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2019

### Drops of Ink: LGBTQ+ Poetic Expression in WNY, 1958-1990

Alyssa Clark

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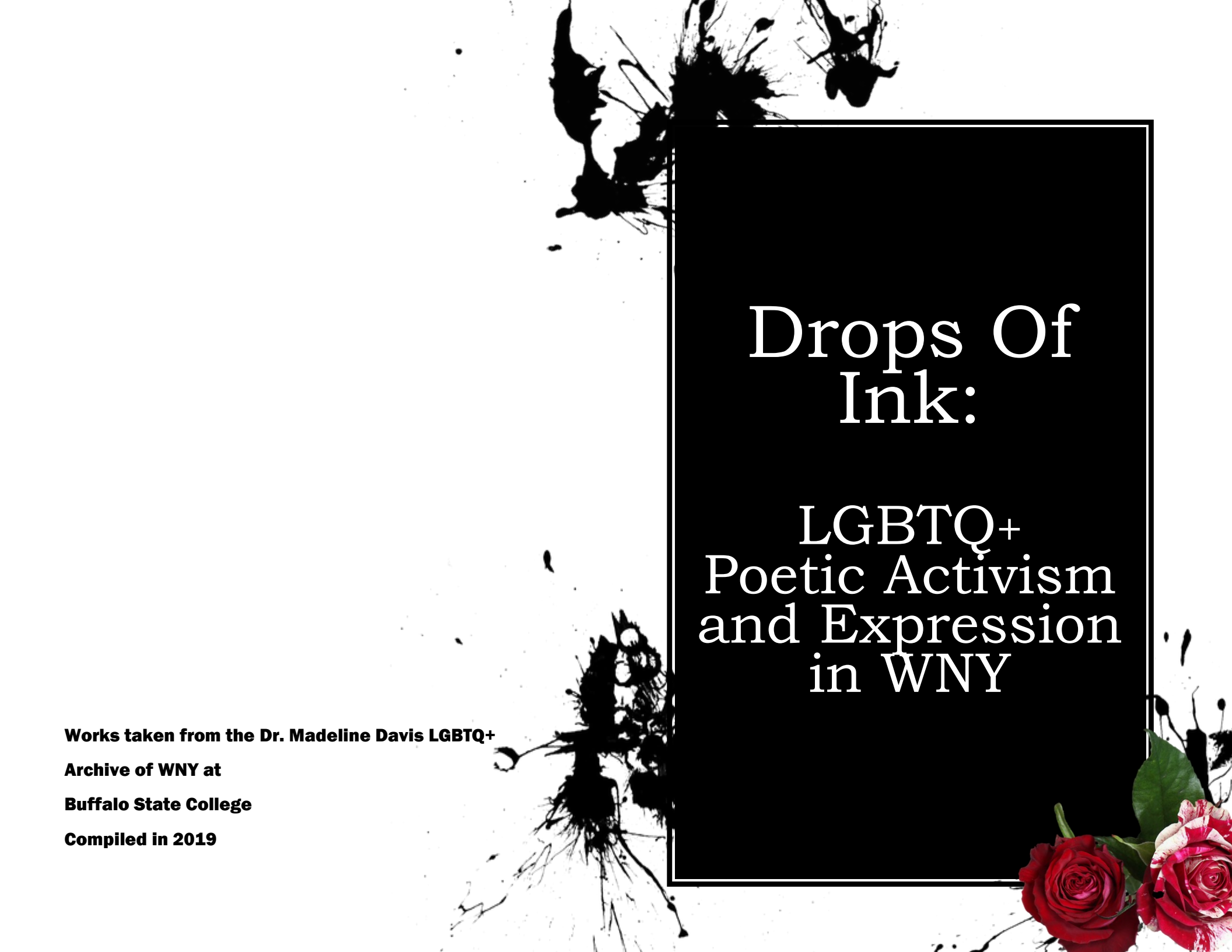
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The background features black ink splatters and roses. A large black square with a white border is positioned on the right side, containing the main title. In the bottom right corner, there are two roses, one red and one pink, with green leaves. The overall aesthetic is artistic and expressive.

# Drops Of Ink:

## LGBTQ+ Poetic Activism and Expression in WNY

**Works taken from the Dr. Madeline Davis LGBTQ+  
Archive of WNY at  
Buffalo State College  
Compiled in 2019**

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# introduction

The idea behind arranging a collection of poetry by local LGBTQ+ community members and activists was to support and enhance the concept of writing as activism, expression, and means of connection. Writing is a fecund space, a linguistic crucible from which one may express identity and experience, externalizing that experience into an accessible form. To write oneself or to write one's self becomes a critical curatorial effort, arranging what one encounters, feels, and lives.

