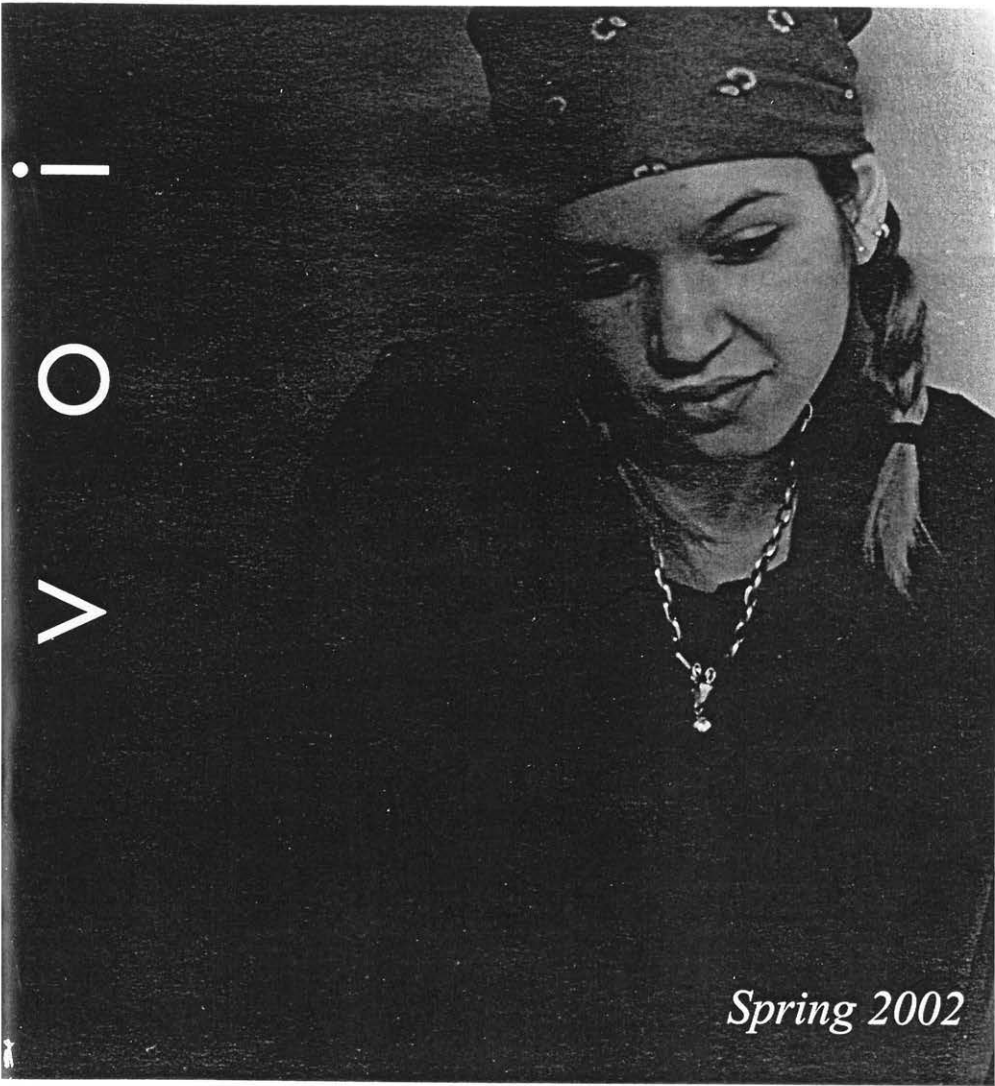


V O I C E



*Spring 2002*

*Voice* is a yearly forum of writing, art and ideas published by the Women's Center at Yale University Divinity School. Submissions of poetry, fiction, sermons, photography and art are encouraged for Spring 2003. It is open to present students, faculty, staff, family

\*Cover photograph by Noelle York

Voice 2002

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

-Margaret Kuhn

## Note from the Editors

From different ages and political standpoints, different religions, homelands, and lenses, the work between these covers shows how the women in our community relate and interact with the complicated, humorous, and painful world around us.

While exploring these pages, it is easy to get lost in the thoughts, words, and expressions of others. We, the editors of *Voice*, offer you this challenge: Rather than allowing these works to provide moments of escape into the worldview of another, let it inspire you to make your own relationship with the world and with the divine. Express yourself in any way you choose.

*Katherine Dick*  
*Noelle York*

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# *Sarai*

---

Kristen Dunn

Well of course she laughed. Old people  
Laugh more than young people do.  
Almost as if they've earned it somehow.  
Addle-headed, disconnected, they  
Laugh at nothing.

We who are still in the battle take nothing  
Very seriously. So, when Sarai laughs, we are  
Properly shocked. Or we rejoice at her defiance.  
Whatever. Sarai doesn't fight or argue or  
Take a stand.

Sarai, at ninety-nine, will be cracked and dragged and  
Split open and she won't have another night's rest again,  
Ever. After begging for this through all her quick life,  
She is about to carry Abram and YHWH's plan  
On her spine.

Sarai can't do it. She can't even begin to  
Imagine it from where she stands. If she were  
Younger she might ask why, but she knows  
Better than that now.  
So she laughs.

