

Years of Malcontent

Stephanie Byrd



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2/22/7

25 Years of Malcontent

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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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First Edition
First Printing

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Good Gay Poets Press, P.O. Box 277, Astor Station, Boston, MA 02123

ISBN: 0-915480-10-7

Good Gay Poets Press
P.O. Box 277 • Astor Station • Boston, MA 02123

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For my sister, Michelle

The kitchen is inviting
The summer is epocal
It's a shame Burley
died such a way
Hanging there
the flesh being plucked
from his bones

You were zeroed in
I never thought you
to take aim

Your prey

I lie now bleeding at your feet

Draped by caretakers and curtains
I lie raped yet assured by all
that such mishaps are quite common

Derby Day

the races have begun
and taken hold of
the populace
pray
pray
for ben hur
and his jewishness

Memoir to Collective Living

Sweet faggot
I've dropped my pants for a cigarette
But I've dropped more than that for
your sugar coated insults
Maulings of my soul
Queen of pirates and pillaging
You have dragged me from dementia
into your private cell of torture
and torment
Leave me as I left you
To be assassinated by our own flailing
tongues

Cruising the Causeway

Love was stark as a hen's carcass
precious as a mother's smile
we sat on my porch swing and watched love
 come and go
 go and come
 come and go
licking our lips and fingering slim pickings

Retreat

I had planned to lure you off
to some quiet place
I had planned to run my fingers
down your curving breast and
suckle its rough brown nipple
But the weather got bad my
aging knees began to ache and
I had to look for shelter
Then I planned to sit with you
in front of the fire and tantalize
you with wine and tales of my childhood
I had planned to gently caress your
legs all the time filling you with
laughter and wonderment
But we were joined by
merry wanderers who stayed just
long enough to remind us that
we were not alone
Yes I had planned all these things and more
leaving no room for winds and rain
leaving no room for other people
and in my fantasies leaving no room for you

Dem Bones

the love bone has arrived
bleached, it is white and holy

it's here! another bone for my garden
it's received! another lady to tea

Juiced and ready! Long awaited
Arrived its coming was expected

Menstruation 73

“it’s no good”
but this pain is so fine
i sit in agony — at your beckoned call

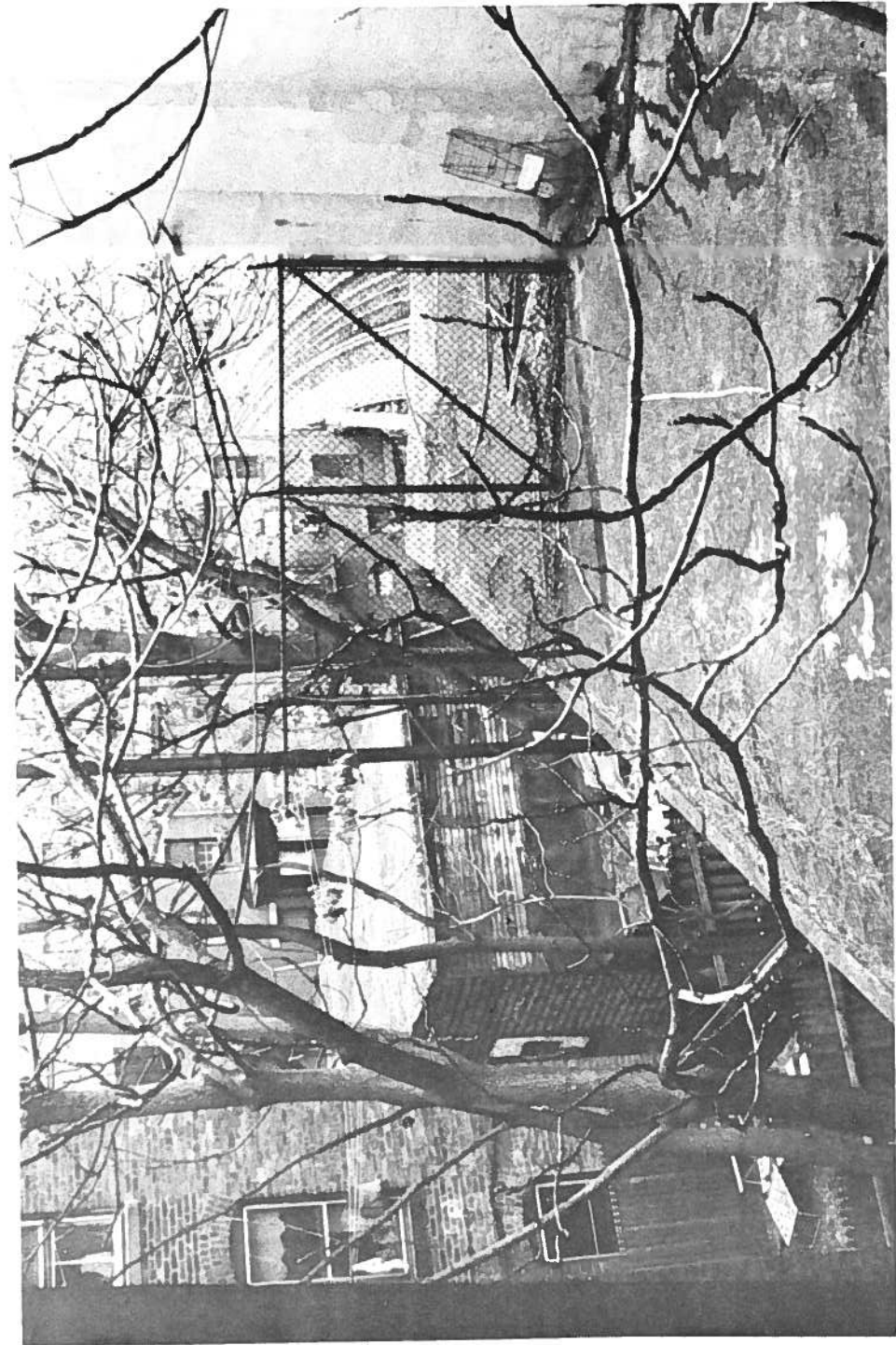
“it’s not feasible”
but this pain is me
i chortle at each flailing — at each session