Many of the poems in this collection, for example, convey struggles with longing, desire, isolation, quiet love, and discouraged lust during stretches of time when LGBTQ+ identities were more commonly and explicitly censored, subdued, and silenced. Translating those feelings into words and sharing them beyond the moment curtails the experience of loneliness not only for the author, but also certainly for readers recognizing they are not alone with similar thoughts, passions, and intensities. By sharing those words and their intimate inner-worlds, these poets are forging connections among and across generations.



The contents of the following collection of poetry was arranged with works from the Dr. Madeline Davis LGBTQ Archive of WNY at Buffalo State College, with dates ranging from 1958 to 1990. These 30+ original works by local community members and activists were compiled from small press publications, handwritten journals and papers, and several issues and submission folders for *Fifth Freedom*, the Niagara Frontier Mat-tachine Society periodical. Some works were submitted for inclusion in *Fifth Freedom*, but never published. Words carefully curated to express individual emotion and experience are now being circulated and shared anew, around 40 years after they were initially written—undoubtedly a unique snapshot of individual, local passion.

Please enjoy, absorb, and share this bundle of local, LGBTQ+ linguistic art. Do not hesitate to make an appointment with the archive to peruse the primary source materials.

# FOR SUZANNE

by Madeline Davis  
Box 5, Folder 5-42

**We would have been lovers  
if you had stayed  
if you hadn't been afraid  
if I had known a little more**

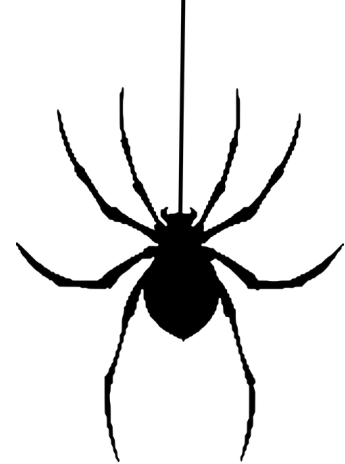
**There was no laugh on earth like yours  
strange bells, warm honey, endless evening;  
frantic phone calls in the middle  
of the night  
made me grateful you were scared  
of spiders.**

**I killed for you...you thought.  
(Secretly I held them by their legs  
and dropped them in the bushes.  
I was never good at death.)  
But I would have—  
I would have battled all your dragons  
with my dedicated sword  
and brought their smoking heads  
and laid them at your feet.**

**Instead I wrote you melodies  
and sang you arias  
and shivered as your lovely fingers  
curved around my arm.**

**We would have been lovers  
if you had stayed.  
Tempestuous, passionate,  
ultimately tined  
each others' instruments,  
each others' endless song.**

**We would have been lovers  
if you had stayed;  
if I hadn't been  
afraid.**



# UNTITLED

by Madeline Davis, October 1975  
Box 5, Folder 5-42

**This is not our anniversary  
I have not been there since '70  
Nor you here in four years.  
The opium you left was used one night with friends.  
Terry ate two boxes of Lorna Dunes  
and fell asleep  
I smiled a lot  
and fell asleep.  
We missed you when you went.**

**This is not our anniversary.  
I play flute concertos  
And think of you.  
Remember how awful it was to be married?  
Remember how we laughed?**

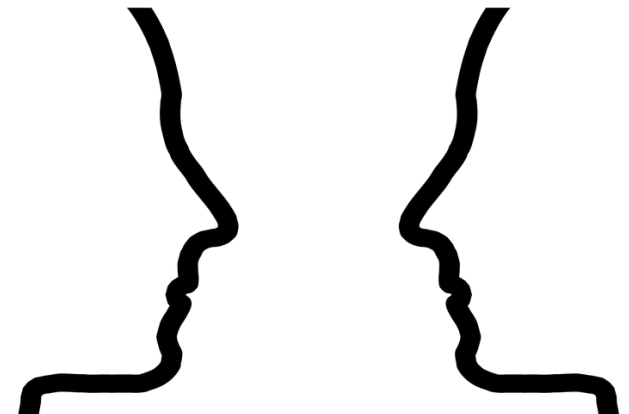
**This is not our anniversary.**

**My life is full of women now  
Beautiful, smooth, soft, flower women  
Women I shall always love  
Women for whom I was born and made  
and melt with perfectly.**

