



VOICE
2000

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This journal strives to explore the experience of voice and voicelessness in women's lives. It delves into the times in our lives when something or someone has affected our sense of self; has moved us to do, to become, to feel, to see, to know differently, or to know more of ourselves, whether it leaves us to grope in seeming darkness, or to shout and holler from clarity.

Its founding emerged from a series of conversations among the women at YDS who came each week to a discussion group at our Women's Center. Each woman expressed, poignantly, moments when voice was lost and the various struggles to reassert oneself and one's creative living.

Cover Photograph: Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge University
Stephanie M. Urie, Photographer

VOICE is a forum of writing, art, and ideas published by the Women's Center at Yale University Divinity School. It is a yearly publication. Submissions of poetry, fiction, sermons, photography and art are encouraged for Spring of 2001. It is open to current students, faculty, staff, spouses, graduates, and friends.

VOICE

The Women's Center
Yale University Divinity School
409 Prospect Avenue, Box 262
New Haven, CT 06511

VOICE

SPRING 2000

Speak your mind...
even if your voice shakes.

Margaret Kuhn

CONTENTS

	Editor's Remarks	
ANNE NAPOLI	Untitled Poem	1
LORI KOCHANISKI	Voice Chapel Sermon, 1999	2
ERIN K. CARTER	Dinner Conversation	5
TAMARA MORELAND	Sister Sojourner	6
ANNE NAPOLI	Crucified Woman	7
KATHLEEN LUNDGREN	Mute Suffering	8
ERIN K. CARTER	Untitled Poem	9
ROMIE PALLADINO	Labored Ancestry	10
AIMEE PALLADINO	Pencil Sketch	10
MARGARET MOORE	Crazy Old Anna	11
SARA THOMPSON TWEEDY	Knowing Mary	13
JENNIFER LOVEJOY	In the Cool of the Afternoon	14
LINDA CARLETON	Jacob with God	15
AMY R. F. JOHNSON	Crying Out in the Wilderness	16
STEPHANIE M. URIE	Genealogy of Mores	19
MARY E. LATELA	Clergy Women ...	20
CLAUDIA MURO	Scream...	21
LAURRIE HALL	Humming, Faintly	22
KATHRYN OTT	Dialogue	23
LINDA CARLETON	Wise Women	24
AMY J. ROHLER	She Feels	25
ERIN K. CARTER	Untitled Poem	27
LYNNE MIKULAK	Photograph	29
SARAH REBEKAH MOTT	I Am Your Namesake	30
CHRISTY HOUSEL	Photograph	30
LINDA CARLETON	Psalm 22: 30-31	31,32
MANDY BRUMMER	A Cup of Cold Water	33
SALLY J. D. BROWN	Christ's Call	35
JAMIE L. MASON	The Anointing Woman	36
DEBORAH MEISTER	Gasper Speaks	37
PEGGY S. BLOCK	Pondside Psalm	38
CYNTHIA WEEMS	You're Such a Girl	39
LYNNE MIKULAK	Photograph	40
ANNE NAPOLI	Untitled Poem	41
CAROLYN FLEMING-SAWYERR	Reflections of Cuba	42
LYNNE MIKULAK	Photograph	42
CARA N. DONAHUE	Hit the Road	43
CAROLYN FLEMING-SAWYERR	The Traveler	44
IN MEMORIAM:		
STEPHANIE M. URIE	20th Century Martyrs	45
DEBORAH MEISTER	Stillness	46
LYNNE MIKULAK	Jane	47
STEPHANIE M. URIE	...Postscript	48

EDITORS' REMARKS

Deborah Meister
Stephanie Urie

With this publication we celebrate five years of VOICE, the annual literary journal of the Yale University Divinity School Women's Center.

The following pages hold some of the personal and potent hopes, insights and struggles of your sisters in the Yale community. We are grateful to each of them for trusting this forum as a place to share their voices. You will find that some of the voices are soothing; some are humorous; intellectual or affective; others are angry or anguished. All, all are unmistakably honest and stir reflection in those who listen.

We invite you to do just that, to engage these voices as they are channeled through the media of prose, poetry and the visual arts. They are as diverse in content as in form as they articulate an array of perennial human themes, including: faith, compassion, disillusionment, triumph, dignity, anger, grief, self-emptying and joy.

So, this, our fifth anniversary edition is a gift from the enterprise of women to our larger community. We know this assembled choir will elicit contemplation and provoke dialogue; ultimately, we hope it draws you to the whispers - and the wisdom and the wealth - of your own voice.

Thank you for listening with us to the voices that enrich our lives.

I am an omnivorous book eater
I like to crack their bony spines
In jaws unhinged to catch the lines
That ooze, and words that teeter
On the brink of their annihilation
The story's marrow I gnaw and savor
I suck the juices to know its flavor
From fine bound leather and illumination
from crackling bindings and vellum paper
To hand-sewn works of lowly bore
And children's tales with pages tore -
I eat them all, such fine-cooked capers!
This appetite, still unplaced,
I seek to fill 'till satiated.

Lori Kochanski

Text: Habakkuk 2:2-3; Mark 16:1-8

HUSH! Can you hear them yet?

HUSH! The women of the tomb whisper across time and space to a waiting people, a groaning people, a people who yearn to know the truth.

"It's all true they whisper. Every word of it is true. Jesus lived and died and was raised for all."

Life is all about crossing boundaries with hope, vision and words as the dreamers, visionaries and voices of solidarity. We take our cues from God made real in the world. From God made real in the words of scripture and from the communities of witness of which we are each a part. We must strive no longer to be afraid to break it down and write it out.

Audre Lorde, in her essay "The Transformation of Language into Silence and Action," talks about the problem with keeping our dreams and vision and words inside of us. She says "Of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger. But my daughter, when I told her of my topic and my difficulty with it, said, 'Tell them about how you are never really a whole person if you remain silent, because there is always that one piece inside you that wants to be spoken out, and if you keep ignoring it, it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter, and if you don't speak it out one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from the inside.'"

Of course the women at the tomb were afraid. They were filled with the same kind of fear Lorde refers to in her essay. Yet they were not only afraid. Not only did terror seize them, but amazement too. Our ancestors in faith, these women of old, knew the truth and yet could not find the words to tell the world. It is the unsettling ending of Mark and the one I prefer to believe. I believe it because of the wonder and terror and amazement I feel in me each time I tell the story.

I can tell the story because that first story declared all humanity saved. Through the angel, Jesus sent this message for all the world for all time. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, much was revealed through outsiders and mediated through Christ. Now God through Christ was mediating his redemptive message of salvation for all through the voices of these women. The outsiders did get it. They had gotten it right all the time.

What does it say to us if the supposed "outsiders" are the ones who have it now? What is our role as very educated insider-type folks?

I think it says LISTEN. You see, just because the women kept silent then, that does not mean they never shared the message. The more I work with those who are on the margin of our well-ordered society, the more I believe that the women at the tomb-Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome-whisper across time and share the truth of the Gospel story with the women and girl children and boy children and men who unexpectedly call us to truth, as the Syrophenician woman herself called Jesus to truth.

HEAR THE VOICES OF...

...the senior citizen who is discounted because she does not move as fast as this world pushes us to move. There is life in her...life she deserves to live abundantly...if you ask and listen you never know

what she will share...I have a card on my wall with a quote from Gloria Steinem that reads..."Some day an army of gray haired women will quietly take over the earth"...listen as they whisper the plans and dreams passed on to them from the whispers of Mary and Mary and Salome.

...the women living in the realities of mental illness...hear the dark dreams and haunting visions that feel real and often hurt.

...the children of the world who still ask the questions boldly and just as they hear them coming in ...they do not wait or hold the thought or try to decide what the right words are...we could learn a lot more if we asked the questions a child asks.

The women whisper to a wanting, groaning world. We must then take our cues from the prophets of old as we listen: Habakkuk tells us to write the vision. We do have a part because this is no longer an insider/outsider process. Jesus turned it all upside down and it is humanity's job to be the dreamers and visionaries and voices in this time and place.

I was reminded the other day of a song that one of the members of "Sweet Honey and the Rock" shared with us when the Women's Center led a trip to hear Alice Walker speak: She taught us to sing, "We are the Ones we've been waiting for." We...the collective we.

We learn a lot here and it is important to exegete well---in the task of exegesis comes the power to deliver a liberating message of God. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz charges us to be hermeneutically vigilant. Yet we must balance the acts of hermeneutical vigilance with remembering that the first messages were given to the dreamers and the visionaries and the women of voice and name and action in the Bible stories.

We must be dreamers. We should all perfect the art of day-dreaming. If you're going to day-dream (and let's face it: the perfect climate is found in the heat of Room 113 when the doors are closed and the heat is on in the middle of April), you might as well try to perfect it as an art. Be a dreamer.

We must be visionaries. In the first chapter the prophet Habakkuk laments that there is no justice as he cries out to the Lord. Standing at the watchpost, the Lord replies: "Write the Vision; make it plain on tablets so a runner may read it. For there is a vision for the appointed time. It speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay."

The vision does not always come in our time or on our schedule. Be patient and wait and listen and watch and hear.

Being a visionary means daring to live such a life that, at the end of it, a person will say about your life of faith: "She lived as if she were convicted of hope and arrested by grace daily." It is a daily struggle. Our job as theologians is not just to know what all of the previous theologians said. We are also charged with the responsibility to unlearn the myths and search the truth of daily life lived with God in the midst of a groaning world. We must translate groaning and whispers into words and proclaim that vision. We must listen to what the whispering women tell us. We must also be voices in solidarity with life and truth in the world. We must not wait for the entire vision of the world, as God sees it, to be revealed. We must voice what we have seen and see and feel, and we must not be afraid.

The truth is, my friends, we all share in the responsibilities of dreaming, writing, and voicing a bold new vision. The way we do church and the way we live is not working...it often excludes more people than it includes. We need to listen and to write bold new visions. It is important to try to see ourselves in others, but, if we are truly to meet God's message of salvation and reconciliation in this world, we must stop looking only to ourselves and for God in the people who look and feel like us.

