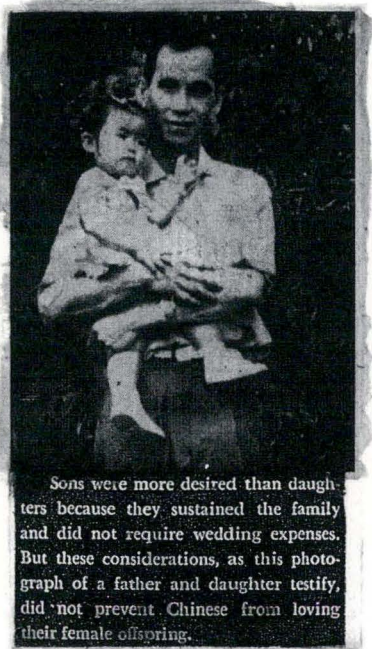
Marianne Nicholson: *Woman's Dance*, photographic collage







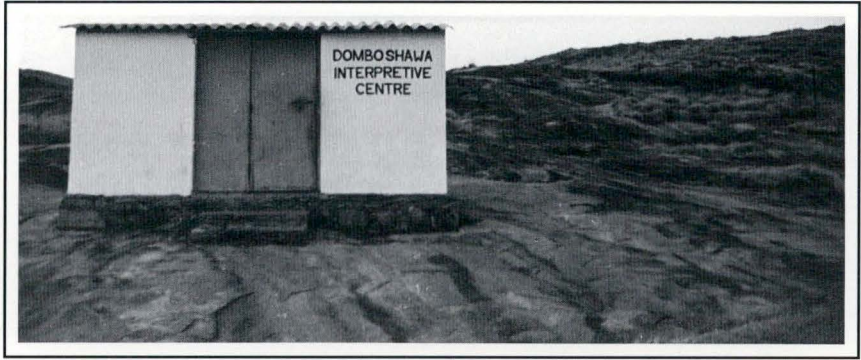
Kiki Yee: *Self Portrait*, 127.5 cm x 90 cm



Sons were more desired than daughters because they sustained the family and did not require wedding expenses. But these considerations, as this photograph of a father and daughter testify, did not prevent Chinese from loving their female offspring.



S A V A G E

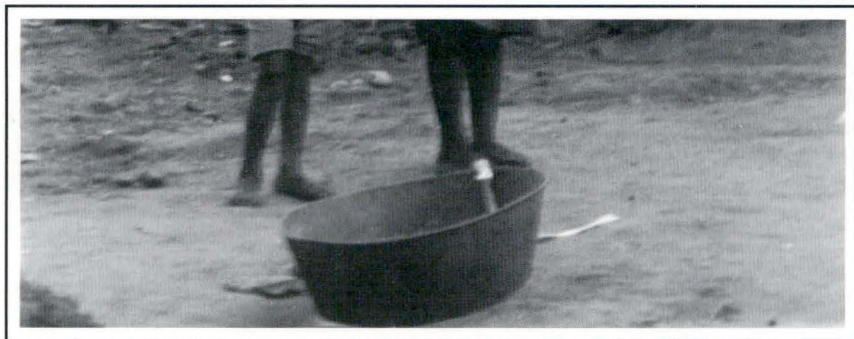


I  
HE SAW HER AS AN OPPORTUNITY  
TO BE IN CONTACT WITH ANOTHER WORLD  
A WORLD OF IDEALISED BEAUTY  
OF WILDNESS

A PLACE  
A PERSON  
HE COULD LOSE HIMSELF IN AND EXPERIENCE THAT WHICH  
HE HAS LONGED TO EXPERIENCE

A PLACE  
A PERSON  
HE COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED OR CREATED  
THAT WHICH HE WILL USURP, ANNEX, POSSESS, OBSESS WITH  
PEERED AT LIKE DEEP SEA WATER FISH, THEN PHOTOGRAPHED

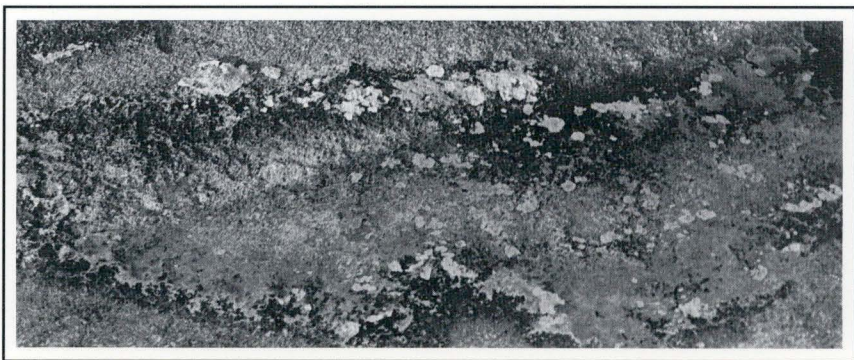
## SAVAGE



II

WITH THE ARID LAND HE MAKES HER LABOUR  
DOES HE REALISE HOW STRONG HE HAS FORCED  
HER TO BECOME ?

## S A V A G E



III

HE SEES HER AS A HELPLESS VICTIM  
RAVAGED BY THE IGNORANCE OF  
A STUMBLING CONSCIOUSNESS

UNABLE TO BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIS STURDY GUIDING HANDS

SHE SEES HIM OFFER THAT WHICH SHE HAS ALWAYS WANTED  
THAT WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY HERS  
THAT WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY HERE

HE QUIETLY OFFERS IT BACK WITH THE PRICE ON HER PRIDE  
HER PERCEPTION OF HERSELF  
THAT WHICH HE HAS ALWAYS WANTED

SAVAGE



IV

SHE IS QUIET

NOT SLEEPING, NOT TIRED, NOT INARTICULATE, NOT PARALYSED

JUST WONDERING WHAT HE HEARS

SHE LEARNS SHE CAN LOVE THAT WHICH SHE HAS BECOME

# S A V A G E



V

WITHOUT HESITATION  
SHE EXPLODES

AN EXPLOSION OF CELEBRATION AND UNCOMPROMISED ANGER  
AN EXPLOSION OF LIMITLESS PASSION      WITH NO LOVE LOST

A FRIGHTFUL ANGER, TORRENTIAL STINGING RAINS  
DEVASTATING QUAKES TO  
THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR EXISTENCE

HUMBLING US  
BRINGING US TO THE MODESTY WE REALLY SHOULD REMEMBER  
BUT NEVER SEEM CAPABLE OF



S A V A G E



VI  
WE ARE TOLD SHE IS BEAUTIFUL  
AND HE ASKS "HOW BEAUTIFUL ?"



VII  
I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED HER

SHE TALKS TO ME LONG INTO THE NIGHT FULL OF CRICKETS  
AND DEAFENING PALM TREES  
THAT SWISH TO NO END /

S A V A G E



VIII

THEN WHEN HE TOUCHES HER AND HE IS LISTENING  
HE SUDDENLY HEARS HIMSELF  
AND HE WATCHES HIMSELF

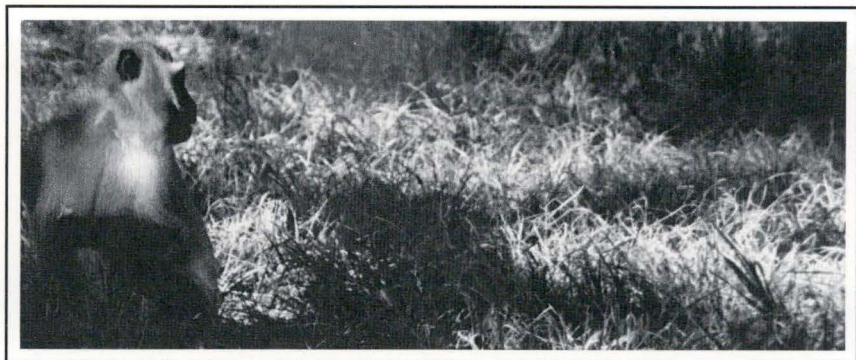
CAREFUL TO HOLD HER STRENGTH AGAINST HIS FRAGILITY

AS HE SEES THEN  
HOW SHE COULD SHATTER HIM WITH A GLANCE  
SHAME HIM WITH A WORD  
SAVE HIM FROM HIMSELF

HE WILL EXPERIENCE DILEMMA /



S A V A G E

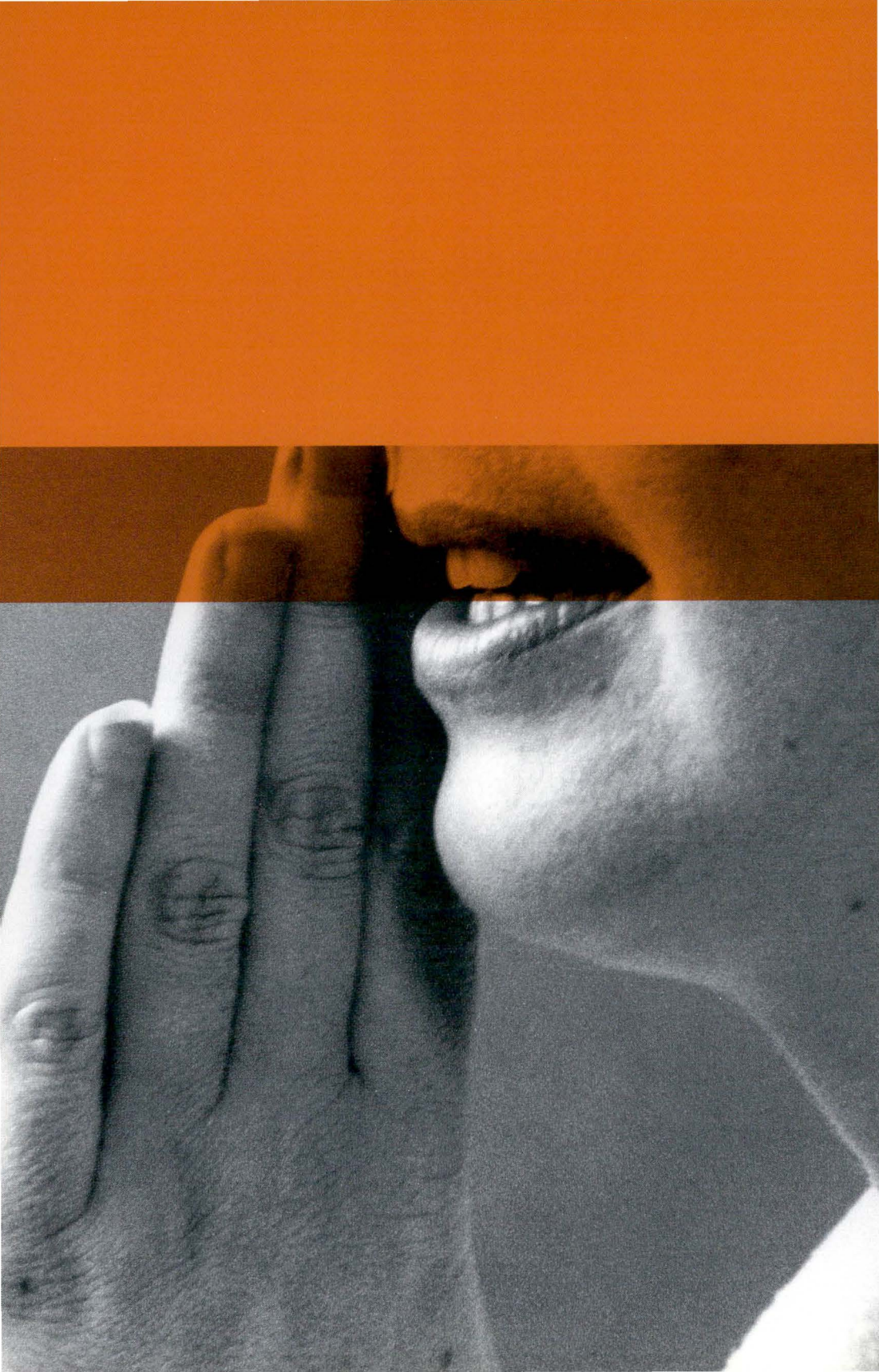


IX  
SHE WILL SAY SHE HAS ALWAYS LOVED YOU



X  
ALL MUST BE REVEALED  
"I HAVE PUT ASIDE MY AGENDA FOR YOU " SHE SAID

WRITING: LAIWAN  
PHOTO COLLABORATION: NETSAYI CHIGWENDERE / LAIWAN  
HARARE • ZIMBABWE • 1991





and she told me about waiting for the bus...early in the morning...waiting for the bus...and as she was standing there...men would come up, different men, a different one every time would come up...and say 'Why aren't you smiling? Why don't you smile? Don't you ever smile?'...and sometimes her reply would be 'I do smile and sometimes her reply would be 'It's none of your business and sometimes her reply would be to say nothing at all - not that it made any difference.