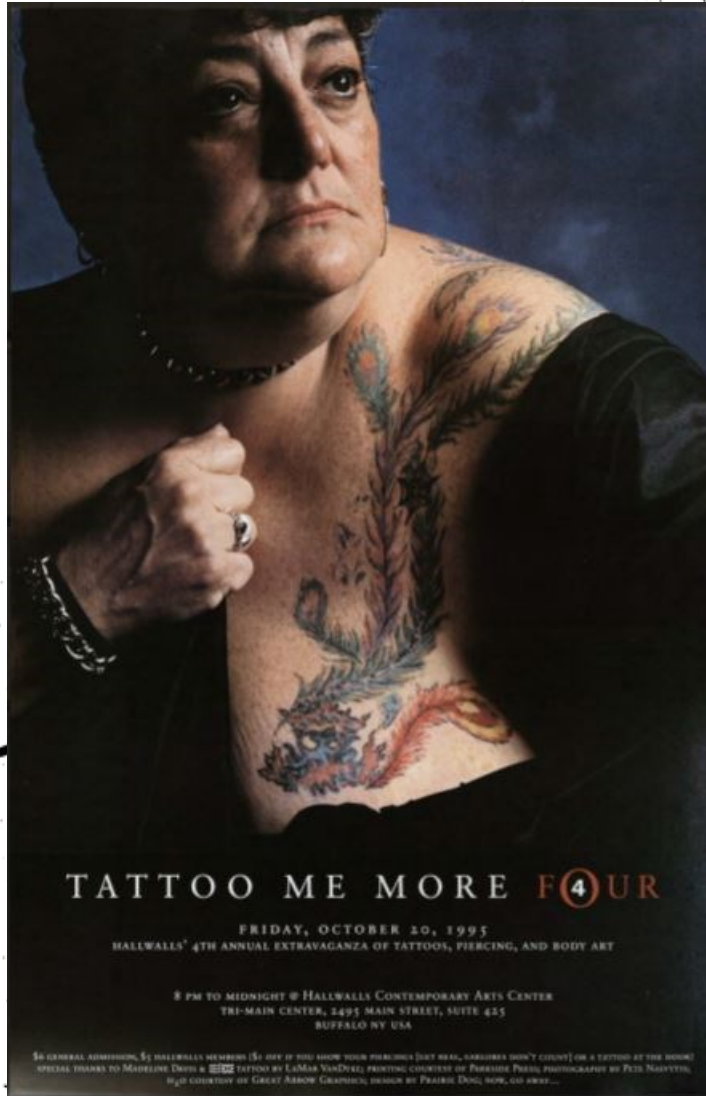
**This is not our anniversary.**

**You were the end of an era  
The close of a season  
The final chord  
The last of the wine.  
And I loved it when you said  
I did beautiful things to the sunshine.  
But this is not our anniversary.**

**This is not our anniversary  
And you are not  
you are not  
you  
my greatest betrayal.**



# DR. MADELINE DAVIS



**Dr. Madeline Davis began the archive which now bears her name in the basement of her Buffalo home in 2001. The foundational rationale behind the creation of the archive was that the LGBTQ+ community had a past, but no history-- a series of joyous events, acts of forceful activism, and a web of individual lives, but no traceable record of those struggles and triumphs which continue to characterize the LGBTQ+ community. Maintaining such an archive helps pull together fragments of that history into a community heritage from which current and future members of the community can ground themselves, draw inspiration, and forge new experiences.**

**Davis herself claims a prolific history of artistry and civic engagement as a folk singer, LGBTQ-rights activist, librarian, and writer. She, for example, was a founding member of the Mattachine Society of the Buffalo-Niagara Frontier, served as the first openly lesbian delegate for a major political party at the 1972 Democratic National Convention, wrote the song *Stonewall Nation*— considered one of the first gay liberation songs—, and co-authored the book *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* which traces the history of the lesbian community in Buffalo. Consult the archive to more deeply research and appreciate Davis' contributions to the LGBTQ+ community of Western New York.**

**Hallwall, "Poster for Tattoo Me More Four, Featuring Madeline Davis" (1995). Local Events. 24.**

# **SONGMAN**

by R. Schroeder  
Box 5, Folder 5-42

To look at him,  
one would not know  
of his habits.

Those who know him love him.  
Those who only love him  
wonder why they move at  
his voice.

They do not watch while  
he creates, the broken music  
stand leaning dangerously  
to the right, the lyrics I  
find scrawled across the  
breakfast napkins, the  
notes written in the window frost.

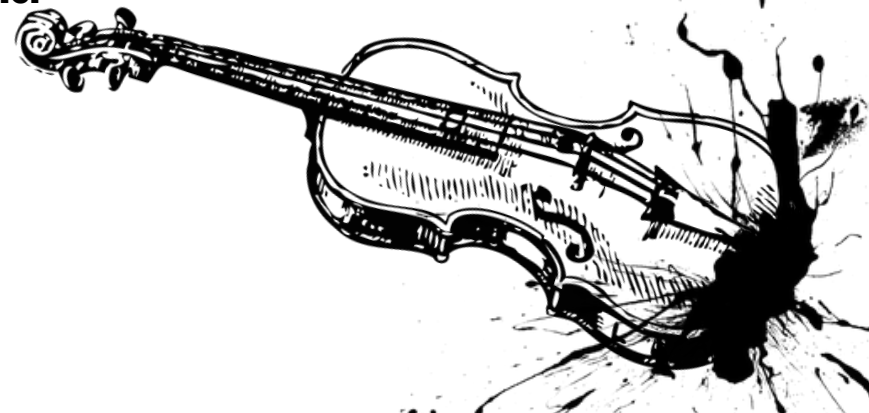
It is not him they desire,  
only his glow, reaching  
like spectators after a  
fight, trying to touch the winner  
to rub off luck.