## *Pablo's Woman*

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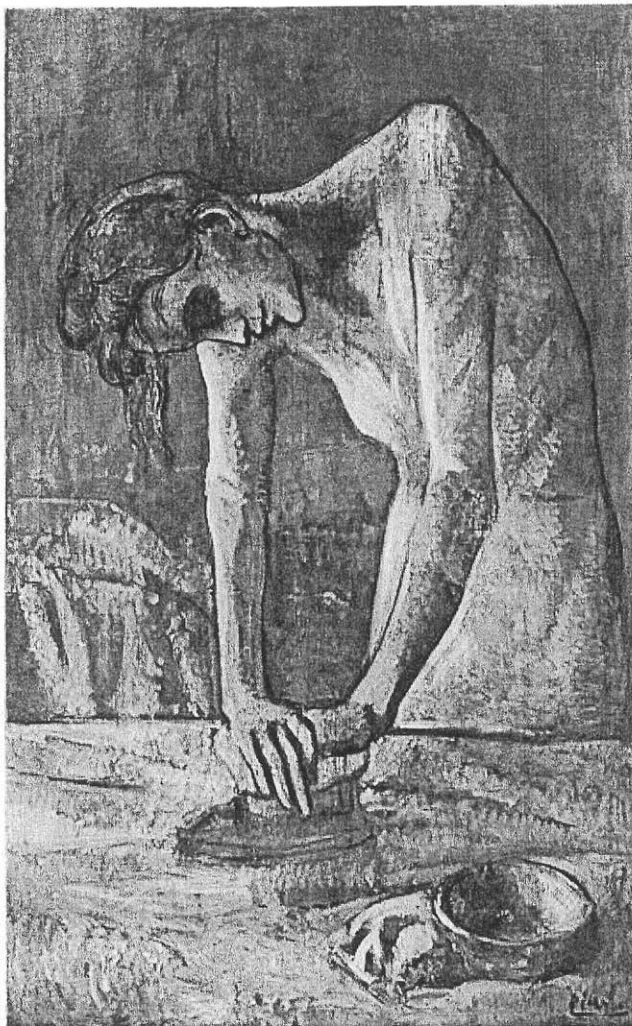
Marissa Smith

For her there is no feast,  
Just an empty bowl  
And black pools for eyes.  
Her gray rags, so worn  
By time and toil, blend  
Into pale arms and neck;  
A sheath of flesh and cotton  
Shrouding her elongated skeleton.  
No books define the ends of her station,  
In work, they add clutter,  
In life, dangerous ideas.

She is the only thing that belongs here.  
She was born to stand eternally,  
Bony shoulders stretched and stooped,  
Bowed by a weight more efficient  
Than the pressure of the instrument  
In her hands.

*The poem was written for Carl Grindley's Creative Writing Workshop class last semester. It was written as a "Response Poem", i.e. it was responding to another poem written for class that took a more feminist stance on the acquisition of an ironing board.*





Pablo Picasso, *Woman Ironing*, 1904. Oil on canvas, 45 3/4 x 28 3/4 inches. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Thannhauser Collection, Gift, Justin K. Thannhauser, 78.2514.41. © 2001 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

# *The Artist's Garden at Giverny*

---

Rachel Gordan

*The Artist's Garden At Giverny.*

Caption Reads: functions as a retreat for the artist.

For my eyes, too, a comfort.

Bedsread art, perhaps.

Lavenders and melon greens, easy.

*Rest here, in swirls of purple.*

I do, and find a warring, wild land.

The peach path keeps two sides of roses barely at peace,

While dancing trees, ignorant

Of petty striving

Among the flora, raise arms above,

High, where nothing else can reach.

Clusters of flowers up front compete

For attention. Like chorus girls, they need each other

To look right, though each still dreams

She's more than a dab.

*Taller girls in back!* They pay no heed.

All lean in to the center.

Darker greens, in back, stand serious.

No pastel ambiguity, but no fun, either.

Stubborn and stocky, they group

Next to the lithe trees,

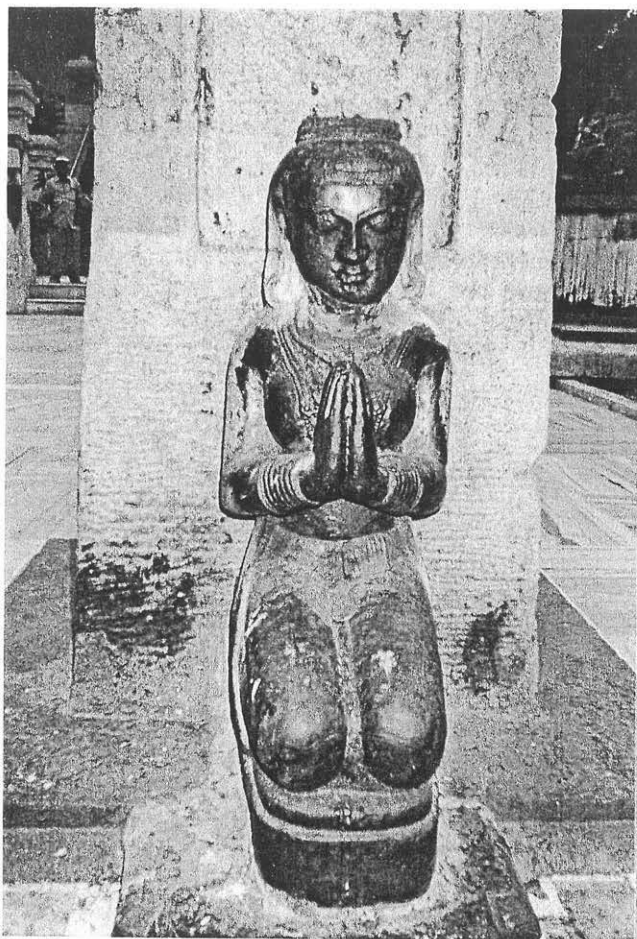
Waiters' arms stretched up, platters on high.