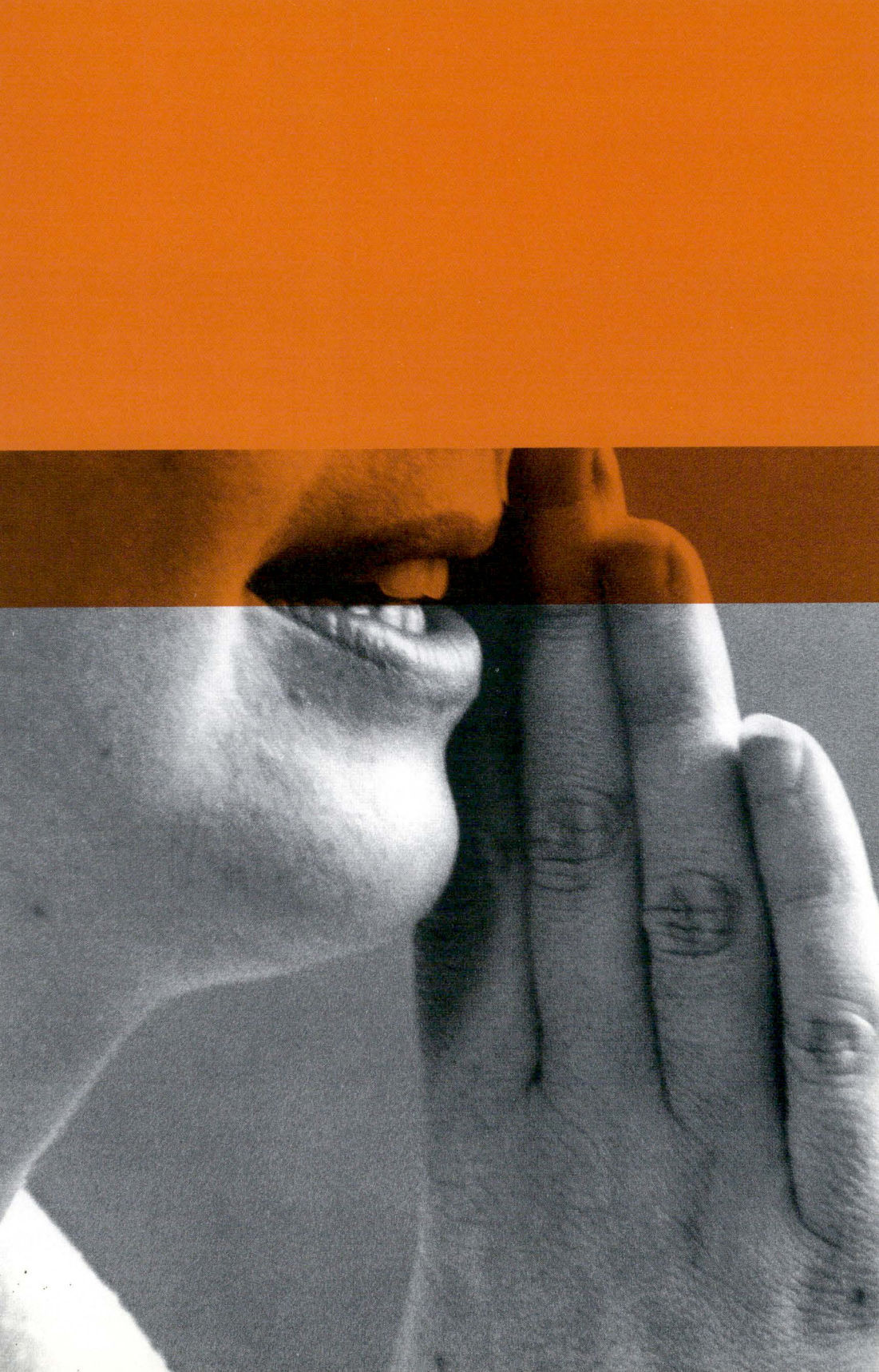
had lost his way.

and she told me about waiting for the bus...early in the morning...waiting for the bus...and she was standing there...men would come up, different men, and she told me about the conference...in the conference centre...hundreds of women in the conference hall...close to the beginning of December. The key note speaker was making her address...at the front of the room...and she told me how the speaker lost her composure...how the speaker stopped speaking...how the speaker forgot what she had to say...when a man approached the front of the room...he was playing with his overcoat...he was rifling through his overcoat...and she told me how the panic spread like a wave...some women looking at the man...some women looking at the speaker...some women looking for a hiding place...and she told me how it turned out to be nothing...just some man had lost his way.

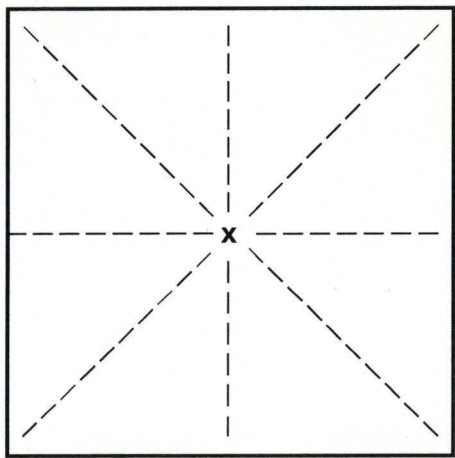
and she told me how tired she was...and how guilty she feels...about making the  
same points in the same meetings...year after year...saying the same words in  
response to the same words...in the same meetings...year after year. Although  
sometimes she remembers not having to make the same response...how  
sometimes her silent presence...evokes the response...and those  
reciting those same words...respond to themselves. This makes her  
uncomfortable...between them...to those words out of the mouth...to  
silently...to savour them...to swallow them...to his

and she told me how tired she was and how guilty she feels about making the  
rain stop. She told me about waiting for the bus... standing on the street... waiting for the  
bus. And as she was standing there, she would come up, a different man, a  
different one every time would come up and say 'Why aren't you smiling? Why  
don't you smile? Don't you ever... smile?' and she told me how finally her  
response would be to roll her eyes back, knocking her head, to open her  
mouth... to bite those words out of the air between them... to chew them  
noisily... to savour them to chew them noisily... to swallow them smilingly... to his  
horror.





Allyson Clay/LOCI

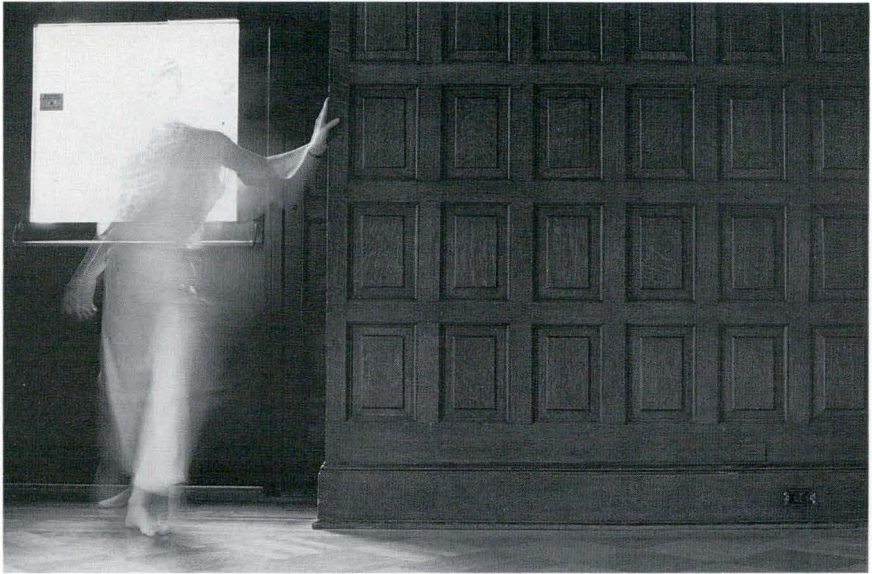




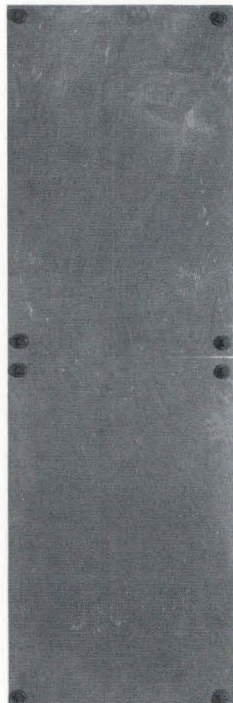
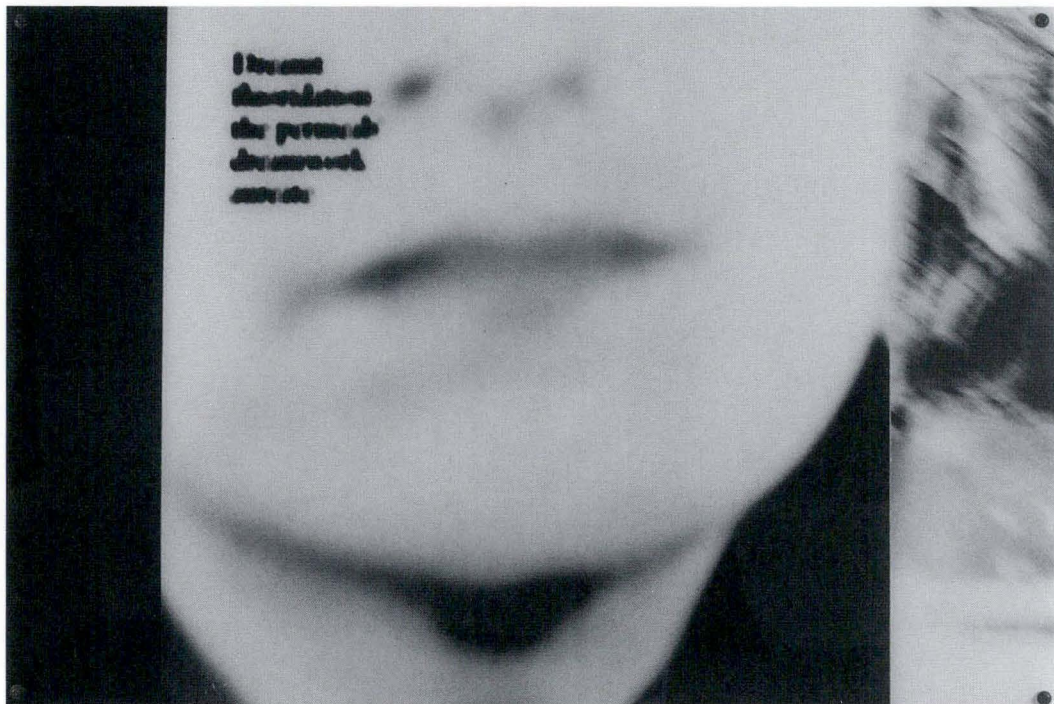
To begin, the performer enters at any time of the day a domestic interior and closes the door after entry. The audience remains outside the room. There need not be an audience. She wouldn't listen anyway. Nothing could be said. She watched the man hopping up the street on one foot. He had started hopping when he passed that blonde woman getting out of a silver Mercedes. He put some money in his meter and limped back down the hill. All furnishings and objects in the room are to be rearranged. We avoided each other's eyes, as our children were avoiding each other on the jungle gym. Some rain plopped on the dusty sand around my feet; I was relieved, playtime was up. Her daughter's head was bandaged, some stitches were visible on the side of her face. Thunder, the air coagulating, darkly. so that there is no semblance of order in the room. She took three books by women authors off the shelf; three paperbacks; aged, and brittle with pages going brown along the edges. de Beauvoir, Stein, Woolf. She poured milk into a basin and put the books in to soak. Kneading them slightly, absentmindedly whistling, she enjoyed the sun from the window hot on her arms and neck. Later, she removed the books from the milk and tied them together with white household string. She set them in the sun outside to congeal and dry. In the middle of the night, the story began, you can sometimes feel her wandering. There is no sound, no light. A draught of air that smells like new cut grass, dank and sweet touches your hand or strokes your cheek. Once order is destroyed, the performance is complete. Exit the space and close the door.

Occasionally, there was a fleeting moment of clarity.

As the text reveals, SEARCH is about an "inner" journey over time and the changes in consciousness experienced along the way. I wanted to convey a sense of urgency and purpose through the actions of a figure (myself) in a variety of

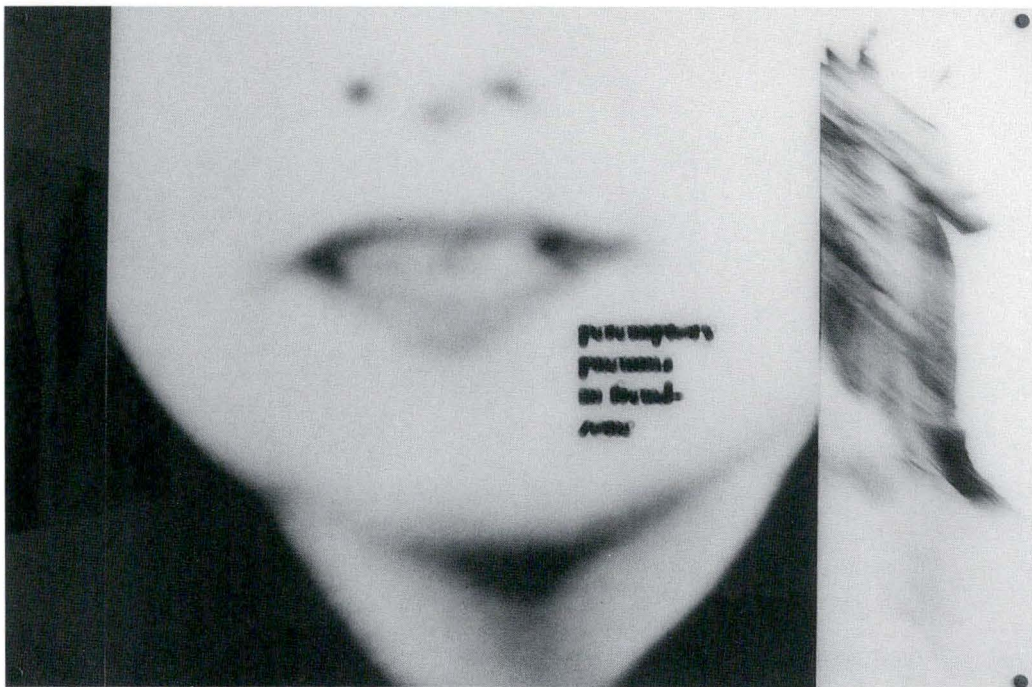


situations, either found or composed. Although there are “moments of clarity”, no complete answers are found and the search for meaning and understanding (an ongoing struggle) continues indefinitely.