Where he loves, it is warm,  
like twins, sharing a  
womb.

Where I love, it is awkward,  
my fingers tangle buttons.  
And he comes at me in  
tee shirt sleeves to set me free.

So we dive in, blend sleeves  
with buttons, until the  
only way to get free is to  
take everything off.

I need excuses that way.  
He makes reasons to be held.  
And we sink into a mixture  
of arms and legs, that very  
quickly, drowns out any  
music.





# **FOR A WOMAN LEAVING**

by KT. Vermeulen, April 1975

Box 5, Folder 5-42

**Cars on the expressway splash east,  
we move westward  
as we sit breathing grass  
behind the wall.  
Margaret, I wonder if I kiss you  
will you pull or push  
pull or push stoned in this rain?  
If I stroke your palms  
will the fingers close or open  
close or open, would you wax or wane?  
There is no answer in m/your eyes  
glazed as new plate windows  
thru the haze  
thru the hair swaying loose  
across your face.  
Tugging blades and weeds,  
I prick my finger on a dry stem  
thorns like kitten claws.  
It is an offer.**

**“Touch it,” I say. “Hold it.”  
Margaret, tempted, you reach slowly  
but recoil.  
You don’t know that if your skin tears,  
I will close my lips around your finger  
and you won’t bleed.**



# UNTITLED

by William Alan Robinson,  
December 30th, 1975  
Box 5, Folder 5-42

I tried tonight  
to be for him  
all that I ever  
wanted from a  
previous love affair  
named Perfect,  
sub-titled Michael.  
How many times I have in and  
up  
in once nightly anger,  
anguish.  
What I did  
like never before  
hardly fazed him,  
but my efforts  
pleased me much.  
Then came  
together  
until time was

a violent  
and some hot  
happy  
making us both.  
Then came  
a certain sunrise  
and we stayed  
together  
until time was  
and then came  
and went  
both again.

# UNTITLED

By: A. Russel Schlesinger , 1975  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

My tired friend by my side,  
hold out your hand to me that at least I  
may touch it.  
So long there's been no one beside me,  
for too long no one to touch.

# AT THE SIGHT OF YOU

By: Ross Vaughan , c.a. 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

at the sight of you,  
i stopped;  
for you were too beautiful  
to draw me near,  
and keep me here.

at the sound of your voice,  
i jumped;  
for you were too close  
to make me feel  
and make me real.

at your touch,  
i fled;  
for you were too (not) strong enough  
to hold me tight,  
and keep away the night

# **AFTERWARDS**

**By: Patricia M. Boquard, Buffalo 1970**

**Box 141 folder 141-4 Poetry book "In Search of Myself:  
Ports and Railroads 1968-1970", 2017 by Patricia M.  
Boquard. University Press at Buffalo**

**I go on dreaming**

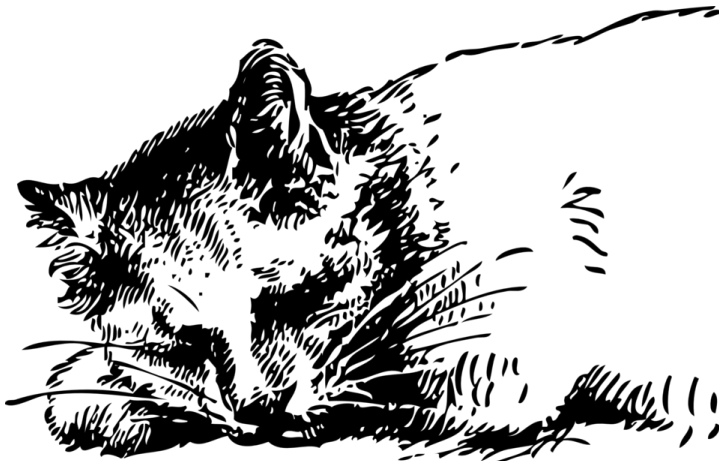
**dreaming up  
dreaming down  
up-down dreaming  
dream dreaming of**

**You**

**In this longest sleep  
Waiting for the sun in winter  
Or shadows of spring and  
you.**

**In this dream your voice calls to me  
And reaching out for you I  
Catch only a handful of today.**

**From the east my eyes see another day  
Coming toward me without you and  
I choose to dream until tomorrow.**



# **TO N.J.**

**By Patricia M. Boquard, Buffalo 1970**

**In the quietness of the night  
night quiet,  
I listen to all nights and  
the sound of wind fondling the trees  
the sound of dreams dreaming  
the sound of stars shining**