There are gentle reminders of God in the cracks of New Haven... This is the part of my job I do not really like. It is Sunday morning. I am preaching in approximately an hour and I still have one more carload of children to pick up before church (and they probably won't be ready either!). The familiar plea: "Can we put on 94.3 WYBC?" I don't know why I attempt conversation. I should just have the radio on before they even get in; then I would not even have to worry about trying to connect with these kids early on a Sunday morning, these kids who live and see things I will never know or comprehend. What kind of connection do I expect to make as I ask all of the same questions every adult in America asks a child when that adult really does not know what that child is truly about?

Why they even get in the car in the first place is often a mystery to me. Once we get to the church I can almost guarantee that these two children will be the basis for my patience-building exercises as they push me to the edge of Sunday morning sanity. As I turn on the radio and change the station I am mentally preparing for my sermon and leaving my captives to listen to their radio station. The voice that drifts in the car through the one working speaker proclaims boldly "Our God is an Awesome God..." J pipes up from spot in the back, "Hey, we sing this at day camp!" He begins to sing along with the refrain. His sister begins to sing also as she fidgets in the coveted front seat position. For voices that often bring my nerves to the edge, they sound surprisingly beautiful as they proclaim the awesomeness of God. As we rumble down Orchard Street toward the church I find that the children and me have become a "We." And so we made our way to the church singing: one tough guy on the edge of teenage madness, one young girl who longs for love and fights the love she receives with an equal passion, one divinity student trying to define her own voice. I proclaim and believe in the words of that humble song sung by the Resurrection Rag-Tag Traveling Chorus: "Our God is an Awesome God...God who cannot be contained in one voice or thought, God whose name is proclaimed by many, God who loves us all."

The keepers of the vision and the inspiration for our dreaming are found in this world, or are they also afraid to speak the truths that have been whispered to them. Are they afraid we are not listening? Do they sit in amazement at the truth and long to share it? I think that we all need some teeth knocked out for the things we say and do not say for fear.

Today we celebrate the publication VOICE and the women who were bold enough to write the vision and make it plain... I give thanks to God for the courage and strength of the bold dreams and visions of the voices which appear in print.

We ARE the ones we have been waiting for to proclaim in VOICE the awesomeness of God mediated in the whisperings and dreamings and visions that cross all time and space.

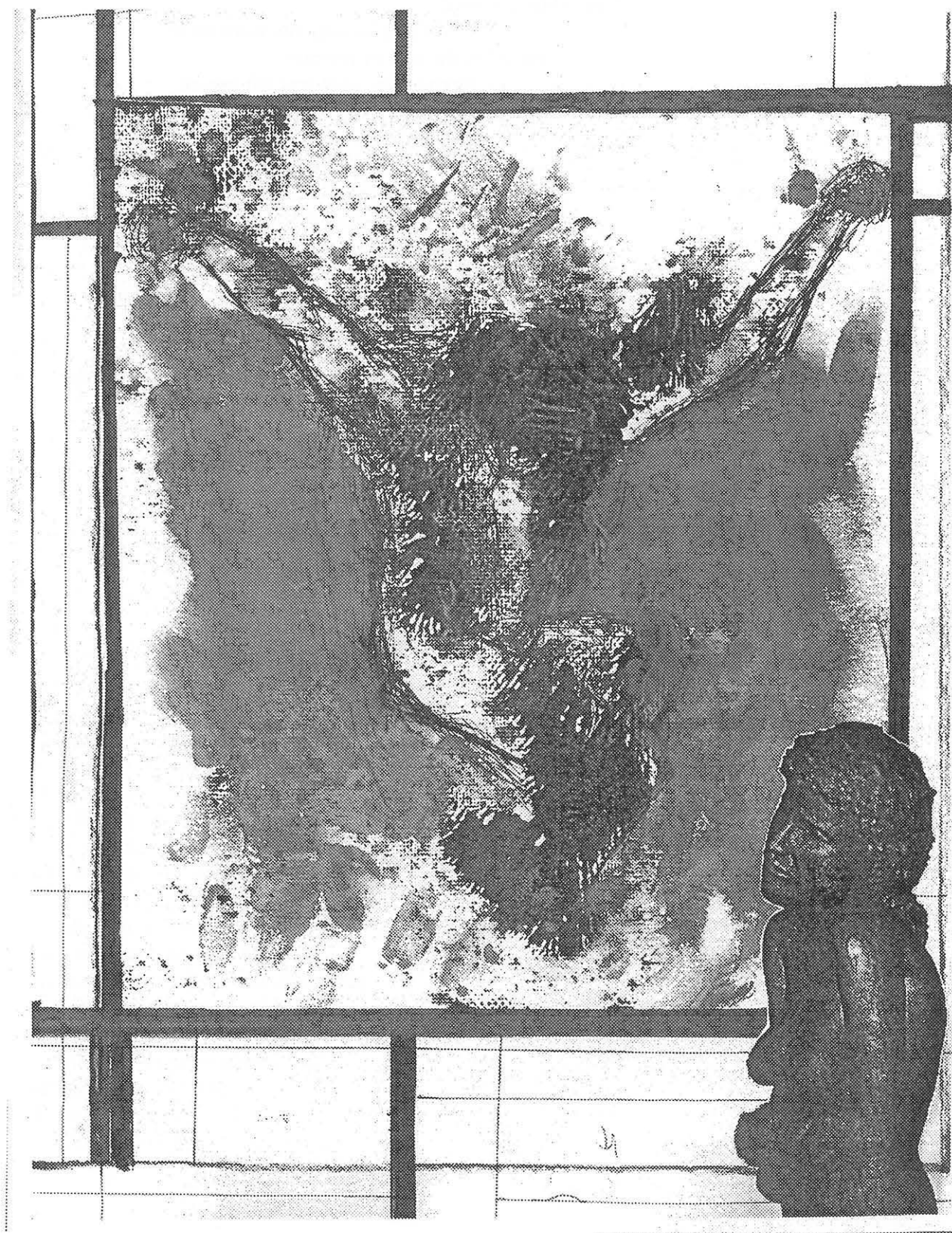
Amen.

we speak in circles, dancing
using language as the music that
guides partners, bringing us closer
and pulling us apart
we stop only long enough to catch our
breath, to learn new steps but
there is never enough quiet to feel
each other's scars; the music begins
again i want to hold your hand
for a moment my heart beats differently
than yours but it still beats if you
would hold my hand you'd know that,
i want to say, but instead we
dance and i am spinning
and you are laughing so how
could i possibly want more?

I am a black woman
 journeying through the wilderness
not yet in the land of promise
 weeping for what was left behind
unaware of what lies ahead
 holding in my bosom sustenance
to nurture, transform, and shake up a nation
 praying to God for the Holy Spirit's power
for the completion of my sojourn
 singing because the distant land looms large
like a mirage yet its existence is sure
 shouting praise in advance of my arrival
aware I must resist complacent celebration for
 helping another sister left behind
to find her way, her voice, her power, is the reason for
 journeying through the wilderness
I am a black woman.

CRUCIFIED WOMAN

Anne Napoli, Ink and Oil Etching and Sculpture



The infliction of abuse, rape, incest, and emotional and psychological trauma not only maims and mutilates the geography of a woman's body, but nearly destroys and entirely recreates the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual landscape of these victims as well. As these traumas and violations are repetitively inflicted upon and experienced by a woman, either in reality or in her inner world through her memory, her pain becomes increasingly intense. The internal "amplification" of her pain accompanied by the increasing objectification of that pain by those observing it and the subsequent denial of the reality of her pain, transforms her identity into one of submission. The submissive identity created by her pain renders the woman, as Dorothee Sölle suggests "mute." In its translated form, devoid of the informative quality of communication, her muteness is interpreted by those involved as her oppressor's power. This power annihilates the richness of the identity and worldview of the woman upon whom it is inflicted. And paradoxically, it serves to maintain the flatness of the identity and worldview of the one from whom it emanates, thereby neutralizing morality and rendering moral cognition within the oppressor impotent, because the oppression goes unchallenged.

In this process, a woman is increasingly silenced, as she ever more urgently concentrates, consciously or unconsciously, on the increasing pain. Her entire universe constricts until it includes no more than her immediate perceptual awarenesses, and the larger-than-life form of her oppressor. Pain shuts a woman down, so that she may go on bearing it. Her life becomes limited to a "prison existence" in which she cannot speak - sometimes for fear she will be heard!

She feels numb, mute, hopeless and helpless. There are seemingly no choices left.

But for those of us willing to stand (as Simone Weil does) on the "threshold" between her world and ours, in spite of her inability to speak, we may hear her silent screams and articulate her fears and experiences for her. With articulation come awareness, memory, understanding, grief, acceptance, and hope: a liberation.

For a woman who has endured violations, however, liberation may be so remote as to be unimaginable. Unless a woman's suffering can be understood by others in community and solidarity, extreme suffering continues to destroy the ability to communicate and causes a relentless turning in on the self. But if this narrowness can be expanded through the almost heartbreaking softness of the presence of others, the opportunity to learn from the pain and to act becomes available to victims. Only when a victim is buoyed up out of the silence by others willing to be with her can she recognize the unnaturalness of her suffering and open the possibility of its becoming, as Sölle suggests, "a purposeful activity in which the victim is not entirely without power to change."