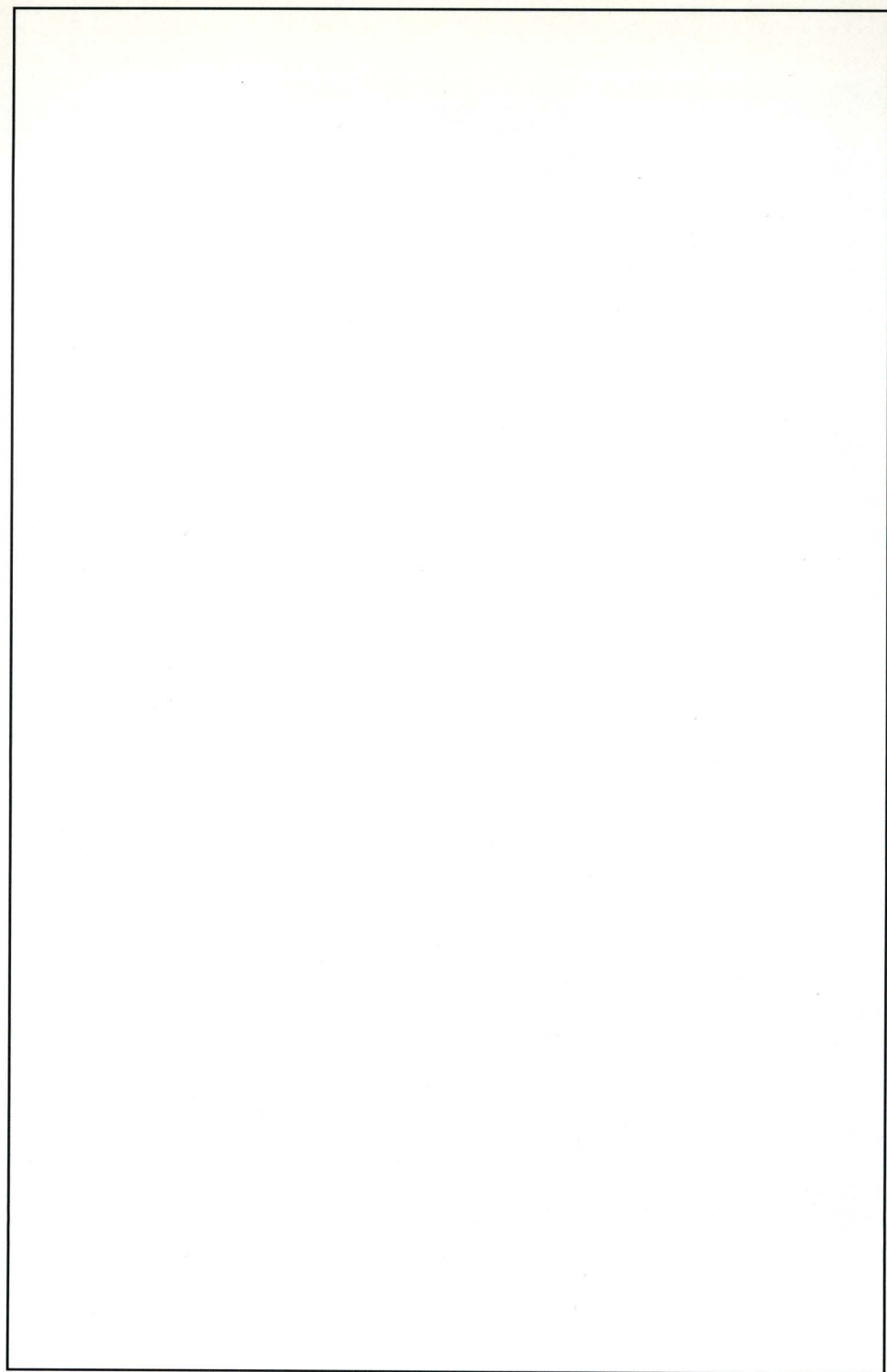


Katherine Kortikow, *Cipher* 1991





Katherine Kortikow, *Cipher* 1991



## Raj Pannu / TWO POEMS

### WHITE LIBERAL MOTHERFUCKERS

*Especially for Chrystos*

There was the risk of temptation  
with the promise of your blood upon my knife

\*With gore gleaming in your eyes  
And your speech punctuated by your orgasmic exaltations  
you attempt to educate me  
about your myopic visions  
of your New Society  
Liberalism!  
Democracy!  
HuMANity!  
love and peace and love and peace....  
At the crack of your whip I moan  
Love...Peace...Love  
— I learned to fake it at the first sight of a burning cross  
Your sons had considered me a fine instrument of practice  
by the way

And what would I know?  
What would I know about the dark suffering masses along the  
equator that you — Rudyard Kipling's Death Messenger  
are gonna try to liberate  
I have seen the maharajah's Palace of Blood  
remain immune and pristine beneath a scorching sunset  
and I have seen the shrunken shriveled heads of my ancestors  
strung like amulets around your pale evil throats

And what would I know about the industrial proletariat  
that you wail about over a cup of cappuccino  
Every time I look into my father's numb painless eyes  
I have the privilege of watching a man die in finite degrees  
Your mechanized beast devoured him thirty years ago  
And what would I know about torture  
\*I have known torture which works and works and works...  
and leaves no mark upon the body

I continue my immobile dance in isolation  
as you all stand around the perimeter and applaud  
And I make it hurt until it feels good  
And I make it hurt until it feels good  
And I make it hurt until...

The masquerade of self-deception has ended  
for I have now surrendered myself before the wisdom of the gun

I fear this war of attrition exploding inside my skull  
And I fear the shadow of the assassin  
who has crossed the line of demarcation  
within my mind between Madness and Death

There is not a gentle darkness coming  
to settle beyond my window pane  
for she comes with the terrors of the night  
My incubus born from the violence of suction

She will soar into the cauldron of your sky  
injecting blood terrors into each and every vein  
and before the aftermath of dawn  
seals over the whites of your eyes  
I will suck the bones of your children dry

\*borrowed with consent from "White Girl Don't" by Chrystos, *Not Vanishing*,  
Press Gang Publishers, Vancouver, 1988.

## THE FACTORY PEOPLE

The horror  
of a new day  
of a bloodless torture  
mathematically refined  
feeding upon us

Dreams once danced  
before our bleary eyes  
but now our minds  
have become so numb  
that we hear nothing  
except the dull roar  
of the beast's central nervous system  
as it devours us

Who would think  
that the maws of hell  
could look so sterile?  
So efficient?

## Sharon Kwik / RAISING OUR FISTS: MORE THAN JUST PRETTY ETHNICS

North America is on the verge of a new revolution. On the heels of civil rights activists and feminists are Asian women. No longer silent (or silenced) we are speaking out. Asian women need their own category because in my opinion the first two movements have somehow managed to leave them behind. Now before you speak out in protest, take this pop quiz: name ten Asian actresses. Newscasters don't count. Having trouble? Okay, name five. One. Am I making myself clear?

I am an Asian actress. I was born in Canada and my first language is English. I am also unemployed. In the two years that I have been in the business, I have had three auditions. The first was for an Ontario Lotteries commercial that was looking for ethnic girls in bikinis. The second was for a B.C. Forestries ad in which I was the token Asian amongst a horde of tourists. The last was for a spin-off of MacGyver. This script was a piece of American propaganda about Chinese refugees embracing the land of the free with visions of democracy shining in their eyes. Even the accent was written into the script. To every person who has suffered some racial discrimination sometime in his or her life, this should come as no surprise. Well it surprised me, because I thought I was white.

Don't get me wrong, I am not visually impaired. When I look in the mirror in the morning, an Asian face stares back at me. Yet for the longest time, I failed to perceive the label. It was just a face. I speak perfect English and I carry a Canadian passport, so why should the colour of my skin or the slant of my eyes disqualify me from roles in films and television as a lawyer, doctor, teacher, or even the "girl next door"?

I grew up in a predominantly white suburb. I was the only Asian in my elementary school and one of two Asians in my high school. Strangely enough, instead of making the differences glaringly obvious, it made me deny my identity.



My parents are Chinese-Indonesian. This means my ancestors were Chinese and had emigrated to Indonesia about six generations ago. Indonesians don't consider these emigrés to be Indonesian, nor do the Chinese consider them to be Chinese. As a mixed breed, we are nothing. However, in Canada we are immigrants: currently labelled in the media as the "Asian Invasion." We were different from our neighbours. Or were we?

When I was young I preferred Kraft dinner to the Indonesian food my mother made. I adored Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. I followed the saga of "Days of Our Lives" religiously. I know the themes to "Gilligan's Island" and "The Brady Bunch" by heart. I practiced disco dancing in my bedroom. I had Donny Osmond and Shaun Cassidy records. I wore bell-bottomed pants, leg warmers and wedgies. I wanted to be popular. I wanted to be blonde and blue-eyed.

Those were the seventies and early eighties. Now it's the nineties. Have things changed? My brother is fifteen years old. All his compact discs are Black rap artists. His favourite T.V. shows are "In Living Color," "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," and "The Cosby Show." On his wall are posters of Queen Latifah and Spike Lee. His idea of beauty is Jody Watley or Lisa Bonet. He wishes he had kinky hair and darker skin. He cut his hair into a flat top with shaved sides. He follows the fashion on the MuchMusic rap videos. We differ by seven years in age and in that time the colour of pop culture has changed. I wanted to be white, he wants to be Black. Neither of us is proud to be Asian.

As Asians we are frequently mistaken for being someone we're not. People on the street think he's a gang member — untrustworthy, violent, and a menace to society. Caucasian men I meet often begin speaking to me in what they assume to be my native language. They assume I'm anti-feminist and that I'll put a man's needs before my own. They believe that I'm exotic, mysterious, and different from white women in bed. Where are these ideas promoted?

A Newsweek poll in 1971 illustrated that the average American citizen watches six hours of television per day. In 1988, there were over 657 million T.V. sets, one for every child in the world.<sup>1</sup> Television has a huge effect on our lives. It educates as much as it

entertains. But what is it teaching us? If it is perceived to be a mirror of our society, does that mean that North America is comprised only of young attractive women, older men, primarily a white population with the occasional Black thrown in for good measure?<sup>2</sup>

Until ten years ago, television was essentially white. Today television is broken up into Black and white. Of course Black people haven't inserted themselves into the media without a fight, but I'm wondering where Asians fit into the picture. First there were all white shows, then white shows with a token Black, then all Black shows, now there are all Black shows with a token Asian. What does this mean? What kind of progress is this?

I have no sense of my history in this country. Every film or T.V. show I watch tells me this is a Black and white world with nothing in between. Black people had Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. What heroes and heroines do Asians have? Did they even fight, or did they just quietly assimilate into white culture, forgetting their past, denying their identities? If they weren't identified as either Black or white when there were segregated washrooms, did they use the "coloured" ones?

The library has books on Black history in the media and representations of Native people. There seems to be a void where Asians are concerned. I am beginning to think we don't exist. Searching for Asian women on television confirmed my suspicions. Yet I look out my window to see that we *do* exist, and not just in Chinatown. In Vancouver, every fourth person on the street is Asian. Asians account for 65 per cent of all legal immigration to the United States.<sup>3</sup> The numbers increase every day, but surely you've seen it on the news? This is where we are represented in the media, whereas Asian immigration is a topic for news Asian women are newscasters. One of the most famous media personalities is Connie Chung. Her popularity precipitated the increasing appearance of Asian women newscasters. Although I know who she is, I can't find her on Canadian broadcast television. Where is she now? Another Asian woman who has received a lot of media attention is Joan Chen of "Twin Peaks." She played the character Jocelyn Packard, a mysterious widow who gets what she wants through the promise of sex. Asian women are consis-

tently portrayed as prostitutes. If we were to base our conclusions upon this character nothing has changed.

The only positive portrayals of Asian women that I've recently seen were Kim Miyori and Frances Nuyen who played doctors on "St. Elsewhere." This is a good example of non-traditional casting where race is not germane to character development.<sup>4</sup> However, this show is no longer on the air.

Rosalind Chao played an Asian war bride on "After M\*A\*S\*H"; on "Eddie's Father" an Asian woman played the housekeeper; on "Star Trek," Lieutenant Uhuru was a sex object; on "Night Court" the token Black character's wife had recently immigrated to America and spoke broken English, and on the soap opera "As the World Turns" the character Liane was the illegitimate daughter of a Caucasian Vietnam veteran. These actresses are no longer on the air.

The remaining visible Asian faces on television are male, and there aren't that many of them either. Even in advertising the Asian faces are infrequent. If Asians are shown, they are part of the milieu, a face in the crowd rather than a spokesperson for the product. According to Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson, "ads mirror not the actual population but the consuming population, and that older persons and minorities have comparatively less disposable income. So as their income rises and increasing numbers enter the middle and upper classes, their percentages on T.V. ads should increase."<sup>5</sup> Considering the numbers of wealthy Asians in this country, one would assume that this would be the case.

Many of the struggles in bringing Black faces to white television are pertinent to the (in)visibility of Asian faces. As recently as 1949, Blacks were still playing caricatured menials of comic types. Sydney Poitier changed that by playing roles demanding social respect.<sup>6</sup> In the late sixties, Diahann Carroll played "Julia": the most assimilated Black character ever to appear in the American mass media. The actress herself criticized the show: "Julia Baker was a 'white negro', the overly good, overly integrated, a fantasy projection of white writers acting, they felt, in a manner sensitive to decades of T.V. prejudice."<sup>7</sup>

In 1970, "The Flip Wilson Show" achieved a number one



standing in the Neilson ratings; television's first Black superstar. The show "had humour that aired Black comic concerns but didn't attack and lay blame."<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this is partly why "The Flip Wilson Show" was so successful.

By 1984, "The Cosby Show" reached number one. This show portrays a Black family representative of all Americans. It implemented "positive role models — a Black family that had managed to escape the violence of poverty through education and unity."<sup>9</sup> The Cosby characters have critics who argue, "the characters are so good they're not funny; that they're mainstream capitalists, therefore 'in essence' white; that they duck racial issues and give the false impression that racial trouble has been resolved."<sup>10</sup> I disagree with this criticism. The show may not talk about issues but it does inspire Black pride in the masses. Besides, why couldn't Black people be mainstream capitalists?

In 1985, "A Different World" a sit-com about a Black college, aired on national television. Since that time enrollment in Black colleges increased by 30%.<sup>11</sup> This is only a small indicator of television's widespread influence. Pride in one's own race is hard to come by, especially if one is an Asian born in North America. There is the need for positive role models. Paul Yee states, "The second generation, benefitting from public education strove to escape the ethnic community/economy/ghetto. The price for integration appears to have been the dissolution of the ethnic community."<sup>12</sup> Ron Tanaka, an English professor at Berkeley, gathered a group of Sansei and Chinese Canadian students to discuss Asian identity. All participants shared feelings of not fitting in, not knowing Asian languages, and not being proud to be Asian. Tanaka argued that "with assimilation, Asian Canadians had acknowledged the cultural superiority of white Anglo-Canada and let it define the roles and places of its minorities."<sup>13</sup> I have nothing against assimilation, to a point. I believe that when one emigrates to a new country, one should try to adapt; however, "melting pot" idealism can go astray. In the process of assimilation, does one lose one's cultural heritage and deny one's past in order to gain full acceptance in his or her new community?