**Sounds of the east and west,  
north,  
south  
diverging  
And then merging together I hear**

**You.**

**The night becomes our song:  
the trees sing  
the stars sing and  
in my dreaming I sing of**

**You.**

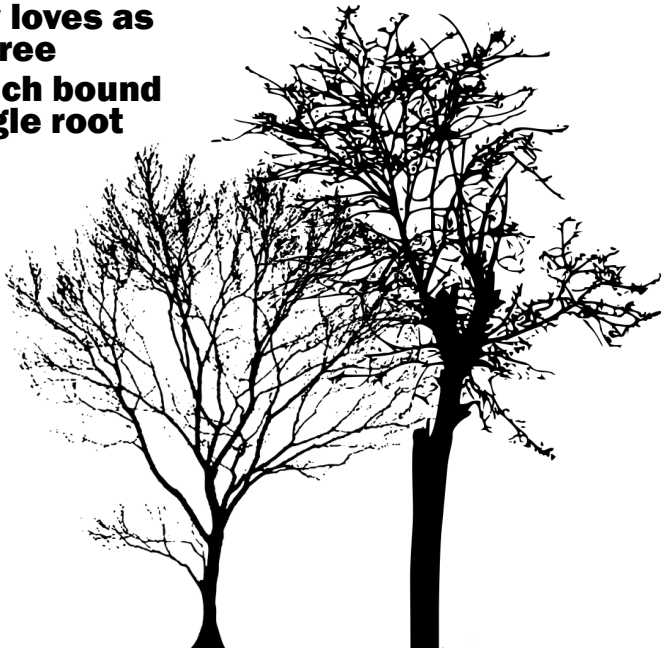
**And you become the night, surrounding me  
Caressing me and  
We come together  
Me breathing you  
You becoming me.**

## FOR JIM

By: Donald Licht, April 17, 1979  
Box 25, Folder 25-2

Love is that which makes us  
Greater than each  
Our strength lies in those qualities  
Which complement and oppose  
For those are qualities which  
Support and give substance to  
That which we are and  
All we can be

Each will have many loves  
May love and be loved but  
Not possess love  
It is given and accepted with no bonds  
It cannot be caged for being so  
Bound it withers  
There are many loves as  
leaves upon a tree  
Each unique each bound  
by ties to a single root



## LIBRA'S TRICK

By: Loretta Lotman, 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-40

Balance out the scales,  
let fury blur  
to subtle blues.  
Passion  
settle down to peace,  
emotion rest  
in rainbow hues.

Do not flail the ribboned shards.  
Tears will never wash the stain.  
Allow intensity to fail,  
then guard against returning pain.

## NAMELESS

Dark vacuum of a party,  
slowly oozing  
person into person,  
edges meshing  
then departing  
in some unnamed dance of fate.

Candles flicker  
lower, lower  
as we flow  
our separate tides.  
Hoarse from all this yearning  
and the silence of our lies.



## BIRDS DANCE, TOO

By: Richard Cogliandro , 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-42

Being earthbound  
was never any fun  
Til one day  
I met a robin  
who flew on the ground.

I used to envy birds  
because they could fly  
and I couldn't.

Now I look ahead  
and not up.  
When I breathe  
I taste honey  
And when I move  
a small robin's egg  
all blue and alive  
rocks in my hand.

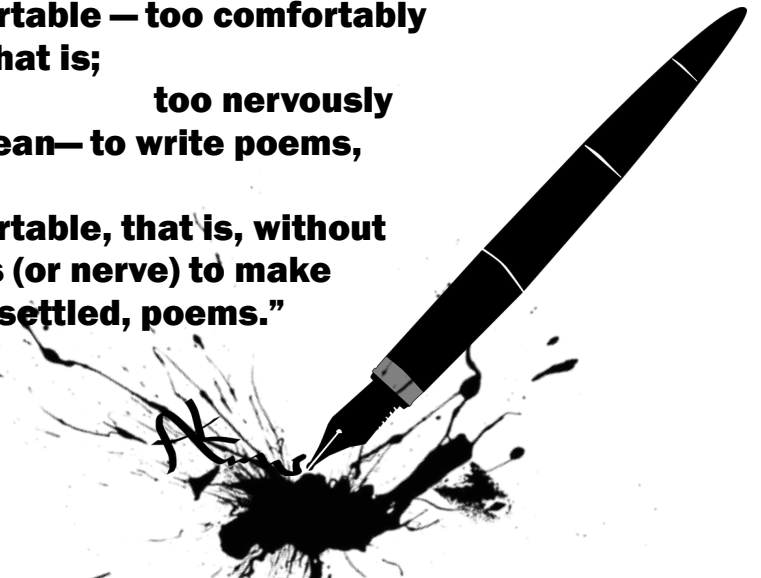
Soon I will  
no longer be  
earthbound.