Without this radical belief, we are delivered "helplessly to a suffering devoid of learning," and the possibility for using this learning for change. Without this learning, we resign ourselves to a barren acceptance, which yields only submission and death. But articulation of the reality of the suffering - of the truth in its nuances and details - replenishes us and enables us to create change. There are those who have been crushed by violence, abuse and trauma. Yet, for them and for the others who still suffer, we who are willing must stand on the threshold, live, and speak.

we are always broken always breaking
in two three four more parts than necessary
jigsaw puzzle pieces not quite interlocking
of life and love and pain and confusion
of a transcendent god become immanent

if those wounds on his body are not only
his but yours and mine and everyones and
if he in his infinite wisdom and eternal love
chose to be embodied to be broken in pieces
then will you listen when other embodieds speak
answer when other always breaking beings ask
love even if it is easier to ignore
be wounded and stay wounded keep your scars
until we all can say we are healed no longer broken
forever interlocking pieces moving together
tethered not only to a dissolving earth a falling apart people
this fragmented capacity for love but also to the one
who cares enough to convert woundedness into a thing
transformative and pain into a thing redemptive

LABORED ANCESTRY

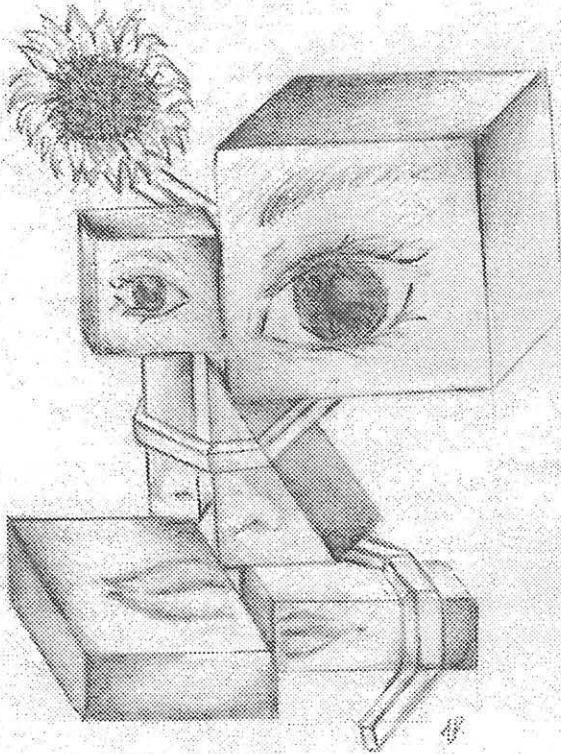
Romie Palladino, Poem

Aimee Palladino, Pencil Drawing

i knew an old girl
she harbored a luminous white sunflower,
pregnant with seeds of inspiration, truth, freedom
she struggled for birth...for air
dis em bod died by misogynists
Do not be afraid, i sang to the girl
Step out from the quicksand of rational rehearsed roles.
Put your ear to the screaming soil of wisdom.
Break open the vessel of womb bondage.

she panted, not so prettily,
but, oh so, powerfully!
a perspired push...

with arms wide embrace
she accepts that light within,
takes her place in the garden with her elder sisters.



Oh, hi, I'm Anna. Crazy old Anna. You must be new here. Not many people speak to me nowadays. And, truth to tell, after being here at the Temple more than fifty years, I just don't bother looking at them much any more. Everyone knows I'm crazy.

Instead of sitting down, why don't we walk a bit around the courtyard. It's warmer in the sunshine. You're just here for the counting, all the way from Galilee. Welcome to the big city. Isn't this temple a magnificent place? Yet there's room for us - you the visitor - and crazy old Anna. Why do they call me crazy?

Well, once upon a time when I was first married, I was sitting with my baby - do you and Zebedee have babies yet? James, huh. All of mine were girls. Anyway, I was sitting with the baby one evening looking at the tiny flame of the lamp, kind of hypnotized by the flicker. Then I looked down at the baby in my arms, and it wasn't my baby girl. I was scared - losing my mind - frozen by what I saw - a boy with curly black hair and wide awake. This baby I was holding drew me to him. He was warm and light. And, I knew - don't ask me how, but I knew that I was holding the Messiah. I looked into his eyes - happy eyes, but I guess he had dust or grit in them because tears were running down his face. And my heart leapt.

My dazzlement only lasted a minute - just long enough for me to remember how he looked and how he felt in my arms. No sooner had I recognized him than he was gone. And I was once again holding my sleepy pug-nosed baby girl. She snuggled against me, and I knew I just been dreaming, just dozed off in the warmth and quiet.

As I was taking care of my home and my husband and my children, I forgot about the dream. Oh, sometimes when we came with offerings, I'd stop here for a minute and look about for a baby boy with dust in his eyes.

Then, the children all married - girls, all of them, and moved into homes with their husbands. I felt the weight of the baby boy in my arms. They said I just longed for my own babies again - or for the boy I never had. But, I knew I had to be here at the Temple when the messiah was brought to be presented. So I moved up here. And, I started coming to meet the families who bring their babies for dedication. It's always after lunch when the babies are quiet and sleepy. They wake for a moment, then they're back asleep.

So I come here where I can see each one. The mothers who come - well, they're all bone weary and the fathers are awkward - letting the babies slide this way and that. They're glad to let me hold the wee ones - glad to have someone provide a brief moment of rest.

Of course, some of the grandmothers don't want me to hold their babies. But everyone pretty much knows me now. And, the priests have begun to wonder if I know something they don't - especially Simeon. I've told them the baby boy story so often.

When the families come, I offer to hold each baby. I'll know when he's the right one. He'll be warm and light and his eyes will draw my very soul into them. And, I'll wipe away the dust and croon to him.

You've been a good listener though I don't know why you'd care about crazy old Anna. Oh, here comes Simeon - Simeon, this young woman is here for the counting - and she's listened to my baby boy tale.

Yes, I'm still convinced that one day before I die, I'll hold that baby boy in these arms again. And, I tell you, Simeon, you'll know, too, that he's the Messiah. Won't that be glorious? Just think, Simeon, the Messiah, in our lifetime.

I'm too old now - and so are you - to see him grow up. I wonder what he'll be. Some people think the messiah will be like King David - overthrow these Romans and give us home rule. That's the kind of Messiah that Dan hoped for. And, Zechariah claims the messiah will be a high priest and bring the people to righteousness. No, No, Simeon. Don't remind me of what that new group of youngsters out in the desert are saying. I don't want to hear about a Messiah that suffers. Just don't talk to me about that.

Oh, look. Here comes another couple.

Hi, there, I'm Anna. Let me carry the baby in for you. You look tired. What a darling she is...

Well, Simeon, we must have seen a dozen babies today. Another day of being crazy old Anna. How silly you are to believe this story of mine. We're both crazy.

Oh, look at that girl - so young - and that's no sleepy baby she has either. What a handful he's going to be. And, the father doesn't look too happy about it all either. I've never seen them before. I'll bet she had the baby on the road while they were coming here for the counting. Look! The baby is wriggling out of her arms.

Here, honey, let me hold that little bundle of energy for you. Never seen such an active baby so young. Give him to Anna. Simeon, tell her it's okay. She's going to drop him.

O, come here, darling. Come to Anna. Give momma a rest. There, there, just calm down now. This will all be over in a few minutes. For one so active, you surely can cuddle up close. And you're as warm as a little lamb. How much does he weigh? He feels so light. Oh, look. He's got the nicest eyes - just like deep wells of water. Simeon, hand me a cloth, he's gotten something in his eyes. Let me wipe his tears away.

Simeon - Simeon - oh, this baby boy - oh, God.

Holiest of Mothers,
veiled in white
(by our religious fathers.)
Your virgin womb
raped by God.
Hailed as the epitome of obedience,
(still you were violated.)

You must have wondered
how a human hand would feel
on your inner thigh in comparison to God's.
Your body would quake in ecstasy
when you were penetrated.
Instead, you trembled
as the Holy Spirit lay upon you.

By giving the rigid constructs of your mind
over to the passion of your body,
you'd have lost your place
as the bearer of innocence and obedience.
Too afraid to admit demons
might possess you too.

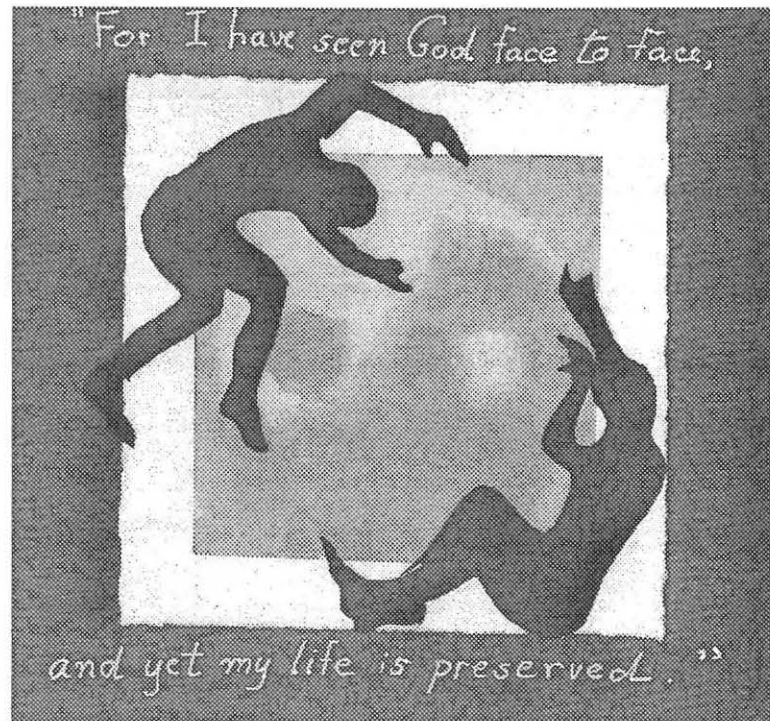
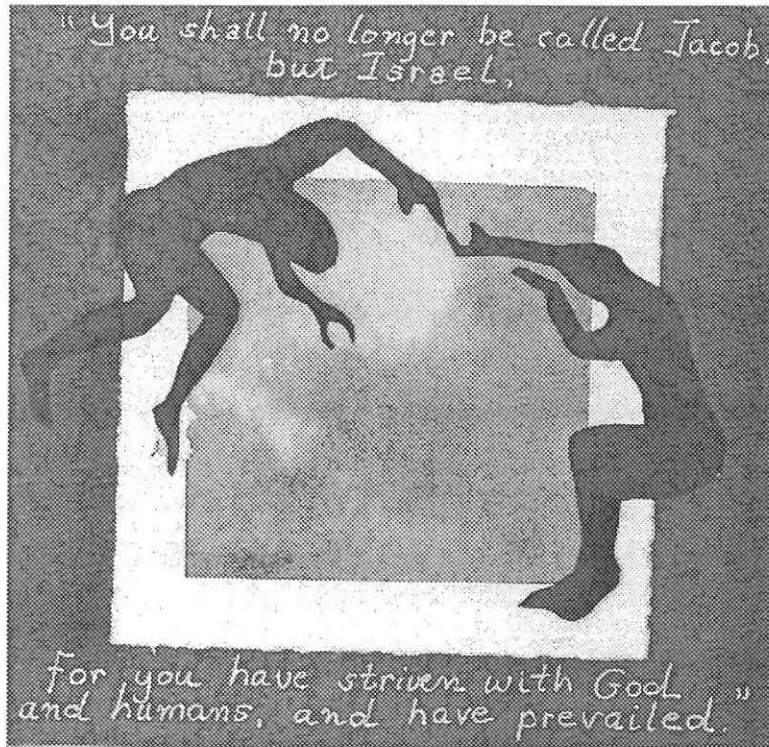
But even God couldn't extract innocence
from your body,
only sweat.

