Selection of a Woman's Poems

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This thesis is a creative project that is comprised of a selection of my poems. All of the poems relate to women or women's issues in one way or another. Based on the subject matter of each poem, the twelve poems are divided into three sections: 1. Sexuality, 2. Spirituality, and 3. Violence. The poems are not, however, merely restatements of the same issue. Each poem explores an aspect of the larger issue which creates a broader understanding of these complex issues in women's lives. The poems are augmented by the artist's statement on the poems and their relevance to the given topics.
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Section One:

Sexuality
Looking Back

My sophomore year
My grandfather died,
My roommate left
I met Tes.
I remember studying Tom Robbins
Who wrote novels with a poet's voice.
I remember the professor who taught him.
His daughter was a gift of life after years of trying.
Our class discussed abortion once,
The professor and I were both emotional
Neither of us able to talk explicitly about our feelings.
It was too soon for me.
But I told Tes.
She and I were together day and night.
I went to a party at Tes'.
I'm falling in love but won't admit it.
So, we drink.
I pick up some guy
Who walks me home
And stays the night.
A day or two.
No shame,
But a fight, and he's gone.
Tes and I go to the movies.
He's there, the boy she's in love with.
He's nice, I like him,
But he doesn't love Tes.
She can't get over him.
I love her.
We spend our nights together
Sharing escapades and adventure.
We even make a movie.
She doesn't let many people in.
She talked to me till dawn
About her family.
I wanted to hold her all night long.
We slept in separate beds.
My junior year.
I'm starting to realize
What my feelings for Tes mean.
I date my boss, but never sleep with him.
Tes starts pulling away.
I think I scare her because I want to be so close.
I'm hurt.
She doesn't call much.
We see each other at Ann's.
She is still hung up on What's His Name.
Ann and I get close;
She's easy to talk to,
But I miss Tes
And I am hurt by her distance.
My boss and I break up.
I think I might be gay.
I visit an ex.
We talk.
We're friends.
He knows What's His Name.
We all go to a matinee.
We see Tes at the movies.
She notices that I am with Him.
I leave with the boys.
Tes leaves with her friends.
What's His Name and I flirt.
He calls.
I come on to him.
He comes over.
We flirt some more.
I miss Tes.
I go to Ann's.
Tes is there.
He is there.
He walks me home.
We kiss.
I think of Tes.
He comes over one day.
We fuck.
It's good sex.
I miss Tes.
I feel guilty.
I want her to know.
I want her to get over him and realize
It will never happen between them.

I don't tell her.
I don't tell her that I was in love with her
And slept with him out of pain.
I don't tell her.
I love her.
Femme

You don't see me for who I am.
You see a nice, normal young woman,
A nurturing, motherly woman.
You see a soft-spoken, natural-looking woman,
Attractive, in fact, with my long curly hair
And petite, delicate body.

But I'm not you know.
I'm really quite abnormal and unnatural,
And I'm fat and ugly and uncouth.
and, of course, I play softball.

You say you don't know what I'm talking about;
You can't see it.
It must be, though;
I heard you say it.
Your Smooth Rhythm Excites Me

Your smooth rhythm excites me
Reaching to caress your face
My hand trembles with desire
Your smooth rhythm excites me
Your smooth rhythm excites me
Soft full white skin flows
Beneath my sweet tender lips
Your smooth rhythm excites me
Your smooth rhythm excites me
Your smooth rhythm excites me
The touch, the want, the wetness
Comes and comes and comes
Your smooth rhythm takes me
Night Walk

As I stand in the cool wet grass,

The moon is broken by the web of the tree

That reaches across the whiteness with its nightly outline.

I hear the crickets

And remember the daisies that she gave me.
Artist's Statement

The first section of poems deals with women's sexuality. The first poem, “Looking Back,” tells about the speaker's own coming out process in retrospect and a lost love as well. I chose to include this poem because it illustrates a couple of things. For one thing, the poem demonstrates how easy it is for someone who is not aware of her sexuality to have romantic feelings for a best friend. The other thing that this poem does is to show the pain that can be involved in such a situation.

The second poem, “Femme,” is much different than the first. This poem addresses the stereotypes that our society has for lesbians. I must note here that these stereotypes are not exclusive to the heterosexual community. They permeate the gay, lesbian and bisexual community as well.

The third poem, “Your Smooth Rhythm Excites Me,” is an erotic poem. I included this poem because too often in our society women are thought of as asexual. They are stereotyped as enjoying sex less than men. This poem is a celebration of a woman's enjoyment of sex.