## PLAIN WORDS, WITHOUT REGRET, FOR MY LOVER

By: Unknown, September 1975  
Box 5, Folder 5-42

Too comfortable,  
too busy acting  
in this unredeemed world  
as if at home, and  
with too little time  
and  
too much joy to recollect,  
to feel alone (or when dis-  
enchanted, too obsessed  
with plotting to regain  
our usual, comfortably nervous,  
tone), too comfortable, that is,  
to forge an explanation  
more comfortably (or joyfully) my own  
than: "Lately I've been  
too comfortable — too comfortably  
nervous, that is;  
too nervously  
joyful, I mean— to write poems,  
too comfortable, that is, without  
the nerves (or nerve) to make  
my old, unsettled, poems."



## LATER

By: Tina Wright , 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

the bathroom annie paints  
another green coat so's that old  
pink stops bleeding.

she needs new walls new women.  
everything familiar goes ghostly  
bone white as moons wax wane  
whips by.

why did i think amnesia could make her  
love me purple like before.  
that's what comes from being so quiet,  
looking down all the time  
not straight blazing present tense  
inter her green gray eyes

wells vaginas tunnels deeper than  
the cracker jack canadian sparkler  
high of first loving each other  
ourselves.



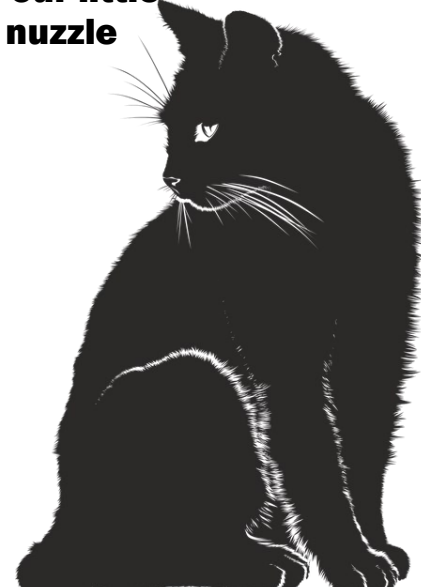
## KITCHEN LOVE POEM

By: Tina Wright , 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

woman of sleep deep as lava.  
alone in the kitchen of your golden popcorn  
i sit where grim green walls streak your  
coffee cup crashing hatred of me,  
grease ovenhot too with houdini foodcraft  
the love your hands conjured here.

i've been hungry but i've never starved

we've floated right down to this cool speckled  
floor mad cats moaning & crazy but not  
crass i swear sex with you  
makes a place my happy home.  
even this kitchen.  
where the coffee you stir out of sleep  
in the morning you cup & carry to me,  
slim fingers supple witch's wisdom  
yes the winning way you caress our little  
kittens oh yes the wild way you nuzzle  
deep into my own warm fur.



## BILLY-BOY

By: Dennis Donnellan, 1975  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

Upon a gently chaotic summer's night  
Amid the derision of reality  
Buried beneath a mountain of flesh  
Music blaring and hands that grope  
we met.

Echoing roles so carelessly played  
Amid the visions of reality  
Praying to regain a paradise lost  
Through empty memories graced with tears  
we kissed.

## SOUND

By: Timothy Lennox , 1975  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

So often the sound  
tells all.  
With tinny laugh  
and slack-mouthed sigh  
the tale is told.  
When what should  
be heard  
is not,  
and what not,  
is.  
Then indeed the air  
is filled  
with falseness so audible

that crimes  
are lit  
by sound.  
So often the sound  
tells all.

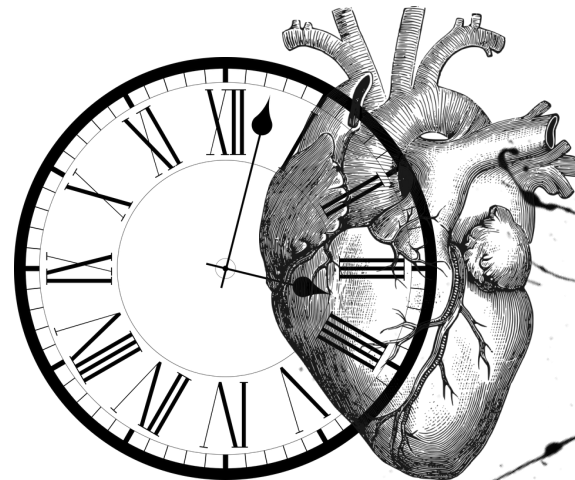


## TO MICHAEL C.

by Dennis A. Donellan, December 22nd, 1972  
Box 5, Folder 5-44

You seemed so free to encounter the lighter  
aspects of life.  
Enjoying the company of a warm admirer.  
Greeting my every kiss  
with such a deep smile;  
Becoming lost in you was so easy.  
As years pass  
And the sun casts a shadow on darkness  
itself  
and books crumble noisily into dust  
one shared heartbeat remains transfixed in time.

i fled;  
for you were too (not) strong enough  
to hold me tight,  
and keep away the night



**did you see?  
i waved  
slightly—  
almost unnoticeably.  
did you hear?  
i called your name  
quietly—  
almost a whisper.  
it's been so long  
since our time together  
did you see?  
did you hear?  
oh, god!  
i hope not—  
i can never face you again.**