Instead of productive role models, Hollywood gives us stereotypes and caricatures. The silent film era portrayed Asians as evil

characters involved in drug or crime-related activities. The first sympathetic portrayal was the Chinese character in the film *Broken Blossoms* made in 1919. This was potentially positive “except for one flaw, his desire for a white women. Since miscegenation was the most horrible crime any Oriental could commit, death was the only solution for this illicit romance.”<sup>14</sup> Besides “21 Jumpstreet” and “Degrassi High,” superficiality persists in depictions of male Asian characters on today’s television. “Wok with Yan,” a Chinese cooking show, and Tom Vu, a self-made millionaire, are embarrassments to Asians. I realize that there are white caricatures on television but at least they are offset with positive characters.

Asian women must constantly struggle against stereotypes in the media and everyday life. Television and films which promote misconceptions about Asian women seem to be successful in affirming these ideas in Caucasian men’s minds. For example, an article by Tony Parsons published in *Arena* magazine (Spring 1991), explains why there were so many ethnic women in the Hot 100 (females) list in the previous month’s issue. The Asian women named were Nancy Kwan, the actress who played “Suzy Wong” the “acceptably exotic and Anglicized Asian female”<sup>15</sup> from sixties film, and “any Cathay Pacific stewardess (business class).”<sup>16</sup> Parsons argues that Caucasian men are passing over white women in favour of these pretty ethnics. I gathered that he assumes that today’s white women are all vocal feminists, that their fight for equality in the work place has given them too much financial power and since they have become the equal of men physically they are a sexual turn-off.

Parsons assumes and maintains, however, that ethnic women are quiet, docile, and animalistic sexually. This means that they are easily dominated except in bed — what more could a man want? *Arena* magazine, where this article appeared is geared towards white middle to upper class, apparently intelligent, employed, socially aware males. Unfortunately, it echoes the stereotypes in *Sex and the Oriental*, a trashy dimestore novel published in 1965, promoted as a white man’s guide to sex in Japan.

The odds seem to be against Asian women ever breaking out of this stereotype, unless we begin making our own films as Black filmmakers have done. Writer J. Fred MacDonald says it best:

What does it suggest about American broadcasters when a minority group has achieved economic strength and constitutes a desirable consumer market, but still is unable to see itself portrayed honestly and intelligently on television? Some have suggested that the only way television will act responsibly towards blacks is when minorities infiltrate the creative aspects — as writers, directors, producers, and top executives of programming and turn their sensitivities into policies.<sup>17</sup>

Although the work of Asian women filmmakers may still be a novelty to North American audiences, they do exist: Helen Lee's *Sally's Beauty Spot*, Midi Onodera's *The Displaced View*, Pam Tom's *Two Lies*, and Lise Yasui's *Family Gathering*, to name a few. This proves an age-old axiom: if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself.



## NOTES

1. McGrohan, *Prime Time, Our Time*, (California: Prima Publishing and Communications, 1990), 353.
2. Campbell and Jamieson, *The Interplay of Influence*, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1983), 147.
3. Sing, *Asian Pacific Americans*, (Los Angeles: National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1989), 9.
4. *Ibid.*, 27.
5. Campbell and Jamieson, 147.
6. McBride, *Filmmakers on Filmmaking*, (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher Inc., 1983), 71.
7. MacDonald, *Blacks and White T.V.*, (Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1983), 116.
8. McCrohan, 200.
9. *Ibid.*, 331.
10. *Ibid.*, 335.
11. *Ibid.*, 346.
12. Paul Yee, "Where Have All The Young People Gone?" in *Asian Canadians: Regional Perspectives*, (Mount St. Vincent University, 1981), 355.
13. *Ibid.*, 357.
14. Miller and Woll, *Ethnic and Racial Images in Film and Television*, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 1987), 190.

15. Okano, "Visible Difference", *Fuse*, (Spring, 1990), 36.
16. Parsons, "Pretty Ethnics", *Arena*, (Spring 1991), 20.
17. MacDonald, *Blacks and White T.V.*, 233.

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## C. Allyson Lee / SINOPHOBIA

By virtue of the shape of my eyes and the colour of my hair, I am considered by Canadian society to have membership in a “visible” minority. I am also called a “woman of colour.” That is, I could never “pass” for white, even if I tried. It has been long regarded as a privilege to be able to be thought of as white, to have no physical characteristics which could set one apart. After all, in Canada, a white person can walk down any street and not be called a “jap,” “chink,” or “nigger” and not be asked “where do you come from — originally?” or “Where were you born?”

Aside from the obvious external racism, many people of colour often suffer from a more concealed form of oppression: internalized racism or fear or hatred of one’s own ethnic heritage or prejudice against one’s own race. It has taken me decades to claim ownership of such feelings. For most of my life I belonged to the “Don’t Wanna Be” tribe, being ashamed and embarrassed by my Asian background, turning my back and rejecting it. I didn’t want to be associated with, let alone belong to, a group which was stereotyped by whites as being noisy, slanty-eyed rice gobblers, “gooks,” or chinks.

Despite being born and raised on the prairies, in a predominantly white neighbourhood with all white friends, my father tried his best (albeit unsuccessfully) to jam “Chineseness” down my throat. He kept telling me that I should be playing with Chinese kids — there were none in our neighbourhood. He chastised me for not being able to speak Chinese — by the time I entered Grade One. I was fluent in both English and Chinese, but my parents, worried that I may not develop proper English skills, stopped conversing with me in Chinese. My father warned me ominously, “You’d better marry a Chinese. If you marry a white, we’ll cut you out of our will.” This succeeded in driving me further away from my roots, leading me to believe that if I acted white enough, i.e. not chatter noisily in Chinese and not hang around in groups, I would actually not look Chinese.



Throughout my home life it was unacceptable for me to unconditionally embrace my father's traditional Chinese culture and values because, in my mind, I would be accused by others of "sticking to my own kind" and would therefore be set apart from whites. But along with my father's wish for my awareness of cultural identity came his expectation that I grow up to be a "nice Chinese girl": that is, ladylike, submissive, obedient, a morally impeccable puppet who would spend the rest of her life deferring to and selflessly appeasing her husband. I rebelled with a fury, rejecting and denying everything remotely associated with Chinese culture.

When I moved away from the prairies to the west coast, I remained somewhat colourless and blind. I still denied any association with my ethnic background. I often voiced, along with others, utter contempt for Hong Kong immigrants who were, in our minds, nothing but repugnant, obnoxious, spoiled rich kids. Yet it was in Vancouver that I first experienced being called chink and gook on the street.

The connection between sinophobia (fear or hatred of anything or anyone Chinese) and rebellion against my father did not become obvious to me until years later. Moving to another province meant that there was no longer daily contact with my father, the object of my defiance. As I became less resistant to Chinese culture, I busied myself with the task of forming a new life in the city. And by forming a new life, I had less time to practice my sinophobia.

Becoming a lesbian challenged everything in my upbringing and confirmed the fact that I was not a nice, ladylike pamperer of men. Somehow I must have known from an early age that I would never fit into this configuration. My friendships with women had always been more satisfying and intense than those with men. I grew up with a secret morbid fear of marriage, and I did not know why until I became involved with a woman.

By coincidence, my first lover was a woman of colour, proud of her own heritage. She became interested in my background, and through her support and love, I began to look more positively at my culture and see that it did hold a few interesting qualities.



Our heritages, although distinct and separate, had some notable and fascinating similarities. Both celebrated yearly festivals. Both cherished the importance of higher education and the formation of a solid family structure. She helped me see that it could be fun to explore various aspects of my culture, but I still could not claim it as my own.

Years later, white woman lovers came into my life, teasing me and calling me a “fake” Chinese because, after all, I did not even speak the language. This helped to bring back the old feelings of sinophobia again. It never occurred to me that certain white people would seek me out and be attracted to me because of my ethnic background. I had heard of “rice queens,” white men who would go after Chinese men. But there was no such term for white women who felt a strong affinity towards Chinese women. I recently coined the expression “Asianophile” to describe such women.

Another woman entered my life; she was Chinese, born in Canada, and proud of her heritage. Simultaneously, I found this to be both mystifying and affirming. She had not developed an attitude of sinophobia in her childhood and as a result never felt contempt or derision for her background or any associations with it. It felt like a bonus to be able to talk with her without having to explain little idiosyncrasies of our common culture and language. She helped me to reclaim a heritage I had previously denied.

I felt certain that we were the only two Chinese lesbians in the world until I participated in an Asian lesbian conference in California. It was there I was introduced to others who shared similar struggles against externalized and internalized racism. Meeting Asian lesbians in my own city became a course in Anti-Racism 101. These special women helped raise my political awareness to the point where I realized it was fine to get upset over injustice and oppression, great to speak out about it, and necessary to fight against it. Gradually my background was no longer the source of my shame, but the beginning of my empowerment.

My attempt to conquer sinophobia continues to be an uphill struggle, as I deliberately seek out friendships with other Asian lesbians. Years ago I would have shunned them, or at best, ig-

nored them. There is still a sense of discomfort, however, when I go out socially with a group of Asian women. I find myself looking around the room hoping not to catch contemptuous racist stares from white patrons, or my white friends tell me that they feel left out or uncomfortable around a large group of my Asian women friends.

As I struggle, however, there are many bonuses in my life. I am enriched by supportive and loving friends: Asian women, other women of colour, white women and men. I have reached a point of understanding about the origins of my previous self-hate and how it magnified the dysfunctional relationship with my father. There is always that private joy in knowing that my father (who doesn't even know it) won't have to worry about me marrying a white boy.

## Kathryn MacLeod / THE INFATUATION

being the most....considered dangerous  
....most women in America....not yet  
....left the city with a gun....  
dark skin, leach....  
button, button-up....keep it hard the whole time  
....over something small, sedative....inner thigh  
surprise revulsion, strokes...peaks interest  
“about his whole life, sadly”  
a cold room, left-over...male eggs  
....lounge, elevator shaft  
....ambitious interloper....entering  
pleasure with tools....reduced me  
....our event horizons....

infatuation....sweet smell, protrudes  
room deaden nightly, bisect....  
....bolted, swept clean, leaks....  
....revealed a white face....  
a lot more where that came from, he  
has a lot more....ditch it....  
....take more pictures of me....  
winter in the apartment....gentle male  
companion....inspired tongue and finger,  
using things that don't belong to you....  
improve my position....critical fantasy

disbelieve the education, jealous  
....close the room up, cure this....  
acceptable sexual combination....our sympathy  
....not adequate to be your father....  
personal reticence, intellect, breasts....  
child's play....titanium....  
tell a good one, lay a finger on him, open season  
....easy ideas to digest....  
....don't push his buttons....  
damp shirt....warm smooth bellies, fifty-fifty....  
....give in to a good time....

respect the tyrant....a complete withdrawal....  
....making you touch me....  
isolated study of the male organ....  
....exhausted idea, room foreshortened....  
teach us, heal us, sleeping....hard  
inside my palm....on the way to the top  
more money than the others, prudent....  
....the mother stopped the father....  
weight room, weight of consequence....  
....displaced commitment, belted up....  
forgive me. I've enraged you.

....messy liquids....uninvited failure  
a collection of substantial size....  
your nipples visible through t-shirt....  
....exchange an old one for a new one....  
brief morality....angry about “the masterpiece”  
unmaking the bed, evasive.  
....completion or celebration, erected  
out of boredom....my right point of view....  
relax/antagonize....complete the sentence  
....his hard line....

....hesitant.undulant.undefined....  
....going forward from the word go....making  
this history thing....implying a common background....  
future after you answer the question....  
....eyes out for: give me real examples....  
let me speak outside the family.  
....don’t need a sisterhood, a real threat....  
essential holiness/her complicit soldier....  
....you don’t need courage with a mother....  
we fall short. police protection.

I deliver you....

....correct me if I'm wrong....revealed  
by how much you know you own, a style  
of employment....heterosexual blossoms color  
....infrequent visitors, to be a maverick  
I need you/envy me my freedom....  
....my life escapes context....  
....going all the way back....  
....black hearted momma, keep me clean....  
family vertigo. trash victims.

....redemption/flagellation/torso....  
....virile girls for men....  
this is great art.  
....“I'm on the very bottom. I have  
no way out. I have no one to talk to”....  
Listening pleasure. Listen to their pleasure.  
....you speak filth....relieve yourself....  
you speak the truth....



## Sandy Frances Duncan / from WORK IN PROGRESS

I am standing by the door. I can see my hand on the frame beside my face. My other hand reaches to the knob, chin level. It is night. I have got out of bed to go to the bathroom. I am wearing my pink flowered nightie, my feet are cold on the slick hardwood. The door is open a crack. Soft light from the bedside lamp. Through the crack I can see my father lying on his back in the hospital bed, his thin spotted hand palm down on the white counterpane. My mother stands by his head, bent over, straightening or fluffing or pulling up his pillow. Behind her, the lamp, books on the bedside table, a glass of water with the curved hospital straw. The light makes her dark in contrast, shines around her edges, outlining part of her profile but no features. I look at my hand on the doorframe, pudgy, small, not large and broad-veined like hers. I glide away, silently as I am used to, pee silently and do not flush, tiptoe back to bed, keeping close to the wall so the floorboards won't squeak. I am eight. It is May 3, 1950. My mother is killing my father.

This is not how I want to tell this story. This is not a story I want to tell, but if I must, why can I not tell it like a mystery? A thriller? At least in the third person as if it were about others? Must I write this as if it were my life? Of course I will put in the usual disclaimer — none of these characters bear any resemblance — and continue to say, never trust a fiction writer's autobiography. Never trust a biographer's fiction. Never trust the facts, the memories, the stories you invent. Never trust the truth, if there is any. Never trust.

This story is about my mother. Who she was and how she came to be someone who could end her husband's life. For what reasons. Whether she suspected her daughter saw. Whether I did see. I will

examine the facts I know about my mother. Those I don't know, I will invent. As perhaps I have invented it all.

Of course, I am the eye, the narrator. This is my voice, at least for this work. This story comes through me, therefore is about me.