“it’s wrong”
but i am its initiator
i exist for spastic ‘seconds’ — monthly drippings

Genise

The silence after a child screaming
the subway passes roaring underground
The little one shrieks Brown cheeks
nestled on flowered sheets
She is a girl-child
3 years into the celestial revolution
The subway shakes my home’s foundations
The little one stands steady
She defies earthquakes and adultly no’s
to the steady siren of her wail

I awaken with your stirring
in your bed
you try to rise early
to start my day
I sort through your webs
early on
I am still sleeping
You are your sex maniac
still sleeping
under Eros' wing
I am but a fly on your wall



Listening to you talk to my kid
I can never believe that
you once walked streets
Covered by dung and desperation
I can never believe that
you once laid your meat out
on a table to be eaten and digested
You challenged my weaknesses for hustlers
and pot
while denying the hustler and head
who lives in your body
And I now question your reality
because without due acknowledgements
to invested parties
not even you have title to the credits

In the larger room
she has
next to the double bed
a single rollaway
where dad sleeps
his youthful nightmares
by himself

I feel his pain
in sleeping alone
she is a hard woman
who has her way
and who
was born to give grief

We love her
he and I
We kiss her
he and I
We do her bidding
he and I
I sleep with her

Cooking red meat
a dog
bays
and I wonder
if you're really
dying
or if
it's just my illusion
that lies
in the wake of
my credibility

My credibility
a lover
of juicy tidbits
who wants
your warm
moist cunt
in its mouth
wanders in kitchens
of smoking meats
on which to nibble

It's just dealing my dear
a dog baying a dying
meat cooking illusionary pans
and kitchens
It's here like the pig in the poke

Mimi

i watched the rain destroy the roses
the length of time is not essential in these matters
i had only to wait to see the petals crumble with each drop
Frailty was never a forte of yours or so i'm led to believe
but you were crushed in a rose-like fashion and lie wasted
flattered by the undertakers rouge and hip deep in dirt

Fortified by Indiana rushes
I make my return
through aeons
webbed by wax-drippings
I sit
contemplating waiting
for your confirmation
or
harried denial
that we once
tore
from each other
the very innards
of a venusian calf