**shall we laugh?  
shall we sing?  
shall we count the joys  
a broken heart can bring?**

**or should we cry?  
should we moan?  
should we tell the pains  
of being alone?**

**let's not laugh,  
let's not cry.  
let's just try forgetting  
the meaning of good-bye.**

**Box 5, Folder 5-45**



## UNTITLED, PAIR

**By: Greg Kerekes, 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-45**

**I don't think like you  
We don't think at all like each other  
But I try to  
each time, after we've made love.**

**I don't think I really like you  
But I wanted to find a way to  
To justify your  
being so important to me  
I still have to have reasons**

.....  
**You trickle down inside of me drop  
by drop, like wine  
held on the back of my tongue**

**I try to play the connoisseur  
And congratulate myself**

**For sampling you slowly  
Instead of in one heady gulp**





# LOVE SONG

By: Peter Thomas, 1970s  
Box 5, Folder 5-45

I knew I'd find you.  
Did you know too?  
At first calmly waiting for the time  
We would meet and you'd be mine.  
Years pass, still alone,  
My heart no longer has a song.  
Then fears set in  
Making all the tears begin.  
Baths, parks, bars to dance at,  
On the smallest chance that,  
You'll be there.  
But when, but where?  
A hundred bodies, a hundred faces,  
A hundred beds, a hundred places,  
Until destiny finally intervenes  
by very ordinary means,  
and one lonely night on a sandy shore  
we simply meet and want much more.  
Hands clasp, lips caress,  
Bodies firmly press,  
And at long last, my friend,  
The loneliness is at an end.

# ONE PHILOSOPHY

By: Grant King  
Box 104, Fifth Freedom April/May 1976

flowers in books will fade  
like friends that would have stayed  
I say don't press  
you'll make a mess  
of things you haven't made.

# UNTITLED

Look at this energy between us.  
It bounds in small arcs from eye to eye,  
lip to throat, fingers to cheek,  
swimming like neon, that cold fire,  
in this sharp autumn night.  
We meld colors, two smooth stones  
washed with phosphorescence,  
bleeding charged air, electric song.  
We kiss each other's auras.  
We are the perfect Kirlian photograph.



# HISTORY

By: Tommi A.

Box 104, Fifth Freedom February 1979

Still the rain does not come  
and we wait in our separate  
cells  
like monks  
we don't know why

in a dream  
this morning  
I met history

its smile was your smile  
only i  
knew it wasn't you

it was holding a baby  
in its mechanical arms

i still don't understand  
why we like monks  
every morning  
bathe in the lake  
not noticing each other

but examining our nakedness  
on the shore  
and sometimes masturbating  
but  
not together

sort of a moment or two  
before and after the other

history says: you can't forget  
and the baby cries  
throwing up blood &  
jolting like a broken machine

it's then i notice it's only  
made of glass &  
when history drops it,  
it shatters.



# THE PAINFUL MYSTERY

By: Bill Schuckhardt, 1978  
Box 85, Folder 85-41

I've often watched you singing in the night  
hiding the harm you do to yourself  
behind the several smiles you use  
to drive away the tightness  
of your doubts  
and make a lair for liars of your hours.

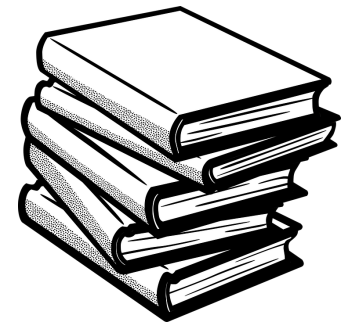
I've often watched you wrapped  
in the tightness of black webbing  
hugging the security  
of your painful mysteries  
within which the whole of you  
is contained  
in who knows what  
tortured measure you will not admit.

Your kinship with the night  
is but a brief and renewable thing  
masking out the train of time  
wasting tomorrows as yesterdays were wasted.  
What will it take to make you  
step away from your rigid stage of fear?  
Come outside  
to where the trees scratch the moon.  
You may discover the freedom  
of wide open laughter  
in a new wide open tune.

# ONCE UPON A LIE

By: Dave Wunz  
Box 104, Fifth Freedom May-June 1975

I don't hang around where you are  
Just to be near you,  
It just happens you're there.  
It doesn't bother me  
if you don't notice,  
I don't even care.  
You didn't put this lonely,  
haunted look in my eyes,  
even though it came  
the day I left  
the day part of me died.  
It's not because of you  
that when I go to bed at night,  
before sleep comes, I cry.  
Go free yourself!  
Love someone else!  
Go find some other guy...  
I'm not one of those fools  
who expound loves' immortality  
in prose, poetry, and rhyme.  
Who say love doesn't die,  
it can't just be killed,  
it just gets buried alive by time.  
What we had once is gone.  
Finished! Through!  
What came before was before!  
I don't love you,  
you don't matter to me.  
And I don't write you poems  
anymore....