Tending to this party of cliques.

*seat of enlightenment*

---

Katherine Dick



# *Untitled*

---

Ivy Helman

I look at You,  
and You look at me.

In my eyes You see my secrets,  
my fears and my dreams,

yet with all that You know  
and the thorns on Your head  
You welcome me home  
as though I had never left.

My eyes toward heaven  
Yours' toward earth...

# Home

Marisa Tabizon

---



# *In Search For Water*

---

Evalyn M. Wakhusama

I stepped out into the world in search for water, for I was thirsty and so were my people.

The path to the river was unfamiliar... it made twists and turns. I needed courage. I recalled my mama's sweet words to me as she cheered me at the door saying, "Daughter, have courage. You must bring back water to the people". That is when I knew that I must keep walking to the source even though it was far, it seemed almost unreachable.

The strangeness of the place was overwhelming, I had traveled many days from home. I struggled with the temptation of turning back. What would mama say? The village knew that Achola's daughter had gone for some water... they promised to pray and wait for the drink.

The currents in the river were strong, faster than anything that I had seen or imagined, I was frightened. This is not for me, I could hear in my heart! My head drummed the question of: What if I drown? I! prayed for courage, the gal I was, sheltered and frightened by the wildest of imagination! The gal I was being transformed into...

I soon realized that I was not alone, we had to be many in my boat. The recognition of company suspended my childhood fears and led to a feeling of strength and liberation!

I took on every experience as divine orchestrated, the river, the water flowed as if that was all it was meant to do, I observed every shallow wave and ripple, it seemed to call me invitingly. I needed to get to the deep in order to draw water for my people. I moved slowly and carefully, protecting my mother's daughter. I drew to the center and felt the cold soothing water over my feet. As I progressed further, the water level also rose. I stepped tentatively, the deep water was wild. It flowed in different, unpredictable ways. Perhaps the parting of the waters, the untamed current, was like having to release the relationship forged. There was both joy of the waters' flow and pain in its parting.

I was drawing mine to take away; part of the water will belong to my people and me.

I did not realize that I had come to the bank, the moment in the deep seemed a lifetime, but it is over, so now, I lift up my eyes again, It is time to walk back, they must be waiting for the drink...

---

Achola must be waiting, and the village, and the girls as well...  
Apondi and junior Achola, they are next in line to go for water the  
next time we run out...

But wait a minute; the water I am carrying is not in a pot!  
My mother carried a pot on her head and brought water to the family.  
I am carrying a different kind of water, inscribed in a foreign  
language. Achola might ask, "What on earth is "Lux et Veritas"?"  
You see that is when, long journey past, I will explain, "mama my  
water is different, the river I visited was the river of knowledge and I  
am back to share it, so drink and quench your thirst!"

*Girl and Ganges*

---

Katherine Dick





# *When the Dining Hall Workers Went on Strike*

---

Rachel Gordan

When the dining hall workers went on strike  
We all talked about the weekly \$108 checks  
From the university, in our mailbox  
For buying food. Yeah, right!  
We were happy to have the extra cash.  
But we didn't know what to say  
to the dining hall workers  
we pretended not to recognize  
who had brought us our Lucky Charms  
And let us stay past closing time.

On our Gothic campus  
They picketed loudly and rudely,  
In jeans and baseball caps,  
While we tried to study and walk to class.  
We skimmed over the stories in the school newspaper,  
Not really knowing the issues  
Or if we cared.  
But we guessed we'd hate to have their jobs  
So you had to feel bad.

And it only made us appreciate our education all the more,  
Thinking of what opportunities we would have, the things we would see.  
We were certain  
Our learning would pay off  
In greater understanding.

# Untitled

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Darienne Gagne

Once, I saw a poster that read:  
*I'm not a feminist but:  
I enjoy the choice  
to be comfortable in pants.  
I kind of like my education.  
It's good that it's against the law  
for my partner to beat me.*

Jesus, who killed feminism in this generation?  
And, for that matter,  
who locked up all the angry women?

Cast anger as a giant, shrieking  
blinking, red arrow  
that points out what is missing.  
Anger will be the character saying,  
*Look! at what is missing*  
and spur action. Therefore  
anger has much to teach about peace  
and justice.

This is a woman-hating society.  
And if you don't believe that  
you obviously don't own a television  
or read any magazines --  
you've never heard of cosmetic  
surgery, push-up bras  
or, ahem, Larry Flint.

*What are you mad at me for?*  
*I didn't do anything. My mom ran our house -- I  
had to be nice to her.*  
Oh, that is another matter  
entirely. Forced and exceptional behavior?  
Toward your mother? You're right.  
Feminists are harpies and need  
(pray for us!) to be shut up.