As I was sitting in church listening to the Lukan account of Gabriel's visit to Mary, the passage where she is told she will conceive, I became very, very angry. The language made me cringe, sweat, and withdraw.

I had just finished a 13 week military training program at Fort Jackson in S.C. During this brief program, I had witnessed and been subjected to sexual harassment on various levels and fronts. Feeling betrayed by this structure and institution that had promised to protect me, or at the very least bring forth justice, I was already angry. My experience would not allow me to avoid what being "female" meant, was supposed to mean, or even what I wanted it to mean.

As I struggled to make sense of my reaction to the Lukan story, I realized that modern day understandings of power and sex make reading this passage extremely difficult UNLESS you are willing to disengage yourself. In this poem, I ask you to engage as I did the questions reverberating within my life experience: What does it mean to be a woman, aware of how power and sex play out in unhealthy ways in relationships? How would a survivor of rape, incest, or other sex crimes understand, view, or make sense of what happens to Mary? And lastly, what about Mary? Our beloved virgin mother....when does she finally get to have a healthy sexuality?

God came to me when I was four
and stayed for quite a few years.
We swung on my swing set
in the cool of the afternoon.
God climbed pine trees in the backyard
always a bit faster than I could
but God was patient and sang of cowboys and policemen
as I tried to keep up.
I wrote poems about God in large, unsteady script
about blades of grass and rainbows
and square birds.
Mom kept them in the middle drawer in the kitchen
but God and I saw them daily by the swamp.
We saved turtles and frogs from the road
and fed them the chicken bits from my Campbell's soup.
God held my hand in the dark because I was afraid.
And then we stopped playing
and I projected God heavenward
so I could swing alone
in the cool of the afternoon.
I stopped climbing the pine trees
and decided it was safer on the ground
but I continued to write poetry
in a small, angry script -
addressed to no one in particular
and I hid my book of poems under my mattress.



possessions, but everything they owned was held in common... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." (Acts 4:32, 34-35)

To come from a culture that had clear social and economic distinctions and to live in this way as equals, giving all to each other in trust, was revolutionary. But, right next door to the amazing statement of Paul regarding Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female; right next door to the amazing example of the early church; right in the very same Bible, we have other statements, statements that would contradict Paul's revelation and the example of the early church.

For example, in Ephesians 5:22-24, we read: "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands." Or, in 1 Timothy 2, we read: "...Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty." What happened to the new creation that was possible in Christ, in which there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female? Clearly, here, there are still male and female, and female is clearly subject to the male. Here, in 1 Timothy, the author goes all the way back to Eve, hanging her transgression on all women. Rather than being saved by Jesus Christ - as Paul stated in Galatians - here, in 1 Timothy, women will be saved by childbearing, a holdover from Genesis 3:16. Even if Eve was to blame for the original transgression - a point that I would argue against - didn't Jesus Christ make all things new? If Christ is considered the new Adam, would he not also be considered the new Eve?

What do we make of this discrepancy? I believe that what we're seeing happening here in the Bible, with its conflicting claims of freedom and bondage, is the influence of the culture on the revelation of Jesus Christ. The amazing revelation that in Christ there is unity and equality in diversity took root within a culture. In other words, as the revelation became incarnate - as it was actually lived out in the culture - the original purity of the revelation was corrupted by cultural understandings and practices.

This could happen for a variety of reasons. For example, perhaps the revolutionary nature of Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28 left the Christians open to persecution from those who wanted the status quo to remain. In that case, maybe the Christians began to conform to cultural norms so as to avoid any further persecution. Or, perhaps those who came into power in the churches were seduced and corrupted by that power and didn't want to share it with those who the culture deemed inferior. The exact circumstances and reasons for the discrepancy between Galatians 3:28 and the other passages quoted above can't be known for sure. What we can note is that there is a discrepancy, and that the other passages that have more to do with bondage than freedom reflect the social norms of the time.

We understand the cultural corruption of ideals because we've seen it happen throughout history and lived it in our own lives... Consider Israel's history. God had to continually raise up prophets to call the people back to God's way. Eventually, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus. You see, Jesus didn't come until there was someone crying in the wilderness. Jesus only came after someone lifted up his voice in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mk. 1:3). Repent, and return to God's way.

The same is true today. Someone must first cry out in the wilderness, and then Jesus comes. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a prime example of someone who cried out in the wilderness. He was the voice of one crying out in the wilderness of racial prejudice, bigotry, and oppression. He knew that in Christ all are one and he knew that our country was not living this truth and, like John the Baptist, he called for repentance. He called the country to turn back to God's way, the way that had been revealed in Christ. All are one. Unity and equality in diversity.

The history of women's struggle for unity and equality in diversity also has voices that cried out in the wilderness. ...Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton campaigned tirelessly for women's rights during a time when it was truly radical, and were thereby subjected to attacks from both men and women. Prior to their 19th century struggle, women had no legal or political power. They had no property rights and could not vote. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton lived to see one of their dreams come true - they lived to see women gain property rights - but they didn't live to see women gain the right to vote. That would not happen until 1920. Near the end of her life, Susan B. Anthony wrote: "We little dreamed when we began this contest that half a century later we would be compelled to leave the finish of the battle to another generation of women. But our hearts are filled with joy to know that they enter this task equipped with a college education, with business experience, with the freely admitted right to speak in public - all of which were denied to women fifty years ago." Both women were truly the voice of one crying in the wilderness of gender prejudice, bigotry, and oppression.

People like Martin Luther King, Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton cried out in the wilderness and Jesus came. I see the presence of Jesus in the movement toward unity and equality in diversity that their cries brought about. Because we take the revelation of Jesus Christ and live it out in a culture, where it gets corrupted, people must rise up to cry out in the wilderness over and over again. We must prepare the way for Jesus over and over again. Yes, we must prepare the way. As John said, we're not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of Jesus' sandals but, still, it is we who must prepare the way. We must do this as individuals and we as a church...

My charge to you is to allow that idea of the voice of one crying out in the wilderness to sink into your consciousness and inform all of your actions on behalf of the marginalized. For when you cry out in the wilderness of the oppression, you prepare the way for Jesus to come. Like King, Anthony and Stanton, your crying out lifts up the plight of women and children for the world to see. You bring it to the world's consciousness.

...And, in doing so, some consciences will be pricked into action. In effect, you're saying, "Look - see what's happening here. Now do something about it!" You call the world to repent. You call the world back to God's way. So, be audible and visible on behalf of women and children. Cry out in the wilderness and prepare the way of the Lord. AMEN.

* An abridged form of talk given to the Church Women United of Hartford Association at its Annual Meeting on January 21, 2000.

intinerant preacher of inviolable norms

no, no
it was nothing you said

yes, but
it was everything you did

it was the accelerated (*italics*) pace past the outstretched hand,
the rolling, rolling eyes at the struggling inquirer;
it was the l i n g e r i n g stare at the fat lady,
the perfunctory glance at the indigent,
the gasp at that deformity

it was the Strength in the pace through that certain neighborhood,
the cool condescension to the janitor's advancing mop;
it was the GLARE at that glaring lack of pedigree,
the sneer askance at the off-beat dancer,
the heaving sigh at that feminist

it was all so quick
but
heeded by an eager disciple

that gate-keeper's hermeneutic
informing
silent, screaming homiletics
enforcing
dear, dear social catechism

no, no
it was likely nothing I said

yes, but
it was likely everything I did

as a street-corner evangelist of sacred, social norms

It seems to me that one of the reasons a church hires a woman pastor is that they expect that she will be nurturing. Now nurturing is good; it helps a faith community to have a leader who really does "care" about them, who feels for them, etc. But here is the bind: many clergywomen inherit the role of "the rejected mother."

A male pastor is not expected to bake for the women's group; no, his mere presence, his partaking of a cup of coffee and a goodie baked by someone else, is enough. A male pastor is not expected to sit at the bedside, holding the hand (even metaphorically) of a congregant who is afraid or in pain. No, he stands at a distance - Bible in hand - murmuring, - "We're praying for you," "Don't be afraid, the Lord is with you." And that is enough.

My question is whether we women ministers grow into this role of "mommyhood" or whether we are merely reacting to what we perceive as the expectations of those we serve.

In actual mother-child relationships, the child matures and separates more and more from the mother - that's life. And though the empty nest may be very uncomfortable, every mother knows that she will experience this phenomenon.

I wonder if the shift in attitude of some faith communities from welcoming to rejecting a woman pastor is the playing out of a developmental need to be independent of "parental" authority. At first they accept, lean on, and nearly smother her with their needs, and then they reject her as not really doing a man's job.