# **GRAVESIDE SEQUEL**

**By: Jimmie Gilliam, 1990**

**Box 39, Folder 39-18, Buffalo Journal**

**Freezing rain  
on top of the freak snowstorm  
kept us at the foot of the graveyard**

**we were not there, Mother  
when they lowered your coffin  
through the thick gate**

**broken earth/your grave  
lies quilted/the funeral flowers  
wrapped in ice**

**gladioluses, carnations  
lilies of the valley**

**Cordie's yellow rose/for faithfulness  
our sweetheart roses shaped into a heart  
your beloved violets  
mountain irises/purple batons  
you hand to me/I pass on  
to Jill and Jenny**

**I dream you sat up  
in your coffin at the funeral home  
accuse me/you went off and left me  
and I wasn't even dead**



**you have sewn me  
a grey coat/woven with sad thread**

**you would have me believe guilt  
is the legacy of daughters**

**I am here to resurrect you Mother  
I lift your body up  
through red clay/fresh  
the afternoon sun  
breaks the iris free  
their silver ice**

**you wear the classic black dress  
the one you made yourself/from the Vogue pat-  
tern**

**I drape a long scarlet scarf  
around your neck/sensuous  
red angles  
between your breasts/your legs**

**I could never compare with you/Mother**

**It's time for both us/to give up the grave**



# ALONE

By: *Fifth Freedom* Editor

Box 104, *Fifth Freedom* December 1980

I sleep alone. again

It seems so many nights it's been

Like this.

Alone.

No one to ask me where I've been

Or what mood I'm in

No kiss.

Alone.

An empty bed awaits me

No person or body waits for me.

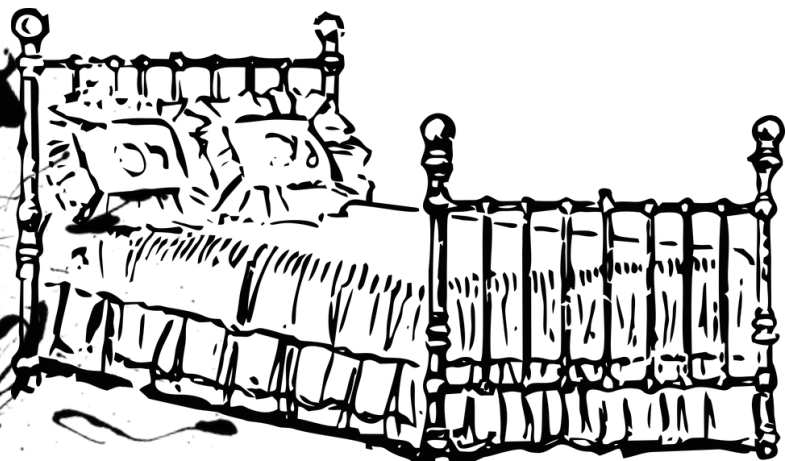
No bliss.

Alone.

Dreams and fantasy

(hopefully) come quickly to me

Alone.



# UNTITLED

By: Donna Serbert

Box 104, *Fifth Freedom* June 1976

If you profess a love of me

love also, the cadaver within me,

the blackness which creeps like moss,

where no eyes will ever see.

Yes, love the cadaver, as well as the niceness

you believe me to be.

I have walked through your darkness

through mountains

of splintered glass

and carried dried roses from their grave

to a plastic bag to preserve the greatness

of their bloomed glory.

Yes. I am bargaining—

my cadaver heart for your darkness.

Yes. I dare deal with love—

love my walking dead heart,

and we will breathe spring,

and I will preserve the roses,

and pick up the glass,

and you will not bleed.



## XIX

By: Heather Koeppel

Box 104, Fifth Freedom September 1976

do you feel it.

i'm going to trace your smile  
with my finger tips  
pull you down  
on top of me  
and taste the inside  
of your mouth  
again and  
again and  
again

someday  
i'm going to  
love you  
not in a shy way

## XXVI

sappho  
whatever happened  
to the little girl  
in the library  
bored with kids stuff  
who decided to  
read the  
skinniest book  
in the  
adult section

a thin blue book  
of greek poetry

looking up the  
isle of lesbos  
on a map

## UNTITLED

By: Madeline Davis

Box 89, Folder 89-35, February 1969

and even yesterday  
in your room  
as you raised your body  
on one arm  
to say — our clothes half discarded—  
Lets make love  
I could not believe how beautiful  
your face made the candlelight

## UNTITLED, II

June 26th, 1958

for you, and with you, and of you  
I live. and for you I breathe  
and of you. my me— which is soul  
and flesh of the earth is you—  
no longer my own.  
I am a poet, not of the world  
but of you, and for you, and with you.  
I do not love you, for I do not love  
love me, no, not me; but I am  
of you and with you, and for you  
I am yourself.