Having written this tentative beginning, last night, April 5, 1990, I dreamed of the Hanged One and the Tower from the Tarot deck. Symbols of surrender, transformation, forces destroying what I know, or want to believe. Should I be encouraged or terrified? What will be destroyed or transformed if I continue? As I continue: only one and a half pages, yet already I can't throw them away and pretend I haven't started.

The next morning, my mother sat on my bed, just as I was waking. She took my hand and said, "Dear, your father died in the night." I said, "You're lying! He isn't dead!" I scrambled out of the blankets and ran down the hall. The room was empty, his bed stripped to the mattress cover, the high crib-like hospital sides folded away. I ran back. "Where is he?" She was still sitting on my bed. I was as tall as she. "They took his body in the night." "Who?" "The funeral parlour people. We will have a funeral."

Right then, I hated my mother. I remember a swarm of confusion, a scream wanting to get out. I knew I almost understood, knew there was something I almost knew; if I could remember it, the confusion would go away. But what would replace it? Rage? Terror? I preferred confusion.

Right then, I loved my mother. A tall woman with greying hair, blue eyes drawn down now at the outer corners, pushing at the lines on her face. She sat on the bed in a grey-blue housedress, hands clasped in her lap, her right fingers playing with the rings on her left. She kept glancing at me, away. I knew, inchoately, her struggle, that she was struggling, that she was doing her best. But her best was not good enough. She reached out to hug me. I pulled away. I tore off my pink flowered nightie and slammed it on to the closet floor. I do not remember ever wearing it again.

For forty years, I have puzzled over, "You're lying!" My mother, as I knew her and wanted to know her, was honest. Only in reclaiming buried memories, only in ordering the sequence, do I realize my accusation had not to do with fact, but with the imprecision of language. She said, "Your father died in the night." She should have said, "I killed him."

I have no siblings. My mother was nearly thirty eight when she married my father in 1940. He was fifty three. They did not anticipate a child; did they want one?

Before that night, perhaps earlier that same day or the day before, the nurse we had, while my mother was at work, called me to wash my hands and face and go to see my father. I picked up the cat so I wouldn't have to go into that room alone. The nurse saw me to the door, announced, in hospital-bright tones, "Here's Helen to see you, Mr. Stevens." I glared. Couldn't she even remember my name: Hilary?

Memories that I've had access to all my life are muddled, as if they've picked up static with too much replaying. Memories I've come upon in my forties are as fresh as the day I stored them. Their static is the original emotional charge.

For years in this memory, my father turned his head on the pillow and said, "Hello."

Now I know he doesn't. I know I say, "Hello."

The cat squirms and leaps away, scratching my arm. I rub the mark, watch it redden, form beads of blood. I suck them, rub again and say, "Goodbye."

Does he even turn his head? Does he even look at me? I know he does not know who I am. It has been eons of my eight years since he has. I glare at the nurse. At least she could have remembered my name. I go outside to play, outside where it's safe, outside where I can forget.

I did not cry at his funeral. Twelve years later I did not cry at my mother's funeral. I did not cry at the funerals in between. I have

never cried at any funeral. How well early training sticks. But I cried all day, unconsolably, when my dog was killed. By then I was thirteen and already practised at death.

My mother had expected me to cry. She was teary, off and on, dabbed at her eyes with a hankie. When we climbed into the limousine to be driven to the funeral my mother passed me a hankie. "What for?" I asked. "In case you cry." "I won't cry!" I pushed her hand away. I could hardly see out of the limousine's high windows. The seats were scratchy fabric and the car crawled interminably down the North Vancouver hills, over the Lions Gate Bridge where I could study only the green cables up above, through the sun-hit dank humus of Stanley Park to the church in the West End. I opened the door before the driver could. "Hello, Aunt Dot," I shouted, "Where's Un—?" and remembered just in time. Uncle Bill, my mother's brother, had died ten days before. I'd not gone to that funeral. I felt proud of myself for remembering he was dead, for not reminding my aunt. She might have cried and it would have been my fault.

Two or three years ago, on Christmas Eve, my cousin Barbara, that aunt and uncle's daughter, offered me her story of my father's funeral. She had been twenty one and six months pregnant. Unmarried but hastily to be so. Her parents were distraught, her mother repeating, "How could you," her father silent or raging until the final silence of his death. The day of my father's funeral was apparently unseasonably hot for early May but Barbara was still wearing my aunt's camel hair coat, trying to disguise her swelling belly. The funeral goers were invited back to our house and, in the midst of shepherding people and overseeing food, my mother found time to put her arm around my cousin and say, "Take your coat off, dear. You're among friends here." Barbara said those were the kindest words she'd ever heard. She said she leaned against my mother and cried.

My mother put all the funeral flowers on the sundeck off the dining room, announcing that she was allergic. Every morning for a week I stared at the huge, ostentatious bouquets and tall ar-



rangements while I ate my corn flakes. I held my breath when I opened the door for the cat to pass through; the flowers' overwhelming scent turned to stench as they grew limper and browner. Finally my mother must have thrown them out.

None of my friends believed I was going to California for a holiday in May. I had to work hard to convince them, but when I did, they were jealous I got to miss school. We flew to Los Angeles, our first flight. Years later, my mother reported how terrified she'd been, how calm I was. I remember the tedium of the bus ride to Laguna; I'm sure it took eight hours. "Are we nearly there?" I asked, even though I knew I'd just asked the same question. My mother's reply was, "No. Read your book." Or, "Dry up," when she felt exasperated. Finally, it was, "Yes."

Laguna, all pink and flowered in the hot sun. I wanted to swim right away. We found our hotel, I changed into my bathing suit and we went to the beach. The breakers knocked me over and the undertow dragged me out. Another breaker shoved me back. Scary at first, but by next day, I'd learned where to stand or swim, how to taunt the waves to knock me over, how far I could let the undertow suck me to it. I played for hours this way, revelling in the delicious thrill that flirting with almost controlled terror brings, while my mother sat with a book on her lap.

One day, a woman whom my mother had talked to in the hotel offered to walk with me around a point to another bay. I was delighted: an adventure. My mother agreed I could go. A few yards away — but I wasn't to go off with strangers. Wasn't this a stranger? I looked back. My mother's face had sagged into someone I didn't know.

Now I understand: they had talked and had an agreement: the woman to take me for a walk so my mother had time to herself. Now I understand: not just time to think about my father's illness and death, but also about her action.

Then, eight in Laguna, I was overwhelmed with a desire to run to my mother, to amuse and distract her so she'd change back into herself, into someone I knew.

I walked on with the woman who was less a stranger than my mother.

Joanna Beyers / THREE POEMS

EVERY MORNING PETER GZOWSKI

We heard it first on Morningside:  
Intelligent Raven ambushes Dog  
from above with icicles  
for sheer pleasure  
in villages across the North.

During the grease-trail centuries  
and now too, when ships line up for harbour  
the length of Burrard Inlet, Highway #1  
sinks mutely into the waters of Howe Sound,  
and ferries cross the Strait of Georgia,  
to bestow identity the land must be earned.

Hedge-like along that arbitrary border  
or loosely between three oceans  
we carve onto the surface  
with the fixed-width cut of a chisel  
shallow marks of uncompromising presence.  
Also our greed.

On the scaled backs of traveled fish,  
drifting soil, denuded slopes,  
the country rests.  
Our short view drains into the stream  
of permeable history along with the water,  
the long-lived toxins.



National unity is not opening night at the stage,  
not special dress worn once a year  
on July 1st with fireworks  
and otherwise before commissions.  
Instead we have time zones  
and links of human invention.

When the stubborn dismantling is complete  
what will remain is the Newfoundland half-hour.  
Meanwhile a giant ear covers  
the great distances daily  
& we listen.

## RE: THE GREEN RIVER MURDERS

Based on Pacific Report, CBC-TV, Jan.19, 1987

When I carried you  
I made you  
skin with bone together

In death they separate  
Bone is the more durable  
And teeth in a broken jaw  
identify you

JOY KOGAWA AT LA QUENA  
April 24, 1986

the poem about the English lord  
unlike the others  
generates laughter  
and indignant whispers  
from the nearest tables  
just so you will know  
we understand here  
we are an audience  
wise in the ways of racism  
so you will know  
we bring an audience of our own:  
we come to the correct places  
say the right things  
love to be seen where it matters

## Claudia Beck / EMMA LOU

Emma Lou Vaugh! Pay attention! You hear me?

This voice snaps in my ears and I know it's Sarah Vaugh, my great grandmother, dead twenty years before my birth. Her voice smacks at me with that clipped twang, to places where I have choked back lumps of hurt. You oughta screw up your courage and fess up to the feelings you had before you decided to just up and shut your family out.

I am Emma Vaugh, still listening for my muse. In her place intrude balky bits of my girl self, Emma Lou. My father named me with his history. Emerson Vaugh was his grandfather and Louis Vaugh was his father. Yet the chant of Emma Lou rang with my mother's lilt and caw. My parents, Charles Pilgrim Vaugh and Loretta Jean Wheeler, grew up along the Old Michigan Road. Their families had been in Indiana since the 1820s. She was a farmer's daughter and CP was the brilliant hope of a family troubled by hard times, or so their stories clung to me.



I was born into kin of talkers who, when they heard the rattle tree of emotions in their midst, turned stone deaf or mute. What they usually did was change the subject and keep talking. Emma Lou had grabbed onto the world as it touched her body. She knew how she felt when she was happy or mad, sad, hurt and brave. Her mouth got around those places inside her and out came the words. The trouble was her words didn't always fit how other people felt.

CP had savoured telling tales to Emma Lou about his youth, wound through with his grampa Emerson and the verve he held in my father's life. Emma Lou ignored Emerson, since he was dead. She wished CP would talk about who she knew or who she might resemble, if he was always going off to family way back when. Neither heard the feared failure of parents turned to

charactered grandparents. I suspect my fabled warp of priss and guts hit on my great grandmother Sarah and my grandfather Louis like lightning to a rod.

Loretta's only, and incessant, silence was about gramma May's death, and (from nowhere) it scarred Emma Lou's memory. Emma Lou had played tone deaf to her mother and, by dint of connection, to Loretta at the piano. I still hear Loretta's arthritic fingers now valiantly play in romantic and spirited keys. My mother's protection strangely bequeathed me her loins of remorse. A slough of memory ruptured our voices. She was May's daughter and I am Loretta's.



I grew up in a time of mind over matter. During air raid drills we'd jostle quickly and almost silently out of our classrooms into the hall to the wail of a siren. We were shown how to crouch down in front of our lockers and cover our heads with our folded arms. This was fun but it made no sense as we peeked and giggled, huddled along the floor. I was more afraid of hurting myself when I fell out of trees or off my bicycle. The big scare was when Philip ran across the street to play with us and got hit by a car. He just lay there like he was dead. His mom told us he had a concussion, but after a week he was out playing again. For a while we treated him like a hero, because the car hadn't marked his body or killed him after all. We were secretly dazed and glad it wasn't us. I grew up in New Jersey to the incantations of adult fears. I still fight my sucked breath of throaty panic that came to muffle my simple pleasures and curiosities.



Every summer Loretta Jean would return with Emma Lou to the country lives of families, forever in Indiana. My grampa Louis and gramma Katherine Vaugh lived in a country town near what once had been the old Vaugh farm; my gramma May and grampa Simon Wheeler lived a brief car ride away on their farm. I get



whiffs of memory — frying fats and steaming vegetables greasing my skin in the prickly heat of already hot days; breezes fluttering my hair and eyes, flying high in a swing; sweet sour manure, soft then icky between my toes; nubbly cool stings on my arms and legs plunked in grain piles; night wafts of roses and lilacs to lull my dreams.

My sense was warm and strange, Indiana family pulls against my more favored home. Indiana belonged to them as familiar and I was a girl whose curiosity almost killed a cat. Emma Lou! Let that cat go! I had been spied repeatedly throwing a barnyard cat into a horse tank. Each time it swam to the edge I'd grab it and fling it back in, gleeful at my test of the saying, cats can't swim.



Emma Lou liked to tag along with her grampa Louis. His eyes crinkled up in a happy look while his mouth didn't move with smiles or much talk. It was a far-away look and it got her to jabber away. He stood tall like the beanpoles in his garden, only he had large hands and feet. Underneath his clothes she knew his body was stick-like, just like the people in her drawings.

Emma Lou dressed for make believe or to show off all the jumpers and pinafores her grammas and aunts had given her. Grampa changed his clothes for chores, jobs and the weather. For special occasions he wore a dark suit and vest, a starched white shirt and a tie, and to her fascination and envy, his gold and chained pocket watch. This dress-up would mean he'd be taking her along on a visit or a drive. No matter what the occasion, grampa never left the house without a hat.

The order of his days charmed her and she felt her own eagerness in his company. In the mornings grampa was the first one up and she'd pop out of her bed to see him leaving the bathroom in his white underwear suit. She'd follow him into the kitchen to his washup sink next to a cupboard where he kept his polishes and shaving stuff. All his personal paraphernalia was at the front of glassed fruit and vegetables gramma had put up. There he'd slip into coveralls to do his morning chores. In sum-

merit time he wore a straw hat and it had that smell. Then out they'd go into an early morning cool, through dewy grass to tend his vegetable garden. She would still be in her pajamas and barefoot, but if she were going to work with him he made her bring her shoes. He'd given her a set of small garden tools so she could dig the earth and chatter away by his side.

Sometimes Emma Lou visited her grampa in winter when the mornings were dark and cold. Then he'd put on an old jacket and felt hat and go down to the cellar to fire up the coal furnace. For this chore he didn't like her underfoot or getting black with coal. So she'd run to stand over the floor register in the living room and wait, shivering to the clangs of his work until he made fire blow hot air up her pajamas.

Grampa always washed up with a black tar soap that appeared to wash away dirt, but its sharp smell linked her grandfather indelibly to her. After breakfast, before he changed his clothes to go off to work, he shaved. Emma Lou liked the schsh click the knife made up and down along a strap, the swooshes of the brush around the soap cup, and the knife's scritch across grampa's face with the magic of smooth, no-blood skin.

The only job Emma Lou remembered for Louis was as the butcher at Chew's Grocery, across the road and two blocks down. For this, he put on dark green pants and a shirt that Emma Lou had watched her gramma wash, starch, and iron. Instead of his pull-on hightop shoes for the garden or cellar, he'd put on his everyday lace-up hightop black leather shoes, and clap on his workaday brown felt hat. Maybe you'll come down and see me today, Emma Lou. If she went with gramma that would mean she couldn't dilly dally.