# *The Joy of Cooking Breakfast*

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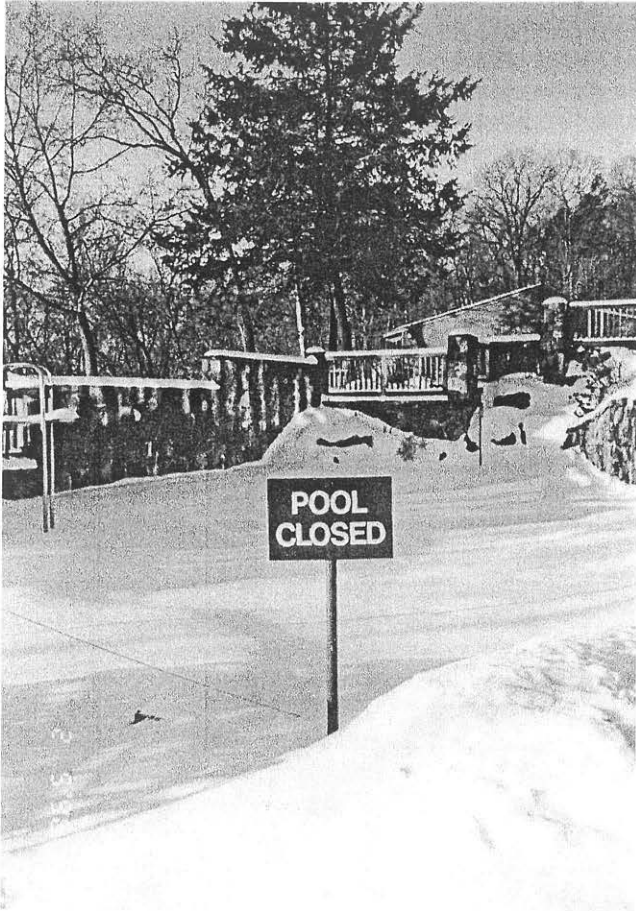
Rachel Gordan

The Joy of Cooking Breakfast  
Never explains the happiness I feel  
Standing in my little kitchen  
Bare feet on cold tiles, in front of the stove,  
Your hand around my waist  
And your cheek against my forehead.  
Quick! A photograph. Because you say  
I never cook.  
So, I pose like I am  
Some woman  
Who cooks for her man,  
A spatula in one hand and in the other,  
A plate with blueberry pancakes  
That seem to bring you  
So much joy.

# *The Downside of Winter*

---

Marisa Tabizon



# *I Live in the Company of Women*

---

Noelle York

*I live in the company of women.*

I am a creator.

That sounds dramatic, but it is really very simple. I really love to create, to begin something, watch it grow, take shape, take on its own personality, loving something into being. I take great joy in sewing, healing, photography, sending care packages, teaching, making elaborate Christmas gifts, and raising my dogs to be good citizens. I do not necessarily create well or with much skill, but I try to create with great love. Generally, I create simply for the sake of the process, but sometimes for a functional purpose, sometimes to give someone else the pleasure of the product. Mostly, I create out of real love for the materials at hand and for the problem of making them into a new thing more brilliant than before.

It seems, if family stories hold true, that this creative drive of mine stems from both of my grandmothers. Both sewed copious clothes for their children and were divine cooks. My maternal grandmother, a gifted gardener, spent her last years learning watercolor and calligraphy while battling a brain tumor. On my father's side, my grandmother was always taking in strays. Children, dogs, cats, no one within reach was safe from a face scrubbing and plate of fried chicken. Her house was always full of strange, mangy-looking animals totally devoted to her every move.

With these wonderful women in my past and my eager penchant for helping things grow, what use have I for a punishing, tyrannical God? Growing up, I never heard sermons about the wrath of God, causing terror and nightmares. I was protected, by my church community, my parents and, ostensibly by God, from the absurd idea that I was not good enough for God or that God was going to send me to hell. I instead learned that I was a child of God and that God would take care of me, just like Mom and Dad did. Church was a happy place for me, where I was constantly being reassured of my acceptedness in both the human and divine world. I learned that God made me and Jesus loves me and knock and ye shall receive.

*I live in the company of women.*

English and Women's Studies were my majors in college. My favorite courses were where the two intersected. My bookshelf

---

still reflects that, heavy-laden with novels and essays by Barbara Kingsolver, Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison, Julia Alvarez, Alice Walker, Virginia Woolf. I am in new territory now, where classes have titles like "Patristics," with no women at all, have one or two token-esque women writers or feature writers like Julian of Norwich, brilliant but demure, insisting that she is unintelligent because of her femininity.

I look forward to a time when there is no reason for not having women in the curriculum, for a time when a course is not considered "feminist" or subversive for having half of its readings by theologians that happen to be female. I'm not sure whether this will happen in my lifetime, although things are changing rapidly. The Christian world is beginning to accept serious scholarship by women outside of the realm of feminist theology just as it is beginning to accept women at its pulpits.

*I live in the company of women.*

When I began volunteering as a rape crisis counselor, educator and survivor advocate in the fall of 1996, I dove in expecting drama and minute-by-minute life-altering experiences as I counseled sad sexual assault survivors back into emotional safety. I was, of course wrong. And naïve and selfish and young. These sentiments were mercifully and painfully "cured" over the next three years as I took hotline calls, made visits to the emergency room, taught at high schools. I was broken, day by day, by the stories women told and the hands that gripped mine. There is nothing dramatic about it.

"Rape" is a filthy word. In my mind, there is not one that equals it for running chills down my spine. Everything it connotes is the antithesis of good: sex as a weapon, physical domination and harm, imposition of power. I often feel marred discussing rape and its implications, simply knowing that this implement of destruction not only exists but is happening every few minutes.