Ideally, a pastor is on the scene to empower the congregants to "do their own thing" - to identify and use their gifts for the benefit of the community and the glory of God. Most of us are hesitant to re-evaluate our gifts, as this is often painful and challenging. We may also recall our own difficult passage through adolescence into maturity with sorrow or angst, and may fear going through the process again as adults.

So, as a woman minister, I tread carefully. And I try to remember that I am in this business for the Lord as well as for the people, and sometimes I may be rejected. I will not be the scapegoat for unresolved issues of individuals or congregations grappling with coming of age, growing, or even dying. I am only human.

Scream and the World changes. Or maybe not at all maybe my screams are really screaming STOP! to a World that already knows how to change because the World after all Spirit and Matter Everything and Everyone Is Change. So maybe I need to fine-tune my screams into the World's silence that is oh so loud! Oh so exquisitely loud and tender and beautiful in its ugliness so that if I don't scream I must curl up and sob and rock oh so rhythmically to the beat that does not go away.

*Inspired by the writings of Henri J.M. Nouwen who wrote
that "hope" is "humming in the darkness."*

I look for answers.
He offers a Way.

I think in terms of destination.
He speaks in terms of Path.

I ask about the present.
He whispers of the Presence.

I rage over troubles without.
He calls me to Peace within.

I wallow in fear.
He consumes me with Love.

I cry out, "The darkness! The darkness overtakes me!"
He says, "My child, don't you know the Light of the World shines within?"

Shine, therefore, O Light Within.
Brighten the Way.
Illuminate the Path.
Show me the Presence.
Picture the Peace.
Reveal the Love.

Teach me to hum, however faintly, in the darkness
Knowing the Light of the World lives within.

Did I hear the Voice drum
as low tide I bellow from

under the blue grey clash of sea
as black waves pushing me

To the tic tic toc
of the biological clock

a destiny of destruction
a falsified profession

like to know where
you
found me

and buy another so
you
consume me

asking answered questions
you
deny me

pass by contagious confusion
you
bury me

above the living legacy
you
enlist me

until i've heard nothing
you
release me

a self shamed to see
you, God
called me



It takes trust not only to give up the past we've known, but to accept the disintegration that must occur inside the traditional cocoons. The green slime as pictured in the background of the piece, within the cocoon is the substance that fuels our voices and provides for transformation into new life. May we all trust in God's purpose and promise as we are nourished and transformed within the cocoon that is Yale University Divinity School.

When she smiles it is almost shocking; perhaps because it is unexpected or maybe because it has such a presence. It emanates. She calls Johnny away from the woman underneath the music shell and gathers up the blanket and his bag. She fits him into his blue jacket, adjusts the shirt underneath, settling his pacifier into his mouth at the same time as she picks him up, giving him an unmotherly smile. It is a thing unto itself, as if it should have a name. It feels alive, leaps into the air and dissolves like a mist that evaporates before it can reach the ground. Johnny loves it, laughs at it, pulls at her lips and teeth with his chubby hands. It is a long walk to the car, an especially long one when she is carrying Johnny and all of his things. But she has no choice but to walk this way, to juggle him on her hip with the bag slung over her shoulder and the car keys ready in her hand. It is not a matter of preference, but a matter of fact. When she walks with him like this, she remembers things about Johnny; like the time he tried to play her boss's piano, plunking all the keys at once in imitation of a chord, and pretending that what he was playing was a great sonata, or at the very least, beautiful (which it wasn't). She sometimes does this on her viola: plucks the strings randomly, conflicts the notes, holds them out to the breaking point so that even she can hardly bear it. Sometimes she plays as if she doesn't know how. Sometimes she feels like everything she is not.

Her husband is missing tonight, just like every Sunday night. Being in the car reminds her of him, maybe because they used to have sex in the car; did they have sex in the car? Sometimes it is hard for her to remember. There is an emptiness around without him, but it is not much different than what she feels when he is there. It is why they fight so much and why there is so much cruelty and chaos in their relationship. It's not because they're young or because they were unprepared for the responsibility of Johnny. It's not even because they hate each other. They have nothing to say to each other, she feels nothing when they sit in the dark car at night surrounded by stars and streetlights and the vague discomfort that they are trying too hard. She wonders if it is possible to feel nothing, or is that a contradiction in terms? What does nothing feel like? And so she becomes annoyed with him so they'll fight, she cries, and the chaos is back. But at least there are feelings again, and for the moment, the nothingness disappears like distant memories.

Sometimes I swear Johnny is such a weird kid, why does he have to be like this in the car? Someone once told me that when they couldn't get their baby to fall asleep they'd just take her for a ride in the car for about 15 minutes and she'd drop off, just like that, and sleep the rest of the night, that's definitely not Johnny; he just cries and whimpers and whines the whole time and I do everything possible to make him stop, I sing to him, I turn the radio on (I've tried every station), I tell him stories, all kinds of different ones, I've even yelled with him, but nothing works. Who is this kid, I think, and I worry that maybe he's an alien or something, that's actually what I worried about when I was pregnant with him. I guess it just felt like that, the thought that there was something growing inside me that wasn't me at all, it was a completely separate thing, and so Scott would put his hand on top of my hand and then put both of our hands on my stomach (though it didn't even feel like it was my stomach). And sing Beethoven's Fifth to me using "Da," da da da daaaaah! He did it because he knows I hate Beethoven, but when I hate something I become very funny and he likes it when I'm funny; I liked it when he put my hand on my stomach, it made me feel beautiful and normal, like we were two people sitting in a Living Room waiting for our lives to begin, only now my life has begun and it doesn't feel any different to me, I wonder what I was expecting? I had the hardest time trying to think up a name for Johnny, how could I name him when I didn't know who he was or what he was like? How could I name him if he was an alien? I think that the reason Johnny doesn't like riding in the car is because he doesn't like to look out the window

and see things whizzing by so fast, and it's true that it's kind of a long ride from the park to our house, not terribly long, really no more than 20 minutes, but it's longer than most of our car rides together, so he freaks out even more and it's dark which makes everything weird for him, like the lights of the farmhouse blurring by or the occasional street sign that rushes by before he can even see it, before it can register in his little head. It's strange because what he hates so much, I really love, I mean I really love being in the dark car alone at night, well not alone because there's always the background of Johnny whimpering in the back seat, but there's this stillness that surrounds you when you strain your head to look up at the stars and you can see them all, and you can't tell the difference between the farm lights and the stars and the fireflies because they stretch so close towards each other, almost like lovers or something, I think I know this road so well that I could almost turn my headlights off and drive by feel. I know this way, I know that sound of bugs smashing up against the windshield and how much worse they are when you pass a field of corn, versus passing a field of cows, and I know the feel of the rushing air on my arm because you have to have the windows open in the summer when you don't have air-conditioning and it is strange to have air so thick with heat and humidity and also so cool because it is nighttime and dark, all at the same time, I guess I just wish that I didn't always have to have Johnny crying cause we're driving, I just wish that once I could do something, say the right thing that would make him fall asleep so that he sleeps until morning, but he never really does. If we were at home, I would put Mozart on the stereo for him and sit him in his baby chair and dance to every note, and he would laugh and shout Mommy, Mommy, Mommy and I would laugh too, and think it's such a funny thing that I am only, always mommy to him. Never Jade.

You are in clinical terms

a c r
y z

as a loon

congratulations!

are in order you have joined the ranks of

virgina woolf

leo tolstoy

eugene oneill

oh and that

black lady on wall street by naples pizza who quotes

shakespeare and chaucer

in exchange for the coins in your pocket

and when you lie and say you dont have any money she says

okay

have a good day and

god bless you

G
O
D

bless

Y
O
U

of all people

dont you feel guilty now

she doesnt say that

she just says god bless you

and goes on reciting

hamlet with that crooked smile that shows shes missing two teeth

you want me to be --c-r-a-z-y--

i can be crazy yzarc eb nac i

i can lick the flowers off wallpaper and

taste the color of the sky

youd think the sky would taste like cotton candy

or maybe a blueberry muffin but

no

i bet it tastes more like oranges or

eggplant parmesan

maybe we wallpaper eaters are the normal ones after all

churchill and
van gogh and
lincoln with that big beard and four score and twenty years ago
are in the history books and you are not at least not yet

no i am not ((crazy)) not even slightly
i refuse
to be what you need me to be so you can get a good nights sleep

i know my experiences
i am the foreign tongue lost in translation
the gift you cant bring yourself to give away
the dream you remember until you open your eyes and its gone
i am the sadness you cant shake
and the tears you refuse to cry

i cant quote shakespeare except for that line

TO BE OR NOT TO BE THAT IS THE QUESTION

and all those bible verses i memorized for sunday school to earn
points with that god who keeps score have been replaced

with what wouldnt you like to know
so you can

diagnose prescribe ignore
 pacify

you wonder why i dont talk to you
would you really understand when i say

i feel this way
i think that way

be honest

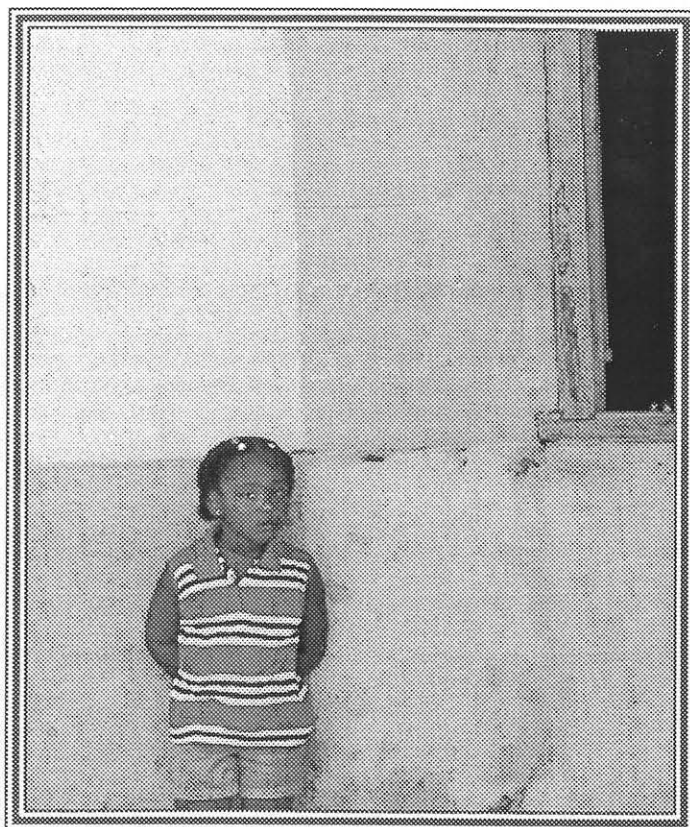
you cant even make sense of your own feelings how could you ever
make sense of mine we dont even speak the same language
remember?

