

The Laughter Between My Legs



by
Rosemary
Meza

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GENDER JESTER
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Not Mexican

Spring 1979

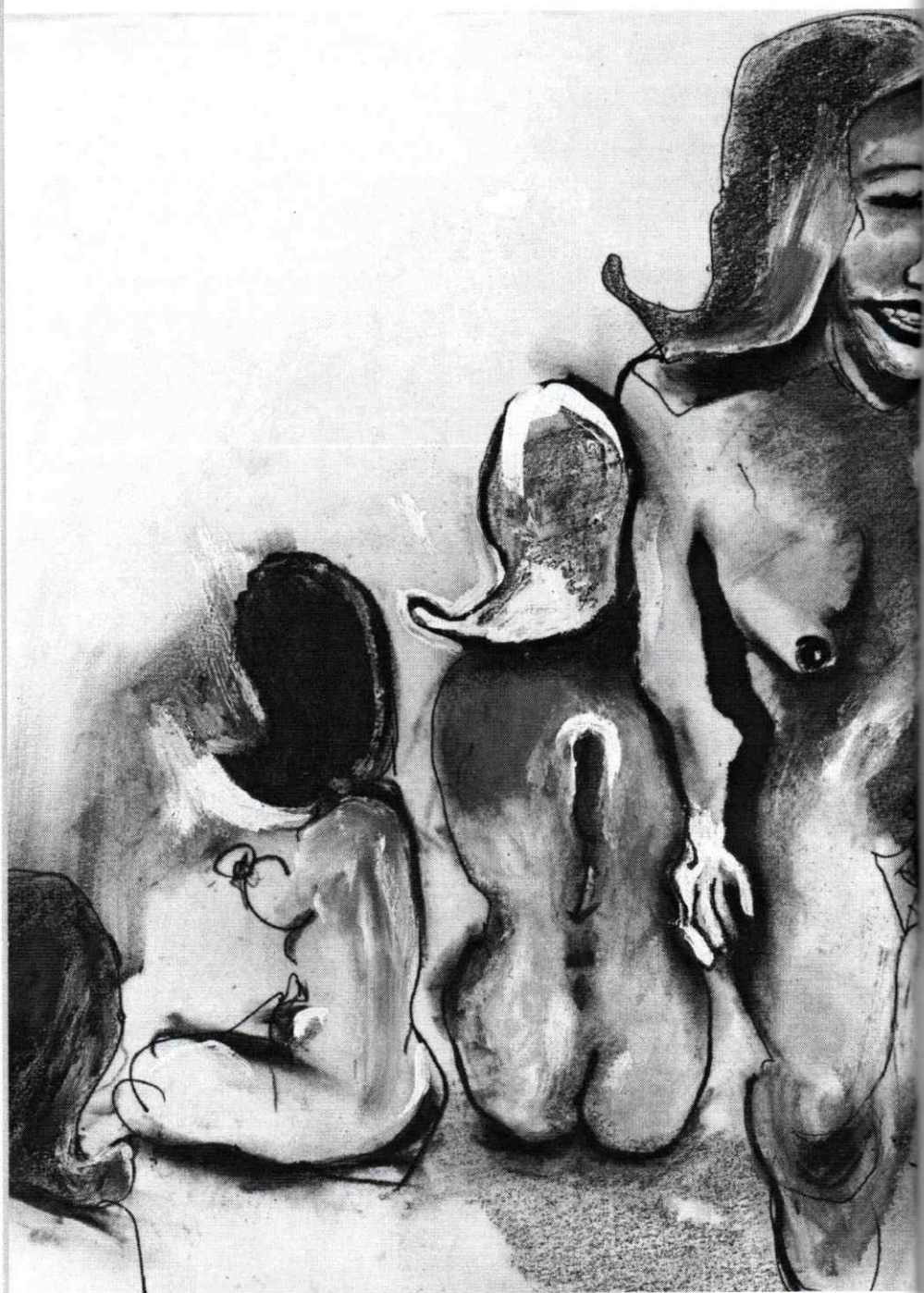
She took to the stage at a school talent show dressed in white pants, a black T-shirt and blue suspenders; this Mexican-American girl with the soft brown afro swayed and spun to the tune of "Stayin' Alive".

I can't remember whether or not my performance was good. My mother claims I was a bit on the stiff side. Sometimes I picture what an ethnically confused sight I must have been to the audience. It is ironic I should pick "Stayin' Alive" since being ethnic in this country translates to a struggle to stay alive.

The development of these next poems coincided with a 'realization trip' of mine through the roads of ethnicity. In the last couple of years I've discovered I am Mexican. Yet, I'm also not.

The more I sought out my culture, the greater my awareness of my ineptness as a Mexican-American. I hardly spoke the language, didn't know the history, and had never *really* seen Mexico. These poems talk about not only 'outside' prejudice, but also about the kind manifested within a group, too.

In unpacking from this 'trip', I've come to a few conclusions: I could be Mary Tyler Moore, white boys don't cry and I'll always like tacos a lot.