At the same time, in this culture that is so saturated with concepts of violence, every story that I can think to tell seems like a cliché, meant to bring a spark of pity: Jessie, an intelligent and thoughtful girl who liked very much to party, came to me the day after a particularly raucous fraternity bash. "I'm not sure what went

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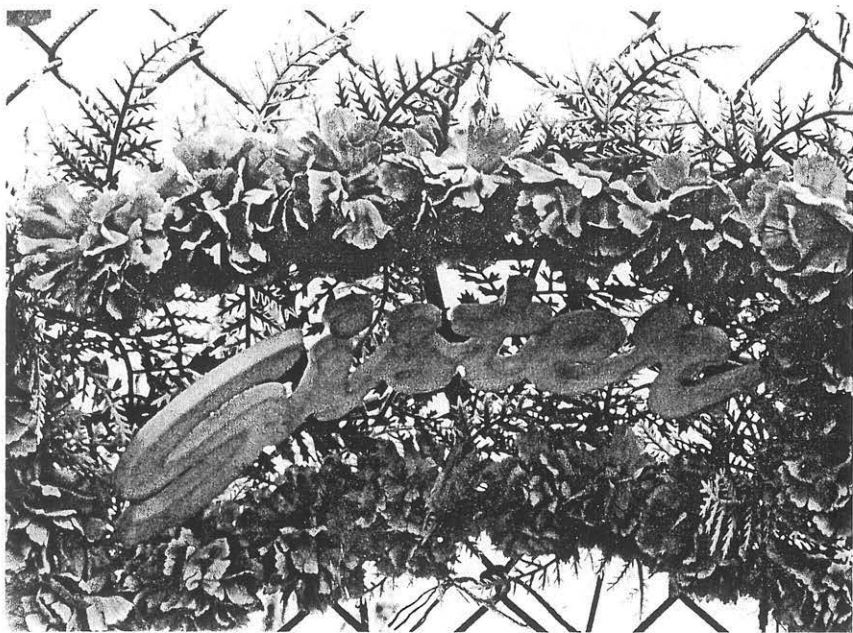
on. I don't really remember how many there were or if anything... you know... *happened*. But I woke up naked. You won't tell? I don't want anyone to get in trouble." Once I was awakened in the middle of the night by a call for a crisis counselor for a stranger rape survivor. When I arrived, I was told by a nurse, "You can go home. We had to send her to the children's hospital. She's nine." There's the t-shirt on the Clothesline Project, a memorial to sexual assault survivors: "Memories of my freshman year: 1) Being best friends with my roommate. 2) Actually PASSING the Econ final! 3) Being raped by a guy in my dorm. 4) This university let him stay." Writing this feels to me like listing statistics.

I could give the ends of these stories, both painful and hopeful, but it still would not give justice to the faces and voices attached to these vignettes. In fact, in three years as a rape crisis counselor, I came up with nothing to give justice to these faces and voices. I was eventually forced to shut up and listen to the pain that society as a whole is inflicting on women by insisting that these things are, at best, "women's issues". These are, of course, *not* women's issues, but the issues of anyone that has or is a sister, wife, mother, pastor, lover of women.

*I live in the company of women* because I am a woman and I am deeply loved. I am learning, though, that many women grow up feeling either unloved by the people around them or unaware of the intense love of God. Many girls grow up feeling that they are flawed to the core, devalued as humans, unlovable and totally worthy of the exploitation that they experience. This is a fact of our culture and of other cultures, a fact that, until reversed, stands in contrast to the teachings of the Jesus Christ. Jesus was, in many ways, the first feminist, frustrating the rabbinical tradition by not only tolerating, but welcoming women into his fold of students. Women were neither objects of lust nor receptacles of unwarranted blame nor mere housekeepers. Jesus saw the women in his following in the same way as he saw his chosen disciples: people of God. Jesus Christ, in my understanding, taught total opposition to oppression. From this first humble feminist theologian, men and women still have much to learn.

*Sister*

Noelle York





# *Time and Eternity I*

---

Carolyn Chau

Tied to the sky  
Eyes soaked with joy  
The light blinds  
So gently yet –  
With unmistakable force  
Faith is a passion  
Heaven stays  
Kneels patiently before you  
And you want to walk into her skin  
Snap the cord  
Resolve  
In union  
Relationship is still too distant  
You want to be *in* Heaven.

# Looking

---

Rachel Gordan

Thinking you will exit the train, first,  
And buy your paper, reading it, all the way up Park,  
Absorbed in what is happening in the Middle East and in New Jersey.  
You never notice the hotdogs and pretzels, or the new coats they're wearing.

You agree. And, anyway it's not your style to stare.  
But, a girl in a yellow rain jacket stops to look at jewelry.  
And we both notice. When you turn to me,  
I see a thirsty iris

# *Tibetan Prayer Flags*

---

Katherine Dick



I am not strong enough to sustain this hope.  
It is too much for me.

Life lulls me or sears me and both times I let go.  
As if I'm holding any guarantee of this joy.

I pray and feel the rain on my face  
and wonder why this answer requires so much.

Time plows me or echoes me and even still I fear.  
For the days I dream in safety leave my eyes with the tears.

I turn and You watch  
for me swearing in your own name.

## *“Closer to God”*

---

Beth LeBar

I was the only nurse working that evening on a busy medical floor at the hospital. 11 patients, a new admission coming in, families visiting, a new intern who didn't know the ropes yet (or, apparently, where anything was - I found him looking for alcohol swabs in the linen closet), and a generally high level of the free-floating anxiety common to busy medical floors in hospitals. Sick people who aren't in their own homes and beds, have no privacy, very little control over anything, and who are forced to wear flimsy garments that don't close in the back tend to be anxious!

It was clear to me from the minute I walked onto the unit at the beginning of the shift that one of my patients, Rose (not her real name), was going to present a special challenge. She was recovering from an infection in her arm, but aside from limited arm movement and some difficulty picking things up, she was quite mobile and certainly able to talk. She also had Alzheimers, and was going through a difficult and painful transition phase, from being unaware of her illness to a realization that something was horribly wrong, that she was losing her memory as well as her ability to participate in her own life as she had done for 81 years. She needed to be with people, to talk, to be reassured, to be reminded that she would be able to go home soon. She also couldn't remember what floor she was on in the hospital, and for some reason this was particularly distressing to her.

