



## Une femme

Je suis la vagabonde  
mille fois violée  
j'ai vécu dans leur ombre  
et ils m'ont oubliée  
Femme de peu de foi  
Qu'as-tu fait de ta vie?  
j'ai appris à me taire  
à subir leur loi  
à brûler les plexus solaires  
à rire dans leurs bras

Petite fille d'antan  
ta robe s'est déchirée  
sur de sanglants ovaires nacrés  
Petite fille en blanc si souvent désirée

Je suis femme maintenant  
je ne sais plus pleurer  
de ce regard noir et blanc  
plus que désespéré

Les Princes Charmants ont ravalé leurs promesses  
Pauvre enfant jointe à la détresse  
Mais où sont les fleurs des champs  
et ce jeune mort en combattant  
Je suis femme et enfant  
si tu me regardes doucement  
tu verras ces épines plantées  
dans ma tête et ma peau  
qui n'ont jamais fêté  
ces indépendances lumineuses  
au bout des années furieuses  
qui m'ont laissé des mains en branches  
et un cœur gros qui flanche.

Nadia Ghalem

## Resurrections

Fallen away from me the quilted cloth  
the years of earth-walk that a woman wears  
the eager watching of another's hungry mouth  
the cross-stitch made of other people's stares,  
I rise above the needing and the need  
to wear myself within one man's embrace;  
I am no longer flower or grass or seed  
but copper greened and lovely as old lace.  
Beyond the ceilinged fibrefill of clouds  
some icy freedom lights upon my flesh,  
nerves, bones and logic, wings that sing aloud  
the stitchless everywhere, till burnt and blessed,  
I dive again for love, past earth to sea,  
choosing my own deep sensuality.

Frances Davis

### She sits in the garden

She sits in the garden  
her only place of refuge  
a wide brimmed hat covers her face  
her hands move restlessly  
picking imaginary lint  
a gently breeze lifts the brim of the hat  
tears glisten on swollen cheeks.  
She stares at her flattened stomach  
the child she so longed for  
aborted in anger by her husband's kick  
she tries to get up, her body aches  
from the darkened passageway he emerges  
yelling for his supper  
she sits back rebelliously  
he grabs at her, she flinches  
he slaps her to the ground  
she pulls at his legs  
he kicks her, she falls on her face  
moaning she begs for mercy  
incensed, he pulls her up by her hair  
grabbing wildly her fingers fasten  
on the garden shears  
she plunges, blood spills  
holding the shears towards him  
she challenges him to punch her  
a look of fear appears on his face  
he tries to speak, no words come  
laughing hysterically, she pushes him  
he falls, now she would teach him his  
own lesson  
she would grant him no mercy  
he would be punished for her loss  
and looking into his fearful eyes  
she sees a shattering reflection  
of her new reality  
dropping the shears  
she turns and walks away.

Ann Wallace



Sweetgrass

Often alone I feel your mouth upon my lips  
your hands upon my thighs  
the sun your body burning into me,  
or in the sweep of rain I walk within  
the circle of your armpit's dampened hair:  
flesh that has worn itself in dream  
awakes to find another's flesh to wear.

Then breaking away, graceful as horses,  
your form transfigures sensual recall,  
galloping through the pastures of my heart  
drumming with diamond hooves away  
the willing bridle that has brought my blood to be.

Deep in the breathing grain of love I stand  
holding this sheaf of sweetgrass in my hand  
luring with words the body's shine,  
the spirit's shade, your fulness back to me.

Frances Davis

### Introductions and Definitions

You have led me reluctant  
into this unfamiliar and ambiguous country  
where men imagine the angles of invisible currents  
move without wonder across impossible heaving spaces  
and weigh their self-respect  
upon the altars of indifferent gas.  
I have read it in the calculations of your glance  
the set of your teeth to windward  
the tendons rigid in your forearms  
and I could imagine you too  
lashed in defiance to a cunning mast.

Tacking and jibing among the choices  
the baffling limits of mastery  
you run your arrogance against the guns of other men  
rising pig-eyed from duck blinds  
where your singing shrouds have frightened their bright  
calculations into flecks upon the dying day;  
and how deliberately they fire upon your sails  
and drive your sloop from sheltered harbours  
merely to celebrate the bond of blood  
whether in harnessed air or angry fallen prey.

You have led me reluctant  
and I am a creature now of water and of waste.  
I have only to come aboard  
and the moments take me and play me:  
the welter of winds and the gulls crying  
the buoys looming and lolling and riding  
and your deliberate coiling of ropes  
in the sigh before the scream of storm;  
even the days most flaccid  
when the drifter hangs empty  
and we flounder through water thick with August weed;  
even the nights slack upon the anchor  
the stars and headlands shifting  
when the halyards answer only to the turning  
of the restless sleeper  
the dew like moss upon the decks  
and the uneasy breathing of the bulky dark;  
I have only to come aboard  
and the hours take me:  
I cannot break them and make them obey me  
never refined by mathematics, pride or fear  
I wear the water and become  
part victim of your piracy and part  
distrustful watcher, skilled in secret knots.  
I am but half enslaved by trust:  
I can turn siren  
and untie your cunning  
if I must.

Frances Davis