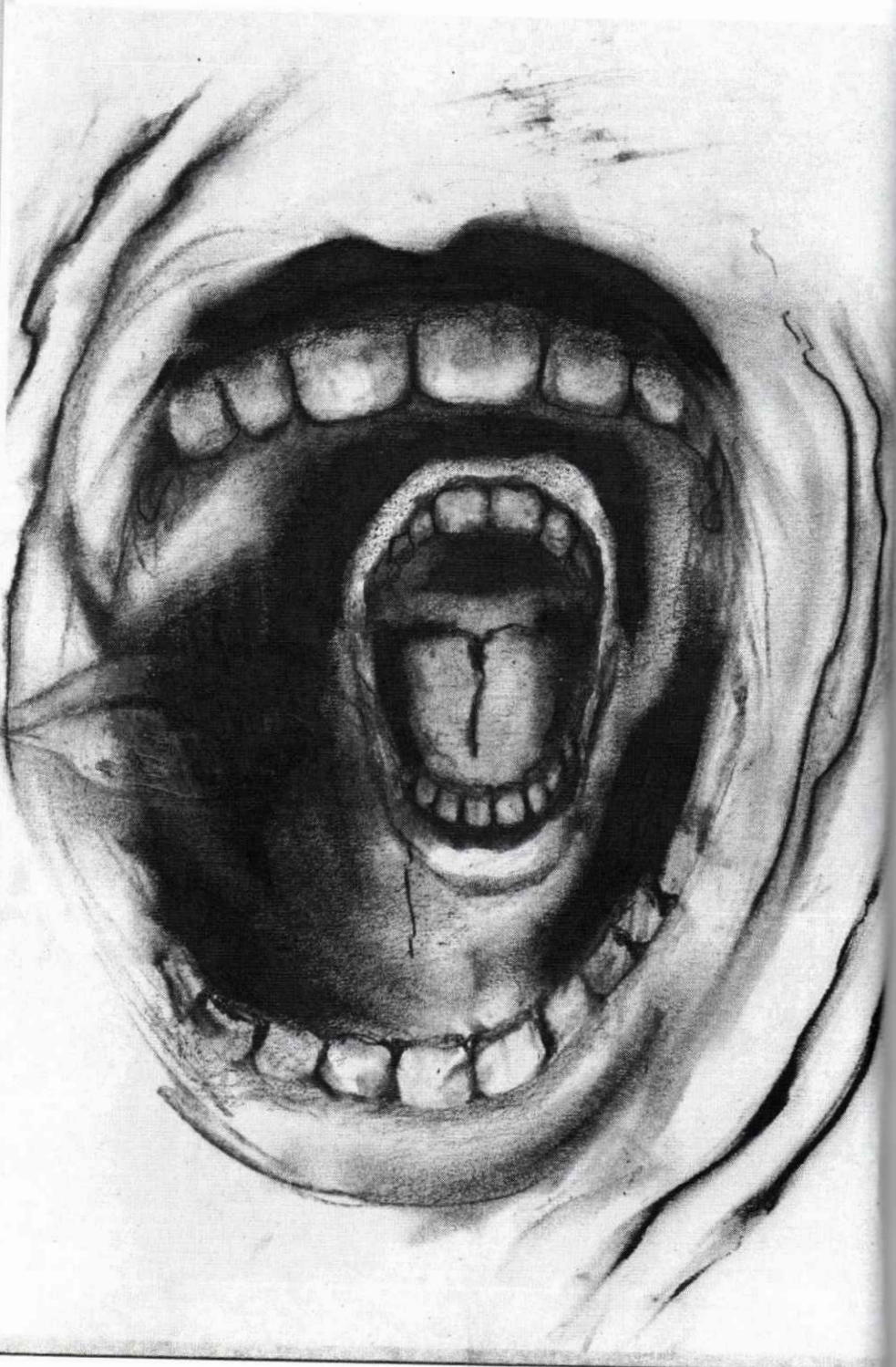


MARY TYLER MOORE WASN'T MEXICAN

*You can turn the world on
with a smile
if you're Mary Tyler Moore.
I grew up in the seventies —
polyester plaid outfits,
and 20 million men stayin' alive
in white suits.
It was the T.V. generation of
Mary Tyler Moore and Bob Newhart.
Mary Tyler Moore wasn't Mexican,
neither was Bob.
Neither was anyone else on T.V.
with the exception of Freddy Prinze
and Tony Orlando.
Hey!, tie that yellow ribbon.
Of course there were the "I Love Lucy" reruns.
Ricky was Cuban they say
and pussy whipped by a redhead.*

*That Mary Tyler Moore was something else, huh?
Such a smart dresser
a dazzling smile
as she threw her hat up in the air with joy.
She was the only woman in the news room.
Smarter than those other guys —
Ted Baxter, Murray, Mr. Grant.
This week she just can't seem to get that promotion.
Last week she didn't let a guy spend the
night on a first date.
She had morals, a good wholesome girl.
Mary Tyler Moore wasn't Mexican.*

*What if she'd been Mexican?
Would she wear tight sweaters,
leopard skin pants and spike heels
like a sexy señorita?
Would she work in a newsroom
or as the upstairs maid for a doctor?
Would she have hot heated sex
with her boss or the limo driver?
The low morals of brown trash
from across the border.
Mary Tyler Moore wasn't Mexican.*



ANGRY WHITE BOYS DON'T CRY

*This is my generation
full and filled
with
a whole lotta
angry white boys.*

*Angry white boys
with dreadlocks,
talkin' black
don't cry out.*

*Angry white boys
don't cry out
about the
unequal
unjust
unreasonable
done
to their people.*

*Angry white boys
aren't a minority.
They ain't
called wetbacks.
They don't
get setback.*

*Angry white boys
don't cry out
about lost
culture...
about
ancient history.*