Throughout the evening, her plaintive voice followed me, "now which floor am I on again? The second? I think I'm on the second floor but I'm not sure and I need to know. What floor am I on?" I gently told her again and again that she was on the fifth floor. I was sure that my voice betrayed no hint of impatience, but she knew better, and by the end of 8 hours, she was upset with herself for both her inability to remember where she was and for "bothering" me, as she put it. She could see how busy I was, but she really didn't have any choice other than to continually seek my help, and despite the innately unsatisfactory nature of our conversation, we had come to trust and respect each other. She trusted me to answer her questions and reassure her, and I had absolute faith that she would keep asking!

As I was giving report to the night nurse, I spotted her out of the corner of my eye looking very excited and pleased, barely able to

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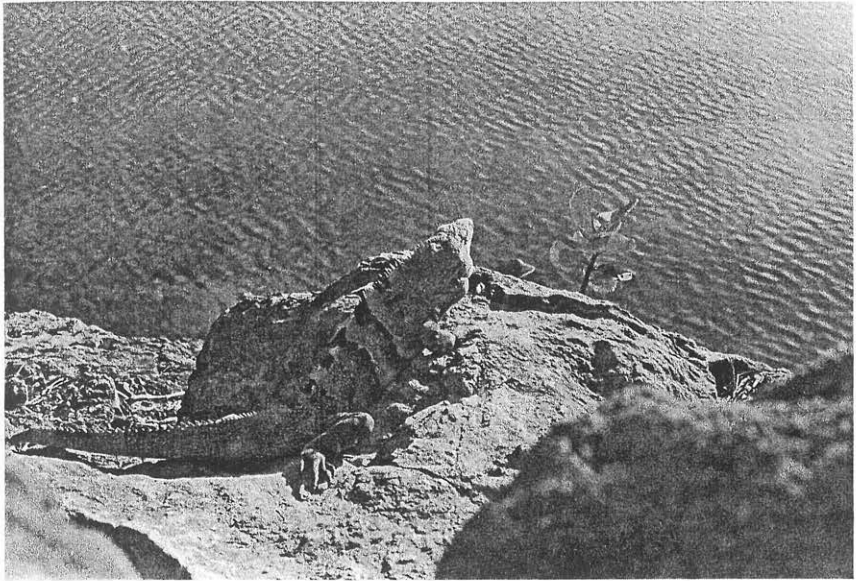
contain herself. After I finished, she rushed up to me, and said, "I know how I can remember where I am!! I know how to remember!" Of course I asked how, thinking to myself how silly I was going to feel if she came up with some simple solution that had been escaping me all evening. Her eyes were bright with excitement as she said, "We're closer to God here on the fifth floor than on the second floor, and if I ever needed to be closer to God, now is the time!"

i asked her if she writes  
<raw>  
she said i used to  
but then i got happy  
does that mean i'm unhappy

simone said that  
happiness  
is not the point  
ask someone are you happy  
<wild>

and you get a nervous laugh  
an oh you're one of those OPTIMISTS  
a well i'm hanging in there  
<unblended>  
i don't want to hang

i want to fly  
if my wax melts  
<honey>  
at least i can say  
i met the sun





## *an atheist's storybook*

---

Katherine Dick

she curses the nuns who blessed her birth. walking up the hill--the one her mother walked up four miscarriages ago--to scream at them about her existence and disbelief and disturbed on the way up by the fact that they might already be dead. mary (*she means eve*) and the serpent. now that is a story i can curl up to. winding her body around a cheap bottle of beer, she says she will not believe until the man who molested her dies on this earth and god hand delivers a receipt for his damned soul. as far as i'm concerned, it's all snake oil for the dying, and my priest is a confidence man. throwing her voice up into the air, she catches it, gulping down a howl, along with another swig of beer

two thousand miles away, bound in pink fuzz and accented with rice milk-filled cheeks, from a plane another was born from the sky well after the time of the stork to become a curse among mothers for years to come. cancer downed the second one--and the child--no longer cloaked in pink fuzz and a smile, stands beside her. piss, death, and the nauseating smell of hospital antiseptic hover over both bodies, too soon to be chased away, up morphine-filled tubes

i don't cut myself anymore. i don't. though i slept with two men last weekend, and one was white. imagine that. he was a football player, and our bodies made slapping sounds together. she giggles and then laughs. i think we might have something, she says. after all, all i really need is a good man

she imagines she is holding the boat up. her mother loves the wind, the healing, and so work must be done. there's just something about being on the water with other women, she says. the sail dips into the water. legs braced, tiller in hand, there's yelling, and lines start twitching...and release. coming about, her oxygen tanks below clank together as the boat levels off, and then hit the other side of the berth

the liquid is filling her lungs. she chokes up air through tubes at first, and then a mask. for her mother, maybe too ill to do it

---

herself, she imagines the miles of tubes into lines, pushing in through her nose, her wrists, pulling her up out of bed, out onto the water again

some days i had enough to eat. my parents didn't know how to handle money, and some days there was food, and some days there wasn't. shrugging while she talks, she pulls the yellow skin away with her fingernails, and the foundation begins to peel and run

her body shows the devastation of any three-year war. her mother is too weak to get up by herself now, and she must help her to the toilet by the bed. she picks up the container carefully and empties it and washes it and puts it back. she holds her hand for a while and then--so exhausted she cannot sit up any longer--lets go and lays down on the roll-away at the foot of her mother's bed. her mother murmurs something, and she begins to get up. but then there is silence, and she drops off into sleep. seconds later it seems a nurse is shaking her awake. the boat sways. your mother just passed away she is told.