Once Emma Lou was old enough to understand that she could be killed crossing the road, someone would walk and lecture her across with her tricycle. Louis got this trike for her visits and he had seen nothing dangerous about her riding around the block. How could she get lost? Her grandparents knew everybody and everybody knew who she was. Going to the store by herself was an adventure. Sometimes she'd pedal real fast to get to grampa. Sometimes she'd pole along — looking into gardens,

watching the tractors and wagons pulling into the seed mill, chatting with people who she couldn't quite remember if she'd met.

Chews wasn't like any grocery store she went to in New Jersey with Loretta Jean. She believed it belonged to her grandfather. Inside was a dim, cavernous room with rows of shelves which didn't have much on them. She could never just sneak up and surprise grampa because, well, looky who's here, announced the lady at the front counter. Still, she'd tiptoe down a side aisle toward the brighter lights and lively words at the back, where mainly ladies came to chat with her gramps. He worked behind a big wooden table and wore a bib apron over his clothes. She listened and watched as his saw sounded through bone and his cleaver or knife thumped and whispered through flesh. Animals died, and to her these red and white creatures seemed beautiful and not at all frightening. Grampa was cutting the legs and bodies of farmers' dead, naked cows and pigs. Pretty soon he'd look up, then she scoot to him across the sawdusted floor, and he'd pat her on her head. Emma Lou, say hello to Mrs. Lybrook and Mrs. Fellows, as he wrapped the cut red pieces in brown paper so the ladies could take them home to cook and eat.



I was staring at Louis Vaugh all done up in his good dark suit. This time he wouldn't be taking me off for a ride in his shiny black bullet Studebaker. He'd never go out hatless. Everyone was quiet and sad. Maybe that was the way Louis had really been all her life. No! and I was angry. I was eighteen and my grandfather's death was no surprise; he'd been almost as good as dead for ten years. If anyone had asked me then, I'd have said, disease, deceit, despair describe this dead dead man. And it was his deceit that made me cry. Despair was hidden from my childhood.

Neither of us had aged gracefully. We both knew for sure I wouldn't hang around except on visits. I couldn't sit still and he had stopped his wonderful sense of everyday rituals. He sat in his chair and he smoked. He suffered moaning headaches and



drugged himself into addiction. He got cold because he didn't move, so he stoked up the furnace to unbearable heat and airlessness, even on summer mornings. He sucked on his pipes and cigarettes and breathed out a smoky fog, like veils against our life. Since he took so long to leave, he should have said goodbye to me.



Emma Lou had her very own, very large bedroom in her New Jersey house. But she would only fall asleep with the light blazing. She knew hobgoblins wouldn't hurt her, but they were large and made strange noises. They came in the dark and wooed her with eyes almost shut to tiptoe to her windows. Roaming in the garden she could see panthers and tigers and shadow monsters. If she didn't switch on the light one of them could spring from the mulberry tree to the lilac bush below her windows, sail through the screen and snatch her away forever. Occasionally a beast would slip through and lurk in the shadows of her room, stealing her drift in sleep, until the hobgoblins shoved them out. But the real reason for the light was the hobgoblins crowded up her room with feelings of sadness and sometimes the sound of crying.



On a book shelf I have set a stuffed red hen — a pincushion. It has survived four generations, passed from mother to daughter. It once belonged to Emma Lou's grandma May. Loretta Jean made the story of May feel like henny penny the sky is falling, and it had escaped my mother without words.

May was alone for the day. Her children were grown, away and married with children of their own. She thought of calling, but her telephone was on a party line. Simon had taken a load of corn to the elevator. She went out to the shed where she kept the tools for her labour and pleasures in her garden. She had already spade and hoed the stalks back into the earth before the ground had frozen. She'd left the pumpkins on the vine for the color they

laughed against dumb fields.

In the shed she hummed a tune, but her voice cracked without the chorus of Loretta Jean's fingers on the piano. It was the time of year when the earth fell dormant and time felt stretched and empty. She eyed the rat poison which she used under the chicken house. For years, actually for her married lifetime here, the egg money had been hers to do with what she wanted. She'd bought fabric to make dresses for her daughters and herself. When they and Henry were older, she'd slipped them some bills so they could go to town with friends. Some of it she had saved up for Loretta Jean's piano lessons. May loved the music of song and laughter.

And there was a piece of rope, like what they had used to hang the swing for the grandchildren in the front yard. Those kids would swing so high like they could fly, over the wrought iron fence and into the grassy ditch by the side of the black highway. She remembered when it had been gravel, and the threshing machines chugged along in summer and in winter the huckster wagon made its calls.

She took the rope. With everyone away from home they only used the rooms on the main floor of the big brick house. She made him search for her. He found her in the stairwell to the upstairs bedrooms. Her throat now strangled, her voice shunned family, time breathed out and gone, away from her fecund ground and work for 55 years.

In her bedroom in New Jersey Loretta Jean howled like crazy, people came and went. CP drove Loretta Jean alone, straight though the day and night. Gramma May disappeared from Emma Lou. Nothing marked her passing but a curdling silence.

Silence gulped down my memories and left me inexplicably sad. I stopped speaking to my family about the places inside me. If some things were so terrible to speak, then I would keep my terrors to myself. I left my family out. There were some feelings we never could get our tongues around.

## Vera Manuel / TWO POEMS

### LOCKED DOORS

I never knew until years later  
    why she kept locks  
    on her bedroom door.  
    I never imagined...  
It never dawned on me...  
though I asked her once,  
    “why so many locks  
    on your door?”  
    “...to keep my father out”  
        she replied,  
looking me straight in the eye,  
    I never thought that odd  
        at the time.

You see I grew up with sunshine  
    spilling into our house,  
and lots of children's laughter,  
        happiness.  
    I knew never to allow  
        her dad  
        to kiss and hug me.  
    I never let him near,  
felt not quite right about him,  
    but I never imagined,  
    it never crossed my mind.  
    I never figured out why  
she liked to come to my house  
    and stay, and stay, and stay.  
Sometimes I grew tired of her



hanging around so long,  
now I remember  
it was always her dad  
who called her home,  
but I never imagined...  
never knew such a thing.  
No one ever invaded my childhood  
with such a thought  
or act.  
I always knew  
never to accept  
unwanted hugs and kisses  
or attention from adults  
when I didn't want it.  
  
I was lucky I guess  
to be allowed  
such luxury  
such freedom.

## DANCERS IN A NIGHTCLUB

“How do you know  
when they’ve been abused  
if they don’t tell you directly?”  
I asked.

“...by their lifestyle  
...they’re prone to depression  
...they drink too much  
...never look you in the eye  
...they become prostitutes, or  
dancers in a nightclub...”

echoes of a past  
a secret past...

“...they keep lots of secrets...”

I never knew I was  
so transparent,  
so easily read,  
...we never told a soul,  
was so sure  
no one could tell  
...never spoke of it  
not even to one another,  
between the dances  
and the liaisons,  
of course.

## Donna Clark / NOISES FROM QUIET ROOMS

Quiet Rooms: Cement rooms stainless steel toilet and sink. No windows except to inspect. Yellow acrylic paint. Easily cleaned. 1-1/2 inch steel door with windows into hallway. She had to scream to have the door left unlocked. Eight by eight feet. Camera encased behind plexi.

Sickness based on trying to conform to being white middle class heterosexuals with two-point-five children in the suburbs. Forgetting how this hasn't worked in our past. Resistance in remembering another way. We just aren't all that clean. Forgetting because we who seem to be this ideal have become complacent, complicit in our own oppression.

### Trophy Finger Inch

Roses and spice and everything nice. Tattoo. A lock of hair. "Thin-skinned" she was called when she tried to speak. Duplicitous.

We were most in love when we plotted to resist together. When I went into the hospital Mom and I snuck an ounce of brandy from a jam jar. "Don't tell anybody." A shared secret. Resistance to the rules. Earlier we laughed as Mom insisted on a cigarette unable to speak due to heavy surveillance in the tiny quiet rooms. She signalled from a well-lit corner for me to pass her a smoke. "Nobody will know." "What can they do?" she said, "kick me out?" "No Mom they'll kick me out and then I won't be able to visit you." I phoned everyday just to ask questions, asking questions, being available to answer questions to help define Mom with and against the hospital. My story of her story. Because they couldn't find her records. They couldn't construct her history or rather she was someone without a history.

Collateral damage.

Bless our families. Innocent women and children.

Aunt Vee was too organized for her; she preferred Uncle Bud because he was willing to go for a drink.

Your resistance is costing the taxpayers seven hundred dollars a day.

We can't find your history. We don't know who you are; you'll have to stay. I spy with my little eye.

Daughter reminds mother to be 'nice' if she wants out.

Meeting with the psychiatrist:

My aunt, sister and I refused to reveal any symptoms. Our melodramatic performances were not going to be performed for her. We presented a singular seamless story. Give her work, that is what she wants and her psychosis will disappear.

They just take notes and do nothing.  
I can tell them anything, Mom said.

I was afraid they would break her in. Make her really break down. Break her will. Break her anger. Keep kicking, Mom.

Overreaction by police like Oka and the Squatters:

They said she had barricaded herself in her apartment and was going to jump off the sundeck. She has never been suicidal or a danger to anyone. She is capable of working. Within four weeks of being hauled off she was working full time again. She is not a victim.

Talking about Mom makes her normal.

We aren't stuffing her full of pills. People do talk to her. The doctor was defensive; she had been in this situation before. Battling monsters. We can't find her records. We don't know her

name. She is on a mild dosage. Defensive: not in complete control.

I don't understand how she is going to get past this stage by not being allowed to smoke. Not being allowed to do anything. Locked in. Surveilled. Humiliated. How could she ever calm down enough to get out? ... It was costing the taxpayers seven hundred dollars a day so they couldn't keep her there too long. Thank God for budget considerations.

Not even good drugs she told me: They gave her two shots and she said she only needed one. She knew how things worked. She complained about a family member: She never really gave a damn about me — just a do-gooder. Liberal guilt and/or familial obligation?

Freud meets Stats Can meets Nancy Fraser:

We see people fall ill who have met with no fresh experience and whose relation to the external world has undergone no change, so that the onset of their illness inevitably gives an impression of spontaneity: Low income unattached women fifty-five to sixty-four have near impossibility of entering the labour market and inadequacy of our pension system average income \$6500 with main source being social assistance. The welfare system does not deal with women on women's terms.... It has its own characteristic ways of interpreting women's needs and positioning women as subjects (victims).

Women as unpaid caregivers: her to me and now me to her.

Handmade gifts, goodies and tree decorations.

Are you Elaine's daughter? She thought she had the right to know everything about my Mom. She then moves on to another and asks her to look at her, as she bends down, stoops to her level.

And what are you doing for Christmas?



Oh baking  
Oh the kids  
Oh the snow

phone Jill  
phone Laura  
phone Nancy  
Invoice to Stan

Absence of clutter, clean, visual impact, all traces of domestic labour obliterated in ideal bourgeois homes. Home literature as voyeuristic peeping. Home is not a display cabinet. Sugar and spice and everything nice — the condiments, extras, details, decoration.

Since WWII sexual and emotional problems as the most devastating problems for which women's lives? Sexual intrigue, scandal and gossip. Confess & shave.

The things you leave behind on your way up. Membership has its privileges. Sublimate the damn libido. A quiet room.

They moved to Canada. Both grandparents tried to forget their past after the war. Going to war was a way for them to separate themselves from their past. Oh Canada.

Bureaucratization of eros. Sublimation is inseparable from strategies of cultural domination. Gold in a lacy undergarment.

Insistence on difference based on inclusiveness:

Crucial to this attitude is the acceptance of the other in oneself, one's dreams, desires and fantasies. Love. Sublimation. Transcendence. Sublation. This is very different from the verb to shop and *todo la jupa de pollo*. To raise up onto the table: to deal with at the level of the body in a democratic way.

To induce in the person a state of conscious and permanent

visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. A big woman is considered to be the sign of a healthy and strong person in my family. Physical strength in women is highly prized by my grandmother and aunt. They are big and strong women.

There's only so much room at the top. We can replace the players but the structure is the same. Membership has its privileges at the expense of the body. Noises from a quiet room.

I want to have the strength from remembering how my mother, my family resisted, even in what seemed like impossible situations, through humour, pleasure and alternative ways of exchange. Remembering resistances to live out in the present. Understanding my own position to form alliances with other marginalized groups while still acknowledging differences. To make a lot of noise.

## Carmen Rodriguez / HANDS

*Translation: Heidi Neufeld-Raine with the author*

I've come to the end of the path. While you're playing at home, daughter of mine, I'm here at the end of the path. The local radios have already gone off the air. Marches have replaced the last-minute warnings and the military commands are polluting our ears, our minds and our hands with their sinister vomit. And while you play at home, daughter mine, I'm here at the end of the path. We're all here; friends and "compañeros" have all come to the university this spring day. We've all come and we're waiting. From eight to ten I have to give the translation class; I've got it prepared — we'll do some children's stories like "Peter Rabbit." Only today, I'm not waiting for my students.

When I was little, they never let us play with weapons. My brothers played ball; I played with dolls. Sure, sometimes we played with water pistols. We ran down the street in Cerro Bellavista after the boys, shooting our water pistols at them; afterwards, we hid on the hill. When we came home all soaked, my mother sent us to bed.

Roberto came, he says we have to wait, that they'll be here soon.

When we went to the fair — remember when we took you to Bustamante Park in Santiago — I could never hit the ducks with that rifle. I shot at everything except the duck. We had more fun on the Ferris wheel and on the merry-go-round. This time when we took you to the fair, you wanted to try the rifle but I wouldn't let you; I said it wasn't necessary; rather not.

Five people have gone to watch the bridge, to wait there until they give us the warning call.

We've lined up and we're jogging. It's been so long since I've jogged; I think the last time was in high school; in Physical Education. It's amazing how one lets oneself go; I can't run half a block; I get too tired.

You're playing at home, daughter mine. They say they're Soviet, that they'll be here soon. The button-downs have Gloria

brand and I think they bring them in from Argentina.