youre that wonderfully

stable
secure
happy
safe

person everyone admires and wants to be with
and im a

loon



Cuba, 2000

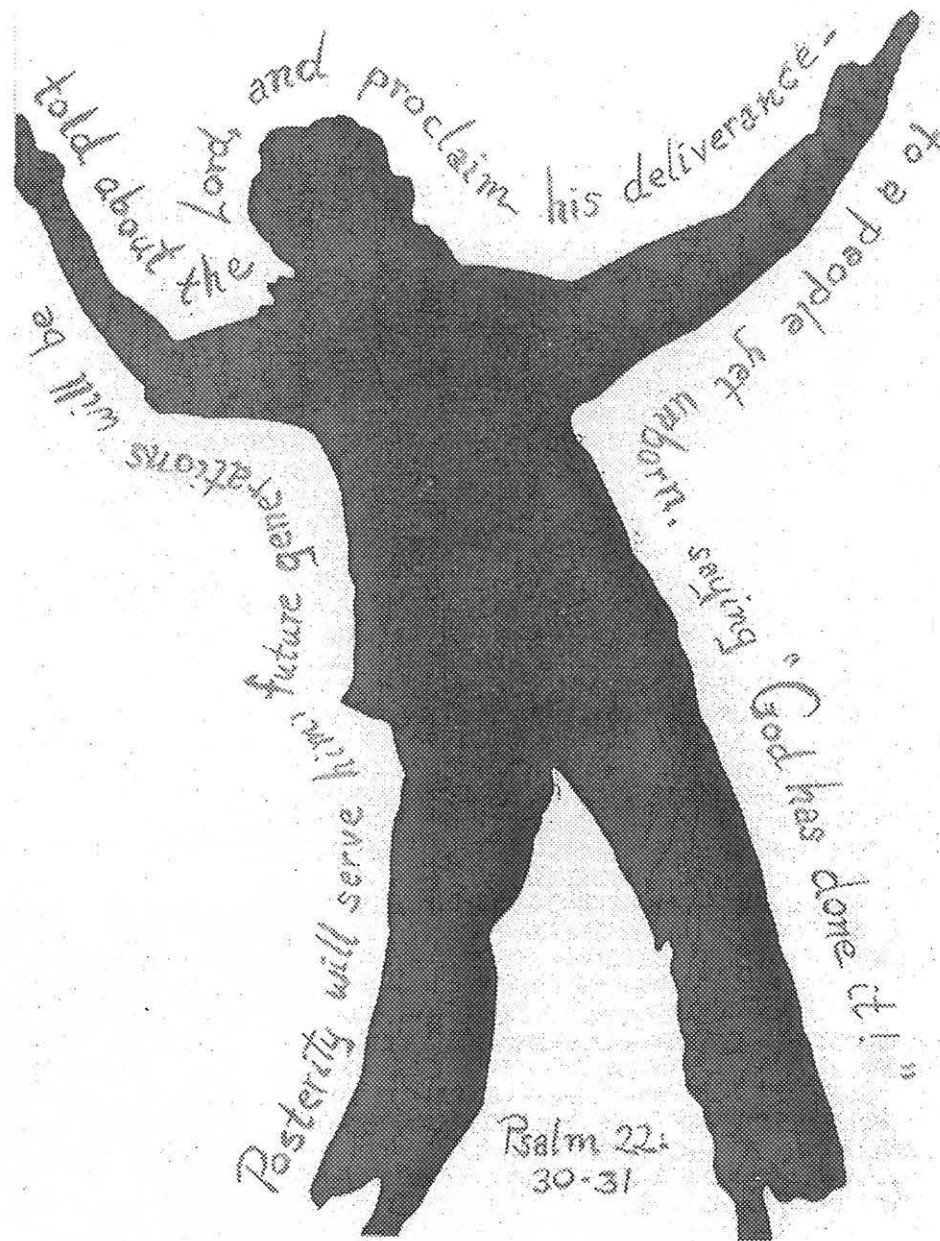
I AM YOUR NAMESAKE...

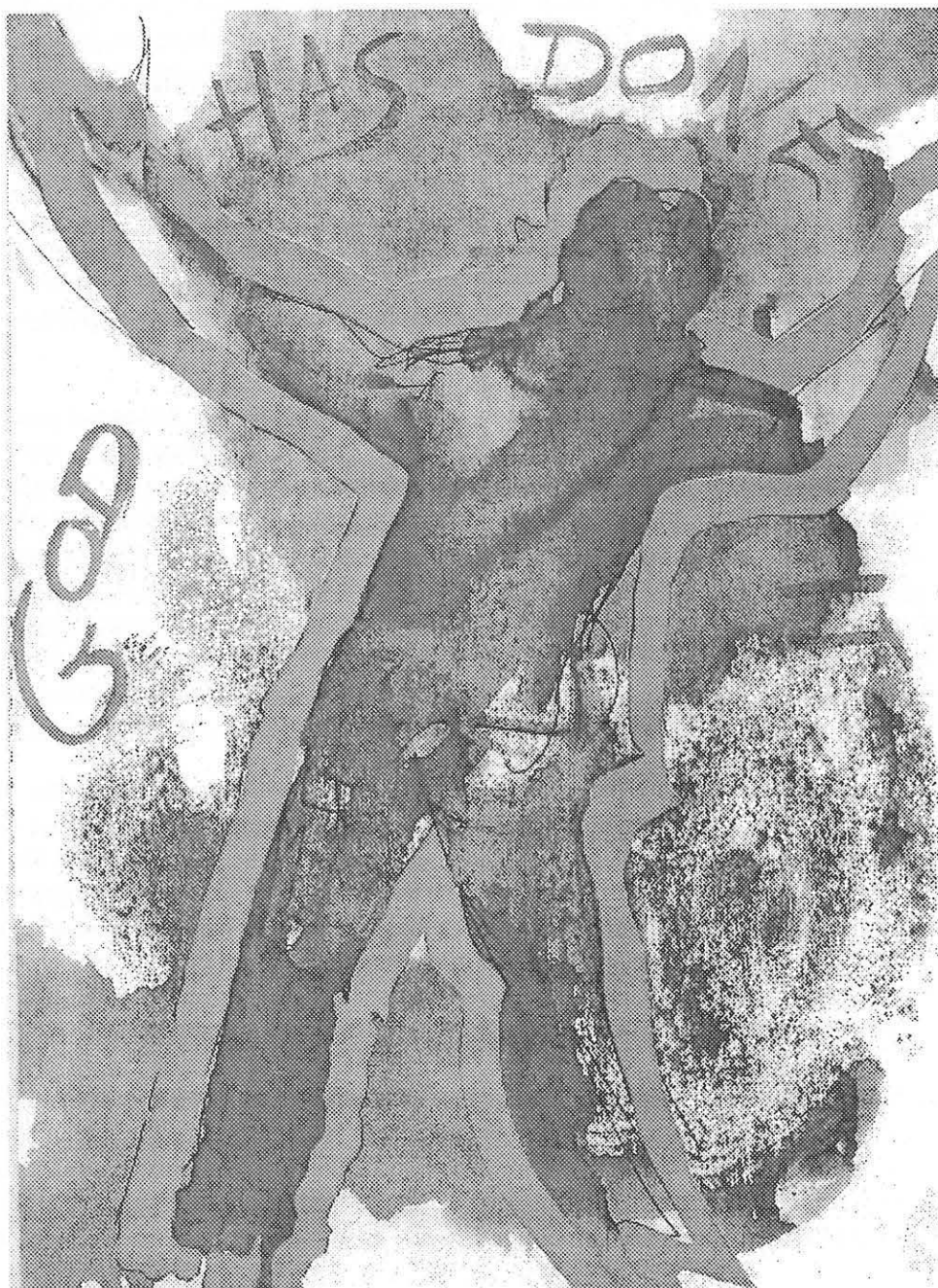
Sarah Rebekah Mott, Poem

Christy Housel, Photograph

and you see yourself in me
I see myself in you
and I know
no matter how much you struggled
to shelter us from the world
you can't protect me
and I see
that nothing is safe
and its true
only the family comes through
and it is possible
to love a man too much
and there is a point where you see
that your love becomes too dangerous
because you love with a ferocity
no man can stand to see
so you give it all to la familia
and now that's what I do
and now my hands smell like garlic,
just like yours
and my knees hurt from praying,
just like yours
and I will do battle
for our way of life
because it is the only thing left
that makes any sense







A CUP OF COLD WATER

Mandy Brummer

Text: Matthew 10: 40-42

This passage is a part of Matthew's "Missionary Discourse." In this mini lecture, Jesus gives the disciples the authority to cast out unclean spirits, heal those who are diseased, and "proclaim the good news." The disciples, like Jesus, are to leave behind their family and worldly possessions. They are to give their life for Jesus and in doing so give their life to God.

In order for the disciples to live as Jesus wants them to, without being attached to material goods or family, the disciples must depend on the hospitality of strangers. Jesus gives them special instructions. When they go to a town they are to search out the worthy households. The key indicator: are they offered any sort of hospitality? If they are, they should offer their peace upon the household or town. If they are not welcomed, they are to, you may recall, "shake off the dust from their feet" and leave the house or town behind them.