Mother's Cadence

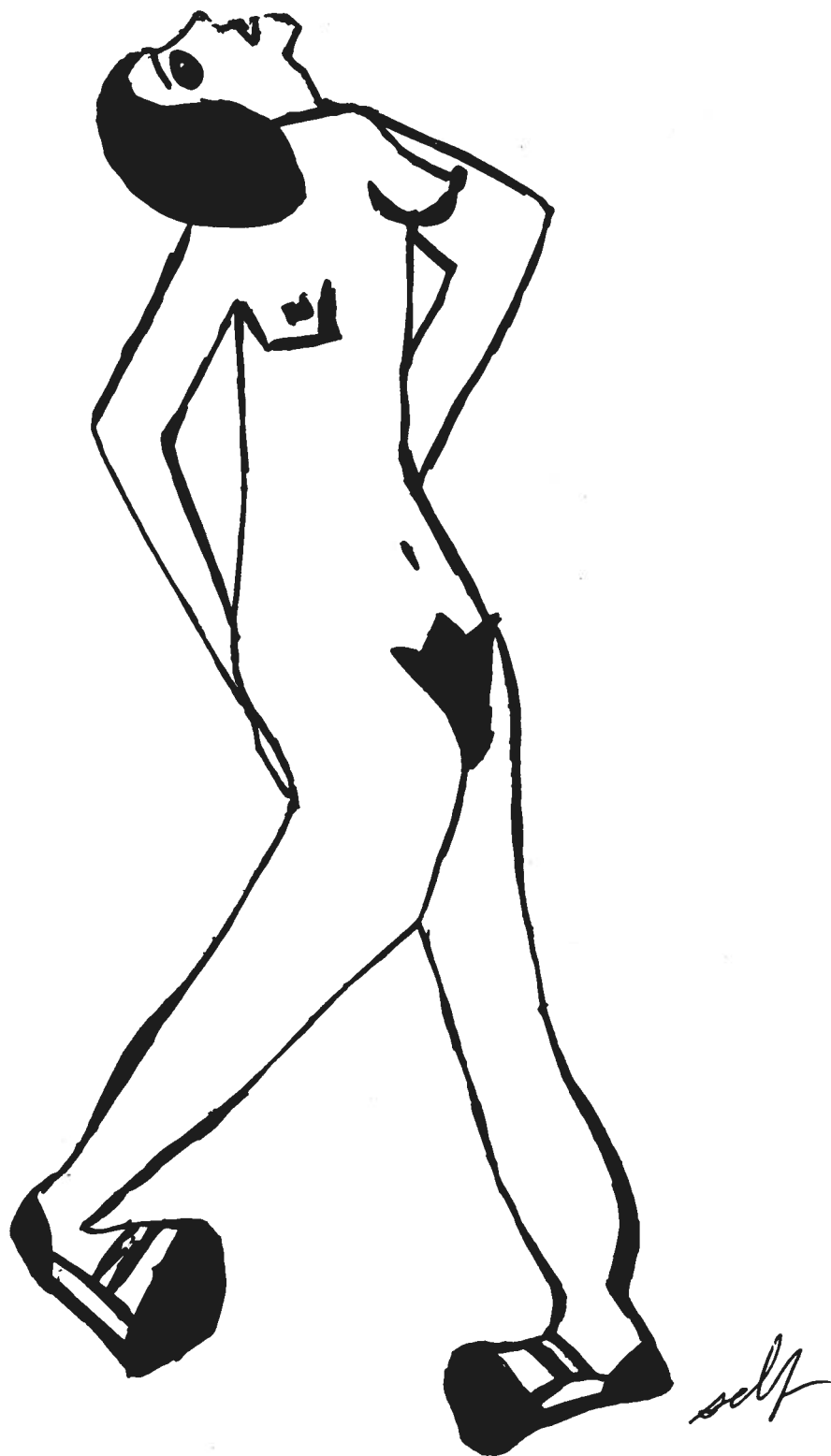
jews are desirous of crucifixion
and christians are waiting; waiting at the ovens
Like all those too presumptuous in their aspirations
those wishing me ill winds and tidal waves
she murmurs . . .
bouncing through novenae
though hail marys to an unholy cadence

Love Poem

My legs, feet
are my father's
small steps taken
with painful relief
I move towards you
with jubilation
on my back
I walk upon you
with footsteps of
weariness erased
by feigning words
I love you with
the stiffness of
age and
merriment of
youth unborn

My spleen is my mother's
venom drips from fangs
of vicious deceit
poisoning me
leaving me running crazed
and brazen
seeking antidotes
in rosy towers
and greedy women
You suck my vagina
draining me
of pus and bile
offering your mouth
as antidote

My immortality is my grand's
she gave up life
to leave me unprotected
she gave up breath
that I might breathe
in threatening waters
my life is immortal
I drape you
in its gauzy cover
thus sharing immortality



Quarter of a Century

I'll never know my real naming
Never know its origin
What would you call this high yellow
Born into uncertainty and schizophrenia
Born into a place where I have no say
I live with the ghosts of slaves
Whose blood still colours my dreams
What would you call me
me whose name is jigaboo
and nigger
My body aches from unseen beatings
I cry tears of blood
I work tilling a field of my brother's
and sister's
bleeding bodies
And all in the while searching for a naming