The final poem in this section, “Night Walk,” is one of my favorites. The poem ties love into spirituality and nature. I chose to include the poem in this section, because to me love and sexuality are very spiritual, so a more spiritual poem about love seemed fitting.
Section Two:

Spirituality
Dancing in the heavens

walking along the edge
of the stone
quarry--darkness
and water

below,

climbing--rocks jagged
beneath hands
below and above
stars in black
water and
sky

falling into stars
is it sky or
water

? 

i did not
hear a
Splash

!
Night Magic

Day comes and the spirit of the night is lost.
The magic that empowers us to dance wildly under the moon
And find safety in the darkness melts away
As the cruel bright sun breaks and chases
The goddesses home.
Standing alone in the open field, exposed
The wind blows through me.
Stubble of stalks that once stood here force
Themselves against my bare feet.
The noise from a nearby highway confuses my thought.
The woods rise up behind me.
I turn and enter.
Inside, I look back to see out,
But the trees have closed in around me.
Screams of man and machine are far away.
All I hear is a low chatter
As the wind rustles through the trees.
I can smell the dry fallen leaves
That crunch beneath my feet as I walk.
I am drawing the woods closer.

Closer, the woods reach in and touch my soul;
The outside world is no more;
There is only the woods with and within me.
As I embrace the woods, I feel my arms
Wrap gently around myself.
Does she hate me does she love me
(Tender love)
Will her ghost always haunt me
(Time and patience)
Will I ever be able to look into
Green eyes
Again
(Rebuilding my faith.)
Will I ever understand why
(My mother always told me)
Will I ever trust life again
I don't believe I used to believe
I think I have always been
Doubted
Of course I had times when I
(Aware of the pain)
Existed in this world.
One has only to watch
And see the violence that we inflict
Against each other
(The violence that we inflict)
Still I was able to build faith.
I had faith that there was
Goodness in life

That faith was eaten away
Everyday that I visited the hospital
(My faith slipping.)
Everyday that I looked into her
Green eyes
And saw the pain.
(How much of that pain
Was because of me)
Looking into her green eyes
So much pain where there
Had once been laughter,
Passion.
Then, death
For her and my faith.
How long will I survive with
My faith gone?
I don't know
How to get it back.
When I try to think of it
All I see are
Green eyes.
Artist's Statement

Women's spirituality has long been dominated by Judeo-Christian religion which is patriarchal. This second section of poetry is devoted to expressing a very different spirituality.


The fourth and final poem, "Green Eyes," is about a loss of faith. This poem is important because the loss of faith is tied to the violence against women that the speaker witnesses. This poem shows that such violence attacks the spiritual as well as the physical and emotional.
Section Three: 

Violence
How Could I?

How could I kill my baby
    a woman with a sign asked.
How could I answer her with tears
    running down my face?
How could I have told my baby about his father
    when he got old enough to ask?
How could I look at my baby if he
    had his father's eyes?
How could I, at barely eighteen,
    clothe and feed a child?
How could I care about a child conceived
    in pain and violence?
How could I not I thought.

How could I?
Thank goodness I could.
Stripped

"No!"
my fists falling
Useless
You laugh i have no strength
"No."
A tear falls upon your arm
Rolls away never felt
But i feel You
Heavy on me
me gasping
Left cold and raw

i could not yet feel the seed
You forced inside
Reclaiming

Eyes burn with your fucking sweat
Ears ring with your haunting groans
Skin crawls with your filthy touch

Shower  Loofa  Lava

With your haunting ears ring
With your fucking eyes burn
With your filth skin crawls

Days  Scream  Awake

You filth crawls skin
You fuck burn eyes

Months  Cry  E&C

Burn you fuck
Crawl you filth

Years  Rest  Love

Fuck you
In Woman's Restless Slumber

I dream bloody dreams
I see the torture, the murders
I hear the screams.

Where do they come from?

Do they come from my past?
Do they come from the nightly news
Story of a woman beaten
By her loving husband?
Do they come from the women
Of War-torn Bosnia?

Yes.

In my nightly dreams, I hear the screams
Of women beaten, raped and killed;
I see the blood of women spilled.

Why do they come to me?

The screams of all women are the same screams
Screamed by the ancient female form.
And every drop of blood shed by women drains
The blood of the forgotten Goddess.
We are not just women; we are Woman.
I am Woman.

Yes.

In my nightly dreams, I hear the screams
Of Woman beaten, raped and killed;
I see the blood of Woman being spilled.

How long will they come?
There is a need for these bloody dreams.
They remind me of the neglected truth
That women are beaten, raped and killed.
The truth must be known so brutally
So we can stop the screaming and bleeding of women
So we can begin to heal the scars of Woman.

How long!?

I will dream these bloody dreams
As long as there is this need
As long as Woman bleeds and screams.
Artist’s Statement

This section explores and illustrates the pain that a woman faces when she decides to have an abortion or encounters violence. “How Could I?” contains a couple of different aspects of the abortion issue. Most obviously, the poem tells why the speaker chose to have an abortion. However, with the first two lines of the poem, it comments on the way that the speaker is treated by an anti-abortionist and, therefore, much of society.

The two poems, “Stripped” and “Reclaiming,” tell about a rape and a recovery from a rape. I felt that it was important to include a poem about healing from the experience of rape because this is crucial to women reclaiming their lives. Unfortunately, many women never experience much healing from rape.

The final poem of this section and of the thesis is concerned with the violence in general that women face and the effects that such violence has on women as a whole. This poem also points out the need for recognition of the violence and brutality that our society wages against women so that it might be stopped and women as whole might start to heal.