It becomes apparent in these passages that members of the Jewish Christian community are often not welcomed and face rejection and persecution. They are the "little ones," because they are lacking in respect, importance, influence, and power in the community. Matthew, however, emphasizes that Jewish Christians are worthy of welcome.

We can also delve deeper into the text by returning to the first verse. "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." What does it mean to welcome Jesus? Matthew offers us an answer in Chapter 25 of his Gospel. Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it when we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' Jesus answers, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Jesus here identifies himself directly with the marginalized and forgotten. To offer food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, to welcome the stranger, and visit the prisoner—all are direct ways of offering hospitality to Jesus. As Jesus has welcomed us we are able to do the same for Jesus. As we continue in our efforts in ministry we are challenged to continually ask: Who is hungry? Who is lonely? Who is a stranger? Who is a prisoner? We are to look for answers deeper than simply their literal meanings. Who is made a stranger or a prisoner in our society because of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability or age? Yes, striving to welcome society's intentionally forgotten challenges us to leave our comfort zone. And leaving our comfort zone is often scary.

Yet, we are reminded even "a cup of cold water," to give even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones...none of these will lose their reward. Yes, we often become so overwhelmed by the magnitude of oppression that we may feel paralyzed. But even the simplest offering of hospitality is important. Because in making the effort to give even a cup of cold water, the seed has been planted. Larger efforts to end discrimination and oppression are set in motion by smaller first attempts, if we are committed to continue the effort.

Last summer, I worked in Boston at a women's shelter called Rosie's Place. Although the shelter offers 20 beds to women who need it for emergency or transitional shelter, Rosie's main purpose is to offer advocacy to the women who come for help. The advocates' motto was "diapers to detox." We could never assume what a woman needed when she walked through the doors. The advocates provide counseling, financial assistance, emergency clothing and food, and many referrals from battered women's shelters to job training programs. I spent a good deal of my time there getting women emergency clothing and providing one-on-one crisis counseling. Another part of my job was to supervise the resource area after lunch time. The resource area has brochures and books concerning job training, housing, and health care. There is a phone for women to use for business calls and chairs for women and their kids to come in during the day and relax. Many women use the resources, but many regulars are homeless and need a safe place to stay during the day, because in broad daylight they are vulnerable to being robbed or raped. Many of the women who came to the resource area were newly homeless because the "safety net," which was weak to begin with, was completely taken away by the Welfare Reform bill. Or they were pushed out of their homes because Boston is going through a serious gentrification process - landlords raise rent too high for people with low incomes to afford housing. Women who have lived in a home for almost their whole lives are forced to leave as the city "improves" a neighborhood.

I was often overwhelmed at the magnitude of many women's situations. I felt acutely aware of my privilege and of being one more young intern in a line of students from prestigious universities coming to get a summer experience. Luckily, I had a responsibility that, I admit, I resented a bit at first. I was to make sure the resource area had a pitcher of water, ice, and mugs for the women. If you recall, July was unbearably hot. Water became a commodity. I found that I was able to welcome more women into the resource area and begin more conversations with them by first offering them a cold cup of water. Women who once passed me by began to come to me to help them with job applications, housing information, jury duty forms. They would hand me their babies and tell me about their new job or their new budding relationships. My relationship with many women evolved from stranger to friend. The simplest act of hospitality began it. Even a cup of cold water can make a difference.

The banging of lids on their pans,
Busy footsteps going back and forth
Heating food over the crackling fire,
Getting ready for the evening meal.

Why isn't she helping me?
Why isn't she interested
In serving the perfect meal
For our visiting Lord?

Why isn't she offering him
Our best wine and choicest bread,
Water for his hands and feet,
And tending to his every need?

I'll get my lazy sister's attention
To stop sitting there and listening,
Hanging on his every word.
Bang again go those lids on the pans.

Ah, Martha, open your eyes!
The Lord sees you and Mary
As so much more than works,
And acts of simple servitude.

"Arise, shine, for your light has come"
To illuminate this dark and fallen world
With your extraordinary and complex gifts
Of reflection, direction, and creativity.

Put aside those pans and perfect dinners,
O woman, the perfection of creation,
The truest bearer of Christ's redemption,
The bringer of the Kingdom, the hope of this world.

O woman, come claim your holy personhood!

*"Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in all the world,
what she has done will be told in remembrance of her." (Mark 14:9)*

What is the nature of this memory
you imprint on us all?
Is it that we never knew your name,
or just dared never speak it?
Are you only a memory
never allowed to become a reality?
Is that all it signifies, your namelessness
on which a scholar made her name?
Reduced to a curiosity of the learned;
a window to a world to be coldly prodded.
What did you know?
But that you desired to know...

So you knelt low
and let the tears flow
like the stories you'd longed to tell.
Unleashed the flood that kills,
Drew the bath that renews,
Transformed old, hardened skin to new.
Cried the tears for the hurt beginning to mend,
and the one now threatening to open.
Poured out the oil that long
boiled in your veins;
It now becomes balm for your soul
as it penetrates and is absorbed by the sole
of the very feet with which you now stand.

So rise now woman,
abide with us
who throughout time
you've returned to life.
Bask in the freedom
only intimacy grants.
For your courage makes you
healed and holy,
and earns you your name,
a new name,
named love
by Love himself.

I had it all planned out.
Forever, really, or a long time since,
when first we plotted all the crossing lines and found the Miracle,
where they all converged.
It was decided then,
that we three would be the ones to go,
and I the one to speak.
Years, it was, that I perfected it.
“Hail, King to come! We are stars of the East
Come to salute the Son of the Sun!”
And on and on
about how we had seen it first,
had seen and made ready,
had dunned our friends for gifts -
gold for a king, for a sun;
frankincense for a sweet savor;
myrrh - well, myrrh because we knew -
we three and he alone - why he had come -
all dressed up, of course, in the gilded pomposities of our former age.
But when we got there, that stable,
with the cows chewing their cud
loudly
and that peasant girl in sacking (none too clean)
and the puling infant half-buried in rotting straw,
it all went out of my mind,
and all I could manage was, “Lord,
of thine own have we given thee.”

Come by dawn
to see this day
ahead in splendor,
golden hope now shimmering.

Say: "Yes."

Come by noon
to see what isn't yet,
plans like flags
unfurling in the breeze.

Say: "Yes."

Come by dusk
to see the day anew:
what isn't - and, quietly,
what may never be.

Say: "Well, o.k."

Come by dark
to see the unseen,
unspoken stars reflected in
the galaxies of the heart.

Say: "Yes."

Come again by dawn
to see this day
ahead in splendor:
hope shimmers anew.

Say: "Yes again,
and Amen."

So, this is where the rubber hits the road. Feminism in the local church.

Following a meeting of our Sunday afternoon, middle school youth group, we circled up for prayer as always. Our routine is to cross our arms, right over left, and hold hands in a circle so that after we pray we are in a position to turn ourselves around and remain locked - symbolic of our going out into the world as a team. There we were. Hands locked, ready to pray, when from the boys' side of the circle came a cry, "O Kenny, you're such a girl."

Shocked, I stood there with my mouth wide open. The girls were quiet, the boys were quiet. Everyone knew this comment had struck a nerve. This was it. The time to teach a valuable lesson. All that I learned about feminism and theology and justice in seminary was ready to be made known to the world.

But it happened so suddenly, without warning. I hadn't developed an articulate response to a statement like this. My mind went blank, and I didn't think I could respond in the same way I did when I was a little girl kicking the guy in the shins. What to do?

I looked to the girls. We were all clearly offended by the remark. Who did these boys think they were? I walked toward the boys' side of the circle and stood between Kenny and the boy, this brother T.J., who had called him the name. I cleared my throat and gently placed my arms around their shoulders.

"Kenny, my friend, you've just been called a name. Do you know what it means to be called a girl? Girls, do you want to help me out? Tell Kenny what it means to be called a girl."

At this point I began to sweat, praying fervently that the girls would hold their heads high and remember all of the wonderful things that make them special. Voices, girls, let me hear your voices...

"Talented," pipes Kristen, the athletic one.

"What else?," I ask.

"Funny," adds Ellie Mae, the shy one.

"What else?," I ask.

"Intelligent," chimes Stephanie, the sweet one.

"What else?," I ask.

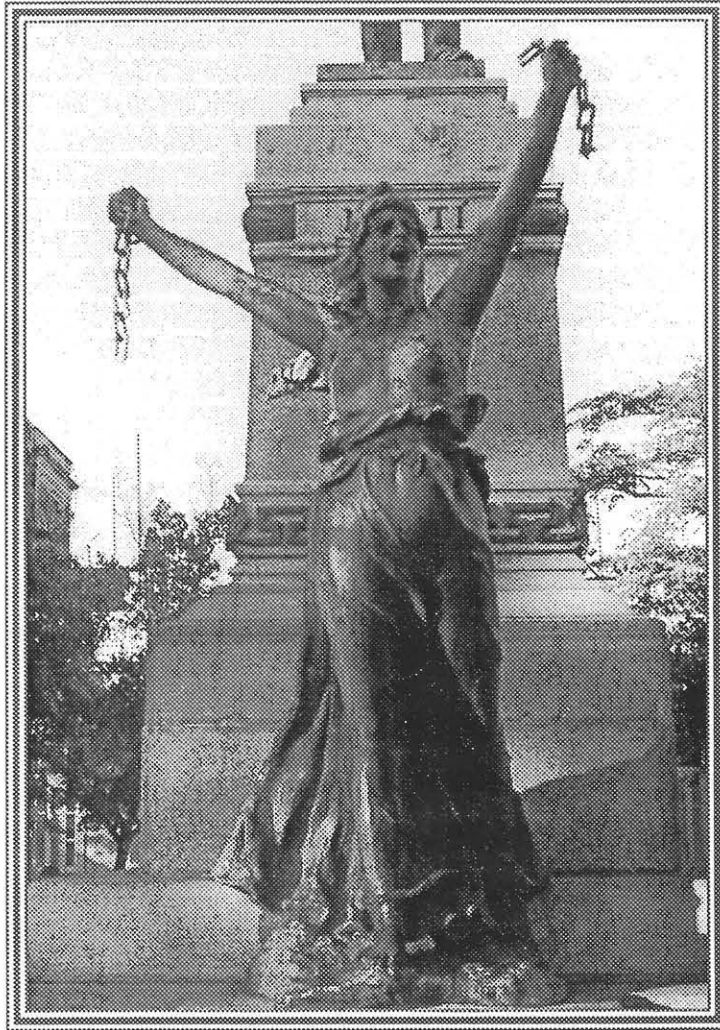
"Athletic," yells Angela, the basketball player.