up on the vihar roof again, looking down into the shit-smelling rice paddies, she tries jumping off, but her body is strange and only floats above it. climbing off the ledge, she and runs down the stairs to where her roommate is waiting. two days later, a phone call comes for

her

it is the father at home calling to tell her it is time to return. her mother won't be around much longer he says--and on a plane she flies, above the rice paddies, to where her mother is waiting

*Girl Friends*

---

Marisa Tabizon



# *Listening To My Own Prophetic Voice*

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Jennifer M. Creswell

In my counseling class we are learning about voice; how many women lose it, and how, as pastoral caregivers, we can help them discover it once again. Sometimes I feel connected to my 'voice.' At other times though, it is clear to me that I have allowed someone, or something, to silence me. Like when I was standing in a long line at a rental car place in the Atlanta airport and I watched, horrified but silent, as a young white businessman at once flirted with and harassed the black woman behind the counter. I had just recently listened to bell hooks tell me not to do exactly what I had done. Another example of my voice being silenced that I experience regularly is this: I am sitting in class, paying attention, and I am itching to make a comment or ask a question, but I don't, because it sounds silly in my ears (the silencing ears that I've adopted as my own). Then someone else in the class, or maybe even the professor, makes my point, and it is taken seriously. Being silenced is being robbed of a certain power that is everyone's by virtue of having been created by God. Does God condemn the voiceless for not using our power to liberate ourselves and others? I don't believe that God does. I believe that God is gently nudging me to the confidence I need to re-learn that my voice has been silenced. I am fortunate to live in a time and place where many people around me encourage the emergence of voice. Last night I had a dream in which I acted in a seemingly uncharacteristic way. I was confident, assertive, AND not worried about how those around me would react to this Jennifer who had found her voice. Of course they welcomed me and didn't find anything about my behaviour to be odd. Now, I understand that being a woman who is well in control of her voice isn't always that easy. There are those who will attempt to silence vocal women using the same strategies that have been effective in silencing women for hundreds of years. However, my dream was a message to me that I do have a prophetic voice, and it encouraged me to use it. I hope that the effects of the dream will help me build self-confidence so that in the future when someone attempts to silence me I an answer with a resounding NO.

*It was a sincere honor and a deeply moving experience to preach this sermon in Neibuhr Hall on National Coming Out Day, October 2001. Though I've been out for more than twenty years, naming, claiming and proclaiming that truth in the context of preaching the Gospel was a surprisingly powerful experience. Since that day I have come to understand the insidious nature of oppression. It can eat away at us from within as well as from outside of ourselves. The way of justice and the work of mending creation must be attended to on a daily basis...even moment by moment. This sermon is dedicated to all those who suffer daily injustices and to those who are partners in seeking justice. —Sherry Osborn, M.Div. '02*

## *Laughter Is Being Transformed; Genesis 18.1-15, Psalm 15*

They must have been journeying through the hot sands for hours by the time they had appeared on Abraham and Sarah's tent step. At least that is what Abraham might have thought as the three strangers walked by. With open arms and a generous spirit, Abraham welcomes the strangers... "Take a break you must be weary. Rest. Wash up. Eat."

The hot dry air is filled with an urgent delight and extravagant hospitality. The *morsel* that is offered is in fact three seahs or 20 quarts of flour for of bread! An entire calf was prepared! All for complete strangers! Abraham and Sarah didn't know this was God, not yet anyway. They simply responded in what was for them as Israelites, one of the most highly regarded virtues...welcoming the stranger. For they themselves were strangers in a strange land. The messenger was indeed freely welcomed. It didn't take long though for the hospitality to dry up and blow away. The message was laughed at, too outrageous to be true.

And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah will have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said "Oh yes, you did laugh."

Well of course Sarah laughed! She knew it would take a miracle for she and Abraham to have a child. Abraham thought the news was pretty unbelievable too the first time he had heard it. He actually fell on his face in laughter before the Almighty. Thinking the news so outrageous and missing the importance of Sarah in God's plan for Israel, Abraham neglected to mention to her the surprising

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word of God. Doubt and disbelief can do that to a person.

Is anything too wonderful for God? The question is left hanging in the dry, dusty air for Sarah and Abraham and for us. Their whole understanding of who they were had been shattered by this new possibility given by God. As Walter Bruggeman writes, doubt and disbelief creeps in when "the powerful promise of God outdistances their ability to receive it."

I was a sophomore in college and a dear friend had asked me a similar question one night as we were hanging out in the dorm. "So are you going to tell your parents? Do you think they know?" That same year I had come to terms with the truth that I really was in love with a woman and that the feeling wasn't going to go away. No matter how much I doubted and questioned the rightness of it, I knew it in my soul that yes this is real, right and true. No matter what anyone else said, I knew. Am I going to tell my parents? I laughed. "No way am I telling them and no, I doubt they know." I had too much to lose. I didn't want to hurt them or disappoint them. Cut to the chase, the risk was that they might not love me anymore. To be lesbian or gay or bisexual (twenty years ago we didn't have the word for those who are transgendered) was to be sick, disgusting and evil.

Two years later I had graduated and was living at home while waiting for my girlfriend to quit her job so we could head to Florida to live and play tennis for the winter. Well, she just couldn't seem to quit her job so the tennis game was off as was the relationship. I was heartbroken, at home and in the closet. "Mom, can we go for a walk?" In the Osborn family, this was code for let's go to the woods behind our house and talk...this is serious.