After the '60s earthquake, they gave my father two big pistols so he'd guard the school. He locked them up and never let us hold them. One night, Mama heard a noise and went out on the patio alone with one of the pistols. The blasts woke us up. My mother had killed a cat, thinking it was thieves. What a woman.

Roberto is explaining how to hold them. He says it's easy, you just have to grasp the trigger, that they're light and firm. Now we have to practice throwing ourselves onto the ground. What will it be like holding one in my hands? I only know how to hold children and books. I have small, soft hands. You like it when I scratch your head with these hands, or tickle your nose or hold you and cuddle you up when you're sleepy. We're all face down in the grass, pretending we have one in our hands. On the other side of the river, there are strange noises. Your bald doll, the one that was mine and is yours now, must already be dressed: maybe you're changing her clothes, or are you singing to her?

The ones who were on the bridge come running; they say they're coming already, that they're crossing. It's hard to hear, the noise is terrible, the earth shakes. We have to be ready. We get into lines to receive them. The helicopters seem like dragonflies with huge eyes that watch. The city groans on the other side of the river. Our island anxiously awaits the start, the finish. We can already see them in the street with all the poplars. They've come to the end of the road. The American tanks have come to the end of the road. American trucks have blocked access. Green insects drag along the asphalt. We have to run to the river. With empty hands we have to run to the river, maybe we'll manage to take the boats, maybe they won't shoot, maybe they'll concede us the right to life. With empty hands I run downhill, with empty hands, I think of you, daughter mine, about your future and my future, with empty hands I reach the bank and throw myself at the boat already moving away while I think about the years to come and about you, daughter mine, about the promises I made you, and the better life we wanted to make for you and I make you one final promise, the last promise of all, tomorrow, tomorrow, daughter mine, when we're ready again to retrieve life and the future, tomorrow, daughter mine, you and I won't have empty hands.

## Annie Frazier / CROSSFIRE

*a poem written in call  
and response*

The morning light casts such shadows,  
this lasting temperament  
of sunlight  
reflecting  
images  
of rainbows  
on the paper.  
Classical music,  
violin concerto,  
splendor  
bath tub waiting,  
Haydn symphony,  
breakfast time for children

I SEE, YOU'RE MAKING LUNCH,  
MAKING MEMORIES  
TAKING APPOINTMENTS,  
TAKING OFF  
IN YOUR MIND,  
IN YOUR EYES,  
TO A PLACE  
FAR AWAY  
WHERE COMPROMISES FULFILL THEMSELVES  
AND THE SEASHORE IS CLOSE.  
HELLO! REALITY CHECK!

smell of coffee  
ritual beginning  
alarm clock



is NOT broken.  
Anticipation,  
obscenity issue on the news  
road block  
flying rock,  
dissonant sounds.  
following the moment around  
a fan, a fan of the moment  
a moment groupie  
of the 90's.  
pages turning  
memorizing  
the look  
the sound  
the look  
the sound.  
A female impersonator  
am I?

MAYBE  
IN YOUR LAST LIFE  
SOO, WHAT'S UP??

these contemporary  
political issues  
take it  
make it  
a hardhat weary deal.

YOU SEEM LIKE A GOOD PERSON, SINCERE,  
SIMPLE  
YET COMPLICATED,

UNIQUE,  
YET RECEPTIVE TO SAMENESS.

YA KNOW  
SPIRITUAL.  
SO ANYWAY..  
YOU LOOK GOOD..SO...  
WHAT RUNS THROUGH YOUR MIND  
WHEN YOU  
RUN OUT OF MONEY?

poverty liner,  
putting on the eyeliner  
painted lips,  
these manufactured colors make you  
forget  
for a moment that the fridge is on empty.  
This life of  
on the verge  
over the edge  
on the edge  
over the verge  
of extinction  
endangered species  
needing distinction,  
front page  
daughter content with little  
National Geographic  
living, crying, dying  
right in front of you  
not  
a thousand miles away

material are we??

#### NEWS UPDATE.

A bullet-proof vest does not protect children  
from the rounds of fire  
shooting from a loaded mouth..  
meditation helps,  
for a moment  
priority is unity.

#### REMINDER:

Does the Buddha know that love and gentleness  
won't pay this empty demand? O Great Spirit!  
hand  
to mouth  
a sense

of  
lives  
virtues

won't  
put  
shoes

on  
empty  
feet.

I keep telling the paper!  
if I die tomorrow,  
this wounded bird

needs to be heard.

IT'S A DEAL  
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.  
SOMETIMES,  
WHEN WE NEED TO REACH OUT,  
OUR PAST  
BECOMES OUR FUTURE  
WHERE NO ONE HAS A NAME  
WHERE NO ONE SHARES THEIR PAIN,  
NOT HERE,  
YOU CAN TELL ME  
YOU CAN TRUST ME  
I LOVE YOU  
I LOVE YOU

these lost thoughts of love melancholia  
only remind me of  
the father  
I never had  
the mother  
half-vanished  
with the dream that disappeared,  
the tears that fell  
in the closet  
after the fact,  
after the apology,  
after the after..  
Pablo Neruda, Henry Miller  
help me to pick up the pieces,  
they fit back together  
differently

everytime  
wearing this Picasso portrait

AND THEN WHAT?

I look in the mirror

..WHAT DO YOU SEE..?

molecules  
molecules smashing together  
atoms,  
neutrons,  
protons,  
electrons  
abstract, rearranged  
deranged,  
like a two-legged  
correctional facility  
trying to make a comeback  
in the middle of a *crossfire*.  
Pacing the streets  
following  
late night sirens  
leading to muffled  
voices smelling of alcohol,  
alcohol  
          and      urine  
searching for a spot to rest  
searching  
only reminds   me of the  
feather quilt



when silence was my sanctuary  
when silence was my sanctuary..  
silence is my sanctuary.

#### AND THEN WHAT?

I go to this gala affair  
where every woman there  
spent more on her evening gown  
than I did  
on my childs  
and my  
wardrobe  
for the entire year of 1990.  
Drinking your expensive champagne,  
toasting  
“you look fabulous,” ...  
what have you saved lately?  
a someone or a something  
while outside  
the homeless  
stand  
unsheltered and hungry.  
What do you do with your 200  
dollar a dinner,  
gala affair  
left-overs?  
is it buried,  
along with the real issues?  
You,  
can save a forest..  
but save me a doggie bag.

## AND THEN WHAT?

Pacing the street  
trying to make a comeback  
a come back  
in the middle  
of a *crossfire*.  
Following late night sirens  
late night sirens  
leading to muffled  
voices smelling of alcohol  
alcohol and urine.  
Searching  
searching for a spot to rest  
searching  
only reminds me of the feather quilt  
when silence  
was my sanctuary  
when  
silence  
was  
my  
sanctuary  
Silence  
is  
my  
sanctuary...

## Gail Harris / from AN EFFIGY OF YOU

When I go to bed, I enact the ritual. After all, I am entering a war zone where preparation is what most counts. I clothe myself to meet the enemy. One, two, three pairs of panties. Gaunch, my friends call them. Three layers pulled up tightly under my flannelette nightie.

Next I lay down the traps for my enemy. Once I have kissed my mother goodnight and been tucked into bed, I get out again. Pile books, rulers, pencils, toys, in front of the crack of the door. A pyramid of anything that will make noise. (If tipped over, if moved even an inch by an opening door.)

A trap to catch a heffalump, the boy next door.

And then I cover his spy holes. Put a pillow over the air vent between our two walls. Stuff kleenex in the keyhole of the door. Foiled, foiled, foul brother.

And then I lay me down to sleep. One wink at a time, my breath held, the pictures in my head gone permanently into snow. The place at the end of television that will go on all night. One wink at a time I draw circles under my eyes that will only be revealed at morning.

Kiss my gutless lamb goodnight.

don't tell. you'll never be allowed to sleep over night  
at your best friend's again if you do. besides, no one  
would

believe you. it's fathers they believe, not kids  
like us with stories to tell. he had his hand inside  
the bed and she punched him. get away, she said.  
i held my breath and he disappeared.  
that's a trick i'd like to pull off again. presto  
and we were alone, safe, in the bed.

•

first he chased us around the kindergarten  
and tried to see up our nighties. his name  
is dave the plumber and he smokes disgusting  
smelly cigars. later, i'm glad she punched him.  
i stayed behind her, up against the wall, where it  
was safe. we never slept in his office again, even  
if he *did* say it was quieter there and would be more  
fun. who would believe him? she says his fingers  
stink more than his breath does and I believe *her*.

•

i was having a beautiful dream, his hand,  
when i woke up, was in me, inside the bed.  
i opened my eyes and he was crouching there,  
in the dark, beside me. shhh, he said, my brother.  
go away, or i'll tell, i said, and he did.  
he was almost as scared as me. his fear,  
i thought, the only safety i have. i can tell.  
he doesn't know, like me, no one would believe it.

•

fiona had a party. her dad gave us as much red  
cherry brandy as we liked. then we were so sleepy  
he said we'd better stay overnight. she wasn't my  
friend, really, but jane's. we slept in the spare room  
and fiona slept in her own. i woke up suddenly  
and he was there beside me, and his hand underneath  
the covers. i got out of the bed so quick  
i almost knocked him down.  
i jumped in with jane and clung to her  
but the fear didn't go away all night.

•

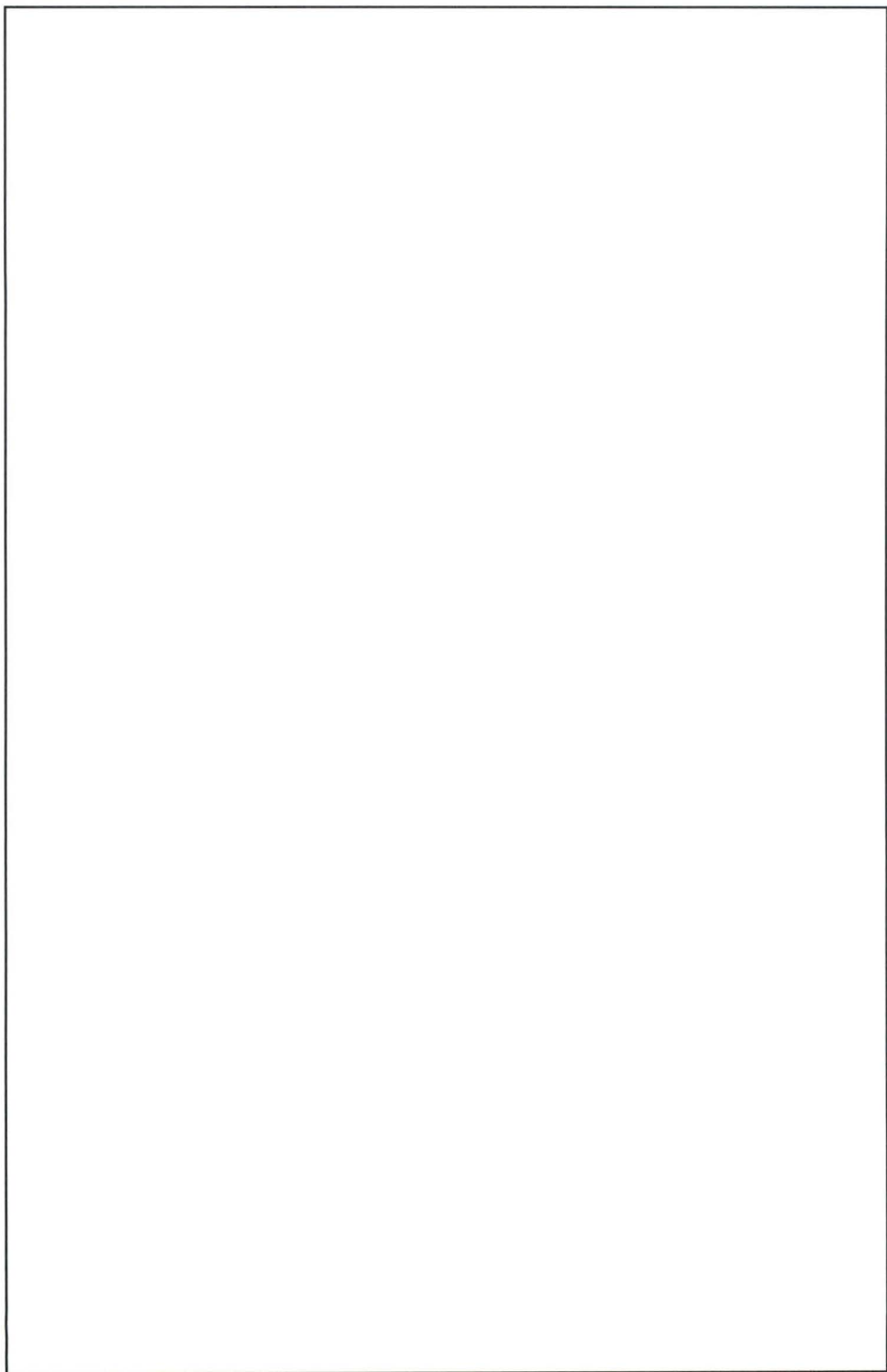
no one will believe you. she'll hate you  
forever if you tell. he's her son, he's her father.  
he's the boy across the street. everyone will  
know how dirty you are, there where he touched you.

•

i was glad when her brothers burned down  
the top of our garage, shooting fireworks  
through the broken window. my brother took  
me in there and tried to put it in. both of them,  
him and his friend. you'll know something she  
doesn't know, they told me, you'll be smarter  
than her then. this time it was me who ran away.  
now there is nothing left of that day but a  
tiny black cinder, here, in my brain.

Hey, that reminds me of the time we caught that little grasshopper. You said it was some kind of jumping spider, but I knew by the sproing it was nothing less than a hopper. So we played with it for a bit and then for lack of anything better we showed it to our rabbit to see how he'd react to such a thing. Well, that was a mistake and I don't mind admitting it. In fact I got quite a case of the guilts when the rabbit made a lunge and bit the hopper's leg right off. Then he thought maybe he'd have a little nibble on it, the leg that is, but after a few tastes decided to spit it out, that he was not carnivorous after all. Well, we'd already made the comment that it had legs more like a frog, so when this tiny leg came off in the rabbit's mouth we couldn't help thinking of that popular french dish, frogs legs, and of course that got us going, but afterwards we felt real bad. And you said we should kill it, put it out of its misery, but mum said let's see if it can still hop. So we put it on the carpet and, sproing, it did. Can you believe it? Even with one leg that grasshopper or cricket or whatever it was could hop just as straight and high as ever. Must be some kinda inner balance, you said.