"What else?," I ask.

"Beautiful," answers Genevieve, the smallest of the bunch.

"Well, Kenny," I add with a pat to his shoulder and a new sense of confidence in myself as a member of this bold group of talented, funny, intelligent, athletic, and beautiful girls, "being called a girl is a pretty big compliment."

"Amen," resounded the chorus of mothers peering in from the doorway, waiting to pick up their sons and daughters from another Sunday afternoon youth group meeting.



Cuba, 2000

She dusted off her good intentions and headed down the road, carrying a small suitcase that had been hastily thrown together - crisis seldom allows time for organization. Of all the possible thoughts available to her at that moment, her mind fixed on one: how few things she needed to carry with her over the threshold when her mother finally threw her out. After all, what could be deemed essential in a world where a mother could slam the door so spitefully on her only child? She also quickly realized how that door-frame had so neatly contained a life, no matter how disturbed, for nearly nineteen years, harboring the taunts and suspicions that her mother unfurled without ever allowing the venom to be seen beyond the front gate...

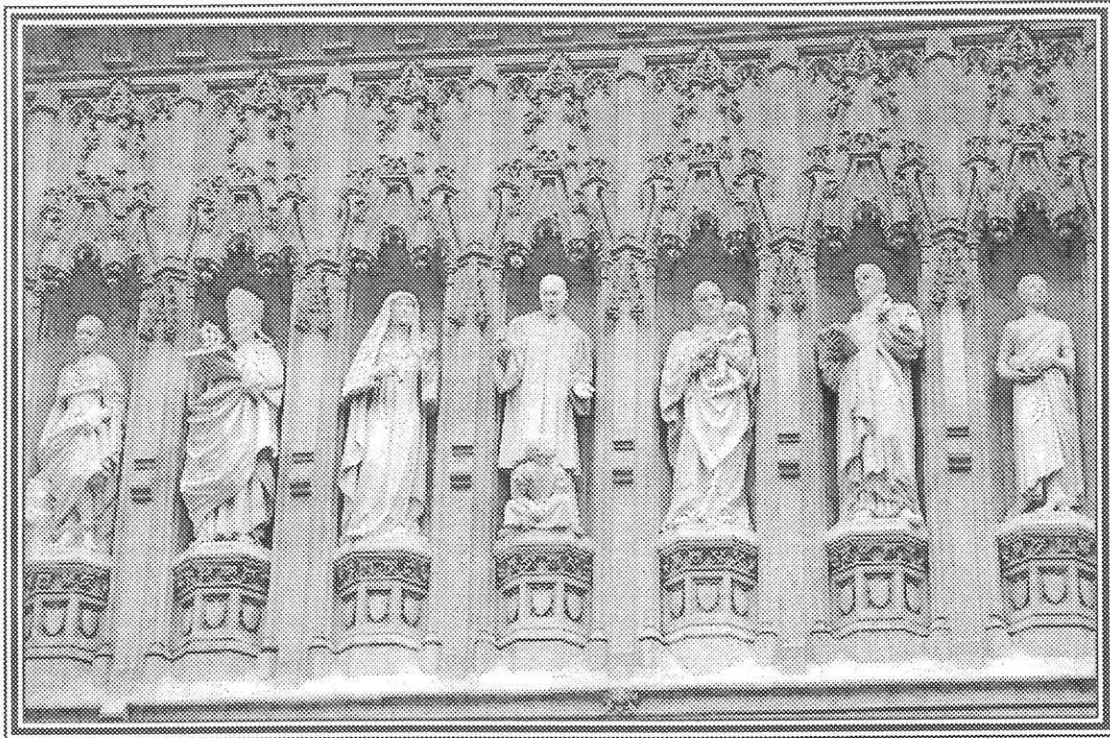
Some food, what little money there was, a few changes of clothes, and a small box of keepsakes littered with photos of her beloved grandparents, a ticket stub to a forgotten movie, a penny squashed flat, and what could be termed a love letter (when she felt so inclined). These comprised the sum of her possessions. Generally speaking, men irritated her with their lack of common sense and their single-minded pursuit of "one thing." Having been raised on a host of tidily prepared sayings like, "why buy the cow when the milk's so cheap?" she had developed a keen suspicion of what she thought men's nature and intentions to be. And so she observed them warily, taking precautions to steel herself against the horrible things her mother had spent years warning her about. The irony of her situation on this particular afternoon, therefore, did not escape her, though its perception offered little consolation. You see, her mother had accused her of carrying a bastard child, like the whore she was presumed to be. As she walked on, the world unrolled before her like an elaborately constructed joke, perhaps made for the amusement of the bored gods.

Displeased with this consideration, she concentrated on the immediate task of walking, made especially difficult by the summer climate. She walked in front of the sun's relentless lashes of heat, left branded by stripes of sweat. Her dress clung in the steam to reveal a strong frame but, with each step, she felt humbled and heavy despite the muscular leanness of her body. She checked the sky overhead for signs of rain, but the hot whiteness betrayed no desire to relent. Briefly, the young woman considered laying down her frame alongside the road until she, like it, became covered with upset dirt and silt, crackling like a hardboiled egg in the heat. She would come to resemble a body dried like a husk, a body to match a broken spirit. But she considered this only briefly, determining that her soul was jagged, not smooth, and, therefore, likely to stick ferociously in the guts of any situation.

So, instead of casting her eyes inward in defeat, she met the road in front of her in the customary fashion, simply putting one foot in front of the other in a rhythm of survival. In this way, she came to sense a thing of value. She felt a guiding hand at the small of her back, and saw a vision ahead of footsteps trodden before she has ever taken her first breath. They were the tracks left by all the women who lived before her who had been falsely named and cast out, only to discover that they could walk this path carved by necessity, and maintained by will.



20th Century Martyrs



Photographed by Stephanie M. Urie

VOICE remembers the lives of great men and women of conviction
who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their ideals.

The 20th century's most prominent martyrs are memorialized at England's, Westminster Abbey. These statues were unveiled by the Archbishop of Canterbury on July 9, 1998 to commemorate what was the bloodiest century for the world's innocent. As pictured here, the martyr's statues stand in niches on the western wall just over the door to the nave; immediately below are four female figures representing Truth, Justice, Mercy and Peace. While these virtues were embodied in the lives of these men and women, and the countless faithful they represent, the world did not receive them.

Their voices were silenced.

Maximillian Kobe, Poland, killed: 1941
Manatee Miasmal, South Africa, killed: 1928
Janna Luwum, Uganda, killed: 1977
Grand Duchess Elizabeth, Russia, killed: 1918
Martin Luther King, JR., United States, killed: 1969
Oscar Romero, El Salvador, killed: 1980
Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Germany, killed: 1945
Esther John, Pakistan, killed: 1960
Lucian Taped, Papua New Guinea, killed: 1942
Wang Shimming, China, killed: 1972

The echo of their legacy can be heard, if we choose to listen.

STILLNESS

Deborah Meister

In memoriam RMG

Our lessons together were hell.
Five words from you
could invest a difficult math problem
with the appalling clarity of another planet
as the rules took flight like blackbirds
and left behind a raucous caw of confusion.

Your law students were as intransigent as I.
They wrote,
"Professor should not hit his head with his hands when students reply.
It is demoralizing."

This last lesson is the worst yet.
I hate it. And I hate
that you're not here to taunt me through.
I kick and tear at the place you used to be,
afraid it will remain,
or go away.

And I yearn for a lesson to not-learn from your pencil
and not this last, dread tutor:
you, as I last saw you,
when in your face I learned
what it is to let your heart be still.

JANE

Lynne M. Mikulak

For Jane ~ September 15, 1960 - April 4, 1999

They say your eyes
are the windows to your soul.
But what I witnessed
that Easter evening
went far beyond
the pane
as windows and walls
gently crumbled
in the slow quake of your release.

It was so wide.
So wide
that my mouth opened in unison
and I quietly hoped
that I could go too.

...POSTSCRIPT

Stephanie M. Urie

For M., a voice silenced too early.

arms up, weeping on the wailing wall
you crossed to get away from all
the Ravage

lethe bathes you now, disremember more
i Pound the rocks that line its shore
yielding not

God, you said you would

raise the dead...

surreptitious locusts digested all your years;
bloated on the kill, Belching jeers.
you, their accomplice.

next time around could you please resist
aiming yourself at your own Fist.
death, death really wins?!

God, when will you

raise the dead...

your pain rankled into anger
anger into Rage
in the end, the architect of your own cage

you pulled a capote; drowned
in their charm's flood
they conquered your mind, Robbed your soul, in cold blood

God why have you not

raised the dead...

curtain crashed on your Act, turned to iron.
your proscenium vanished.
...sans encore

the veil sneering there, unmoved by my tears.
my face in the dust of your years.
...Damn morass

God, when will you

raise the dead...

deafening dervishes gloat the carnage
among who Remain,
taunting us

then, merciful angels stirring the air
between here and There,
restoring us

God, you raise the faces of the dead...

you're gone from us, this cursory place
eased, at last, into a pool of -- of that
so brutally wanting here -- Grace

Forgive her for she knew not what she did.
our father, hound wandering souls --
and leave them not forever hid.

God, you said you would

raise the dead.

CREDITS

We would like to thank the following supporters for their generosity.
Because of their contributions, women's voices at YDS
will continue to be heard through this publication.

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