My grandmother tells me
that her grandmother's mother
was called Smothers
And though I've never met her
I saw her faded photograph — she was
old withered, a woman whose face
had disappeared with handling
scarred and withered
another woman whose head
bore a white man's scalping
My grandmother tells me these things
and secrets too
until I can hear her voice repeat it again
coming up from her grave to repeat it again
These are my nightmares from which came a naming

What would you call me
Black woman
Who has sought naming
in strange women's breasts
and between their legs
What is it that you call me
who pays homage to heathen gods
and decorates the family tree
with nightmares
Is there no naming for this child of soil
who stands before you now
Eyes have answered my question with mocking laughter

I have sought a naming in bones on which I stand today
with the bones I used to construct words as a child
and in the bones which I throw to ask my gods
to answer me
this naming
I would gather bones of past and present
carving them with knives
reading them with bibles
pounding them in rhythms
until my granddaddy would shout and I would stand up
hoping to be Ezekiel

Bones say seek my naming in the East
swollen cracked lips tell me to turn home
grandmothers warn me to turn away the alien ways of
what is white
For when these things are connected
Winding serpentine in hieroglyphs and
language
a name long evasive wanderer and prophet
will be written on the stone

Liturgy: Twenty-two

At a playhouse opened to the public
I am punch n judy, a streetside symposium
Dangling my platitudes with feeble mimicry
I am the fig long lying in a vendor's wagon
Yielding less than maggots who eat
this youth-full fancy
I am the gallery of roses and rotting flesh
the last vestige of wasted merriment

Feeling being forced upon me
Like waves of jello
the red sea parts
and you and me are inseparable friends
Like an old record
I play again and again
to whatever's satisfaction

I can feel it in my lips
My ass moves towards warmth
Press warmth upon my buttocks
 my breasts
rub my crotch the lips
I am warmed, hot water in a bath
I can feel breath in my throat
I choke up phlegm
Lick my chest, the lips
Dart in to make me choke again
I can feel sight in my eyes
Push sight into my eyes, the eyelets
I see writhing eyelets clearer
Eat me
Eat me
Eat me
 alive

I am alone through no fault of my own
It is cold, water drips from my ceiling
Puerto Rican rum and women
I want even more
hold me from thinking
What's your game
I want to exhaust you with love
What's your game
I want a piece

The Gay
Boys

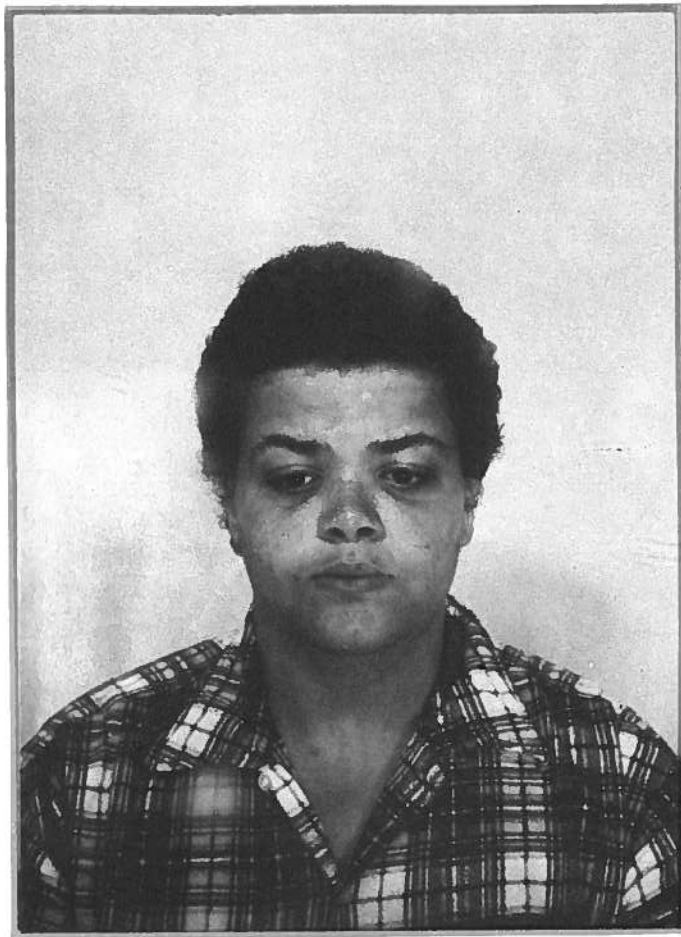
This project has been partially assisted by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts; the findings, conclusions, etc. contained herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Endowment.

\$2.00

ISBN: 0-915480-10

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The Good
Guns