Within the first minute of our walk, I came out to her. She immediately started crying, turned directly to me placed her hands on my shoulders saying, "I'm so glad you've finally told me. I've known since you were in high school." Well, I laughed! This time in absolute disbelief... I didn't even know in high school! I couldn't believe she did and that it had been okay all that time!

Is anything too wonderful for God? The question had hung in the air between my family and me for several years. My mother in

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her patience, wisdom, respect and deep abiding love waited for me to believe that it was safe to come out and come home with dignity.

Is anything too wonderful for God? In light of our world today, one-month after the horrific violence and destruction of September 11<sup>th</sup>, answering this question is a gospel imperative and it is an answer that must not be taken lightly. If we answer yes, there are things impossible for God, then as Brueggemann suggests, "God is not yet confessed as God. We have not conceded radical freedom to God. We have determined to live in a closed universe where things are stable, reliable and hopeless." If we dare answer "of course nothing is impossible for God," then we make way for God to be God. We become open to the shattering of our preconceived notions of reason, wisdom, morality, justice. We make way for the impossible possibility of receiving and offering extravagant hospitality. We make way for a day like today, where we can speak what has been denied and unspeakable in our houses of worship for too long...we are transgendered, lesbian, bisexual, and gay and we are the recipients of God's extravagant love whether in blue jeans or growing into them. We acknowledge and give thanks for the witness of those who stand in solidarity with us and for their part in creating safe spaces for us to be and become.

Let us also remember that our celebration cannot be fully realized until all people are free to live their lives with dignity, without fear of violence or of being fired. Without fear of losing loved ones and colleagues and without fear of being rejected by ones faith community. The hard work is before us. God is with us.

Is anything too wonderful for God? How will we answer, both individually and collectively? Know this, there is abundant good news in Sarah's doubting laughter... God's reconciling work in this world does not ultimately depend upon our answer. After all God is God.

Listen! Laughter is being transformed all around us from disbelief and fear to deep faith and extravagant love. May we be a people who can stand together in all our diversity, turn to our neighbor, place our hands on their shoulders and looking into their eyes say, "I'm so glad you are you...Nothing, nothing is too wonderful for God." Amen.

# *Blessing*

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Dean Rebecca Chopp

God of Mercy, Beauty, Holiness, Hope,

Be with us in the dawning of the new day as you again bring into being the miracle of new life. Sustain us with the courage you provided Hagar, the vision you gave to Sarah, the wisdom you bestowed upon Esther, the sheer strength you heaped up on Miriam. Like Elizabeth, let us proclaim justice in the land, like Mary, the mother of Jesus, let us look upon the world with the tenderness of a young mother with a new born child. Give us the tenacity of the woman who kept knocking, the generosity of the widow who gave her mite, the bravery of the mother who argued with you, the loving need of the woman who touched your garments, and the love of the woman who washed your feet. Let us always remember the woman who wept at your suffering and the suffering of the world. Let us be the first to proclaim new life.

Let us be holy women in your sight, oh Good God. Let us have visions of your reign, voices to proclaim your good news, hearts and hands to do your works of mercy in the world.

Amen



## Biographies

### **Jenifer Blevins**

Jenifer is a first-year MDiv from Chicago, Illinois.

### **Carolyn Chau**

I'm an MAR student at YDS in my first year. As a former philosophy major, I love all the spheres of human life that are concerned with eternal meaning: philosophy, religion, art. I enjoy writing poetry because I find it one of the media most conducive to speaking and hearing truth.

### **Jennifer M. Creswell**

Jennifer is a first-year MDiv who enjoys the poetry of Dickinson, Yeats, Hopkins, and others. She is pursuing a life of creative ministry, and she is committed to helping women find voice.

### **Katherine Dick**

Katherine is a first-year MAR (feminist studies concentrate) from Olympia, Washington.

### **Kristen Dunn**

Kristen is a first-year MDiv student.

### **Darienne Gagne**

Darienne Gagne is a first-year MDiv student who loves Naomi Wolf. And not just because she is a fellow a Yalie.

### **Rachel Gordan**

Rachel is a third-semester MAR (ethics concentrate) from Massachusetts.

### **Ivy Helman**

I am a first year in the MAR program from Milwaukee, WI. Writing poetry has been a hobby of mine since high school. All of the poems I have written contain elements of spirituality because I believe spirituality is an important part of life.

**Beth LeBar**

I'm Ruth's sister, a registered nurse working in education and geriatrics, and enjoy sharing stories of my patients and what they teach me.

**Claudia Muro**

Claudia is a third-year MDiv.

**Sherry Osborn**

I am an MDiv, '02, and since I'm in the middle of a job search that may or may not move me away from Hamden, I have no permanent residence other than earth! In any case... Hamden, CT is my current place of residence and Vermont is my spiritual place of residence.

**Marissa Rourke**

I am a first-year MAR concentrating in Religion and Literature. I hope to teach English and Religion in an interdisciplinary manner. I am a dancer who loves nature and animals, and having recently become an obsessive Tolkien fan, wish I could be a hobbit and live in Middle-earth, preferably the Shire.

**Marisa Tabizon**

I am a first year, MDiv student from the great state of Oregon. Friends, family, natural scenery, and, of course, Girl Scouting are great inspirations for taking pictures.

**Evalyn Wakhusama**

I am a sojourner in a foreign land. My homeland is Kenya, on the East Coast of Mother Africa. I love to sing and dance because my spirit and body are freed to celebrate the endowments of the Divine.

**Noelle York**

Noelle is a second year MDiv from Atlanta. When not taking dog-naps with her greyhound and yorkie, you can find her at the business end of her camera or sewing machine (although not at the same time).

## Contributors

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Rebecca Chopp  
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