## CONTRIBUTORS

CLAUDIA BECK writes essays that are caught up with current art — the writing spins and loops. “Am I writing about art, or is the art writing me? The question persists. I have to write to hear what gets written.” “Emily Lou” is her first story.

JOANNE BEYERS is a Vancouver-based poet and geologist. Her earth scientist perspective informs her work. She has published one volume of poetry, *Sandbar Islands*.

KATE BRAID is a journey carpenter who lives in Vancouver, B.C. Her first book of poems, *Covering Rough Ground*, was published by Polestar Press this fall.

LORNA BROWN lives and works in Vancouver and has exhibited mixed media installations using photography and audio since 1984. Her practice as a visual artist and cultural organizer continues to address the visual representations and audible voices of women within contemporary institutional and public contexts.

JANISSE BROWNING is a hard-working masters student in communications at Simon Fraser University. She is a fifth-generation Black Canadian from Southwestern Ontario who loves riding her bicycle despite thick Vancouver traffic.

MARGOT LEIGH BUTLER is an artist and arts activist living and working in Vancouver. She is currently completing an M.A. in Women’s Studies in Cultural Theory and Practice at Simon Fraser University. She hopes you will consider investing in an “s” stamp (easily ordered at your local stamp store) and a stamp pad (available in many colours) — with a little practise, you will soon be happily intervening, perhaps even ordering other stamps — “wo” man, “wo” for man and men, “un” and “non” for general use, or stamping an “s” for pluralizing a sense of singulars!

ANA CHANG was conceived in Peru, born in Macau, and raised in Vancouver. Illiterate in her native tongue, Ana sometimes uses photography and/or English text (see the *Flyer Project* for the Association for Noncommercial Culture.)

DONNA CLARK works with the Vancouver Association for Non-commercial Culture; she does some translation work for *Aquelarre*, and has just started to work with Talks Not Tanks, a Native and non-Native support group.

ALLYSON CLAY's work has appeared in recent group exhibitions: *West Coast Stories* (1991) and *Remembering Post-Modernism* (1990-1991). Her most recent body of paintings *Traces of a City in the Spaces Between Some People* (1990) has been exhibited in Lethbridge and Toronto. Drawings from the *Loci* series have been exhibited in Toronto and *performance number 2* was published in *The Front* (January 1990). Allyson speaks Italian and English and teaches in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University.

SUSAN CREAN is a writer, editor, and critic who divides her time between Vancouver, Gabriola Island, and Toronto.

SANDY FRANCES DUNCAN's latest books are *Pattern Makers* and *Listen To Me, Grace Kelly*. She lives on Gabriola Island, B.C.

KIRSTEN EMMOTT is a member of the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union (VIWU) and a contributor to VIWV anthologies *Shop Talk* and *More Than Our Jobs*. She works as a family doctor.

SKAI FOWLER, 34, was born in Sexsmith, Alberta, and lives in Vancouver's Chinatown. She graduated from Emily Carr College of Art and Design in 1984 and is currently working on a film script.

ANNIE FRAZIER is a writer and musician of Blackfoot, Sioux and French ancestry. Her current work incorporates theatre, poetry, and movement.

GAIL HARRIS is the author of *The blue silk underwear of the incredible Miss Rainwater*, *Lady ambivalence and her small, secret mansion* (artdog), and *Za Za of the Cirque Fernando* (Pink Dog). She is an editor of *Mental Radio* magazine. These pieces are from a long series entitled "An Effigy of You."

JAM. ISMAIL (b.1940 Hongkong) has lived in Hongkong, India and since 1963, Canada. She has published one book of poems, *sexions* (1984). To all the worlds whose words are memorized in *sacred texts*, jam. says: good of you.

INGRID KOENIG did her art training in Vancouver, Greece, and France and completed her M.F.A. at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1984. Since then, she has published a book of drawings, *Rap on the Sublime*, which deals with the exclusion of women from art history. She has exhibited in various Canadian galleries and works with artist-run centres and lobbying organizations. She teaches part-time at Emily Carr College of Art and Design and is the mother of two children. The Empowerment Series depicts moments in the women's liberation movement.

KATHERINE KORTIKOW is a Vancouver artist. *Cipher* was exhibited at the Or Gallery in Vancouver (Spring 1991).

With *Cipher* I wish to put forward the question of the speaking subject (both female and male) within the essence of old codes. We are beings of language, and it is through a dissolution, a fading of meaning, that we can hope to arrive at an acceptance of a new positivity of meaning. It is through a refusal to engage in endless forensic contests (which ultimately seek only to usurp existing power structures) that the need for a strategy which will enable one to exceed a fixed position with the symbolic order becomes apparent. Hence, the slate functions as a zone where we can inscribe ourselves into meaningful discourse.

ZOE LANDALE lives in Ladner, B.C. with her husband, daughter, and two cats. Her most recent book is *Colour of Winter Air*, Sono Nis.

LAIWAN's research on the topic of language addresses the history of the English language in the context of colonialism. She was born in Harare, Zimbabwe and currently lives there. She was the founder of the OR Gallery in Vancouver.

NETSAYI CHIGWENDERE is a young artist living in Harare, Zimbabwe.

LARISSA LAI has recently completed a B.A. (Honours) in Sociology at the University of British Columbia. She assisted in curating the touring film, video, and photo exhibit *YELLOW PERIL: RE-CONSIDERED*, and currently works at SAW Video, an artist-run video production centre. Her poetry has appeared in *Room of One's Own*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, and *Matrix*, and is also going to appear in an upcoming anthology of Chinese Canadian writing. Her articles have appeared in *Fuse*, *The Independent Eye*, *Video Guide*, and *Matriart*. She is a member of the Asian Canadian Writers Group. She will be included in The Society for Noncommercial Culture's *Flyer Project*.

C. ALLYSON LEE calls herself a *Wet* Coast transplant from Alberta. She has published pieces in *Awakening Thunder — Asian Canadian Women* (Fireweed), *The Journal for the Canadian Dental Association*, *The Video Guide*, *Angles*, *Diversity*, *Kinesis*, and *Phoenix Rising*. She has a special affinity for guitars and primates.

KATHRYN MACLEOD is an editor of *Motel* magazine, published in Vancouver. Her work has appeared in numerous literary magazines, including *Verse*, *Big Allis*, *Writing*, and *However*, as well as in the anthology *East of Main*.

VERA MANUEL is a Shuswap-Kootenay Indian from Chase, B.C. She presently resides in Vancouver, working as a freelance writer and a trainer in the field of addictions. She is a strong advocate for aboriginal people, and it is this commitment to her people's



struggle that compels her to write. She has published a short story titled "La Guerra" in *Room of One's Own*, and is the author of a play, *Song of the Circle*, which has been presented at conferences in B.C. and Seattle. She is currently working on a novel.

DAPHNE MARLATT's last collaboration with Betsy Warland was *Double Negative* (Gynergy, 1988), a book of poetry. She also co-edited *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* (Press Gang, 1990) with Sky Lee, Lee Maracle and Betsy Warland. Red Deer College Press will be publishing her *Salvage* this fall, comprised of prose poetry and a novella.

LORRAINE MARTINUICK has lived on Denman Island since 1980. She designed and built her own house/studio where she lives, writes, and makes art. She is currently working on a long work of fiction and is developing an intaglio series for her next gallery showing. She also works as a technical writer, designing and writing training manuals for industrial processes.

HEIDI NEUFELD-RAINE writes stories and translates from Spanish. She has been published in *Aquellarre* and *Prism International*. She was the executive editor of *Prism* until 1990. She currently lives in California against her will.

MARIANNE NICHOLSON is an artist of Native descent. She uses photography as a mechanism to de-construct the representations of Native peoples. Her work attempts to break down stereotypes and re-construct an imagery that reflects both the traditional and the contemporary.

HARUKO OKANO was born in Ontario in 1945. She studied art at Central Technical School in Toronto. She has lived in Vancouver for the past seventeen years and has exhibited in group shows locally and in the United States. She is currently working in collaboration with a Toronto filmmaker on a film about growing up Japanese Canadian after W.W. II.



RAJ PANNU has published poetry in *Ankur*, a publication produced by Indo-Canadian youth. She describes herself as a 23-year-old working class Sikh woman who has no money but a great sense of humour.

HELEN POTREBENKO is the author of several short stories and poems. Her most recent book is *Hey Waitress and Other Stories*, published by Lazara Press, 1989.

CARMEN RODRIGUEZ was born in Valdivia, Chile in 1948. She taught languages and literature at the Universidad Austral in Valdivia while raising two girls. She worked in the literacy campaign in the shanty towns and was recruited and worked for the "reds." After the coup (September 11, 1973) many of Carmen's friends were killed, and many were incarcerated, including her brother. Her home was raided by the military; she saw her two girls forced against the wall with bayonets against their backs; she lost her job, was interrogated, and left the country. She has lived in Canada off and on since 1974. In 1980, Carmen gave birth to a son in Bolivia and began to write poetry and short stories again after a six-year silence. She is a member of the *Aquelarre* magazine collective.

MANISHA SINGH is 20 years old. She grew up in Jasper, Alberta, where her family was the only non-white family in the small town. She is in her fourth year at UBC. She works on the Anti-Discrimination Committee and with the Women's Center, and is a volunteer at the Women Against Violence Against Women Crisis Center as a crisis counsellor. She says, "I am rejoicing in the colors."

CATHERINE STEWART studied art at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design (among other schools) and has been practising art in various forms in Vancouver since 1977. She is a sculptor, printmaker, illustrator, and (most recently) a photographer.

BETSY WARLAND has published several books of poetry including *Double Negative*, written in collaboration with Daphne Marlatt. Her most recent book *Proper Deafinitions* (1990) is a

collection of her essays, articles, and prose. She also recently co-edited *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures*, and is currently editing *InVersions* (fall 1991, Press Gang), which is a collection of essays by North American dyke, queer, and lesbian writers on their own work. She lives on Saltspring Island.

KIKI YEE was born in 1967, the youngest of five children — the first generation of the Yee family to be born in Canada. “It seems like so much is lost from generation to generation, and sometimes this worries me. That’s why I started this body of work — so at least I have a document for myself.”

JIN-ME YOON was born in Seoul, Korea in 1960 and emigrated to Vancouver in 1968. She spent most of her late childhood and adolescence trying on alternative identities in the predominantly “white” lower middle class suburbs of North Delta. “Even as kids,” she says, “we realized our parents were Koreans in Canada whereas we were Korean-Canadian.” Between travels abroad, she obtained a B.A. in psychology at the University of British Columbia (1985) and a B.C.A. from Emily Carr College of Art and Design (1990). She is currently pursuing her MFA in photography at Concordia University in Montreal.

These images [pages 102 & 103] are from an ongoing, photographically-based sculptural installation project, titled: (Inter)reference, Part II: “(In)authentic (Re)search.” The second part is titled simply: “(In)authentic (Re)search.”

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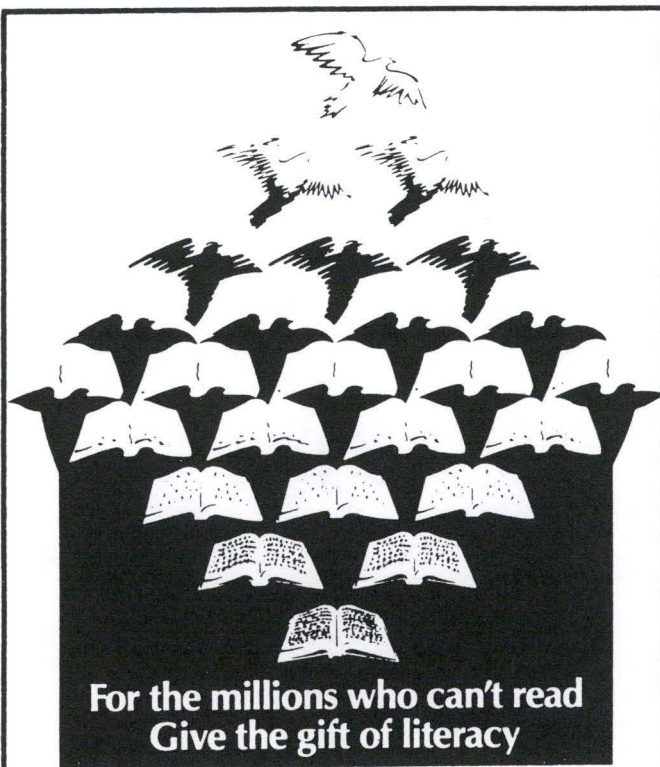
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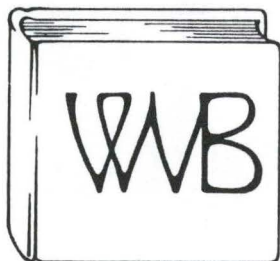
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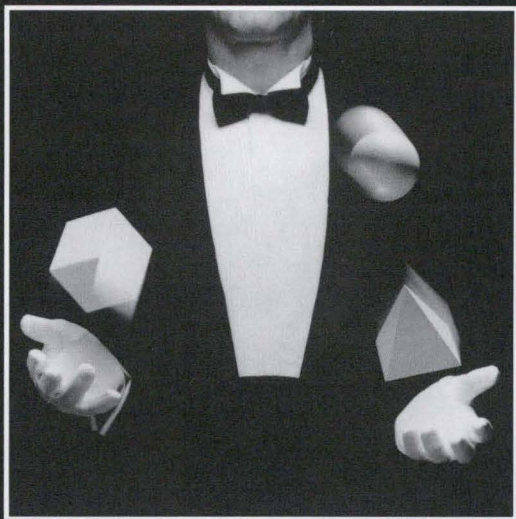


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# ERRATUM

Using a rubber stamp and ink pad  
she inserted the lower case letter  
s before the word  
he where found in the left margin  
of selected library books.<sup>1</sup>  
The interruption of the  
margin disturbs the  
justification of the text.

<sup>1</sup> See education theory section of WAC Bennett  
Library for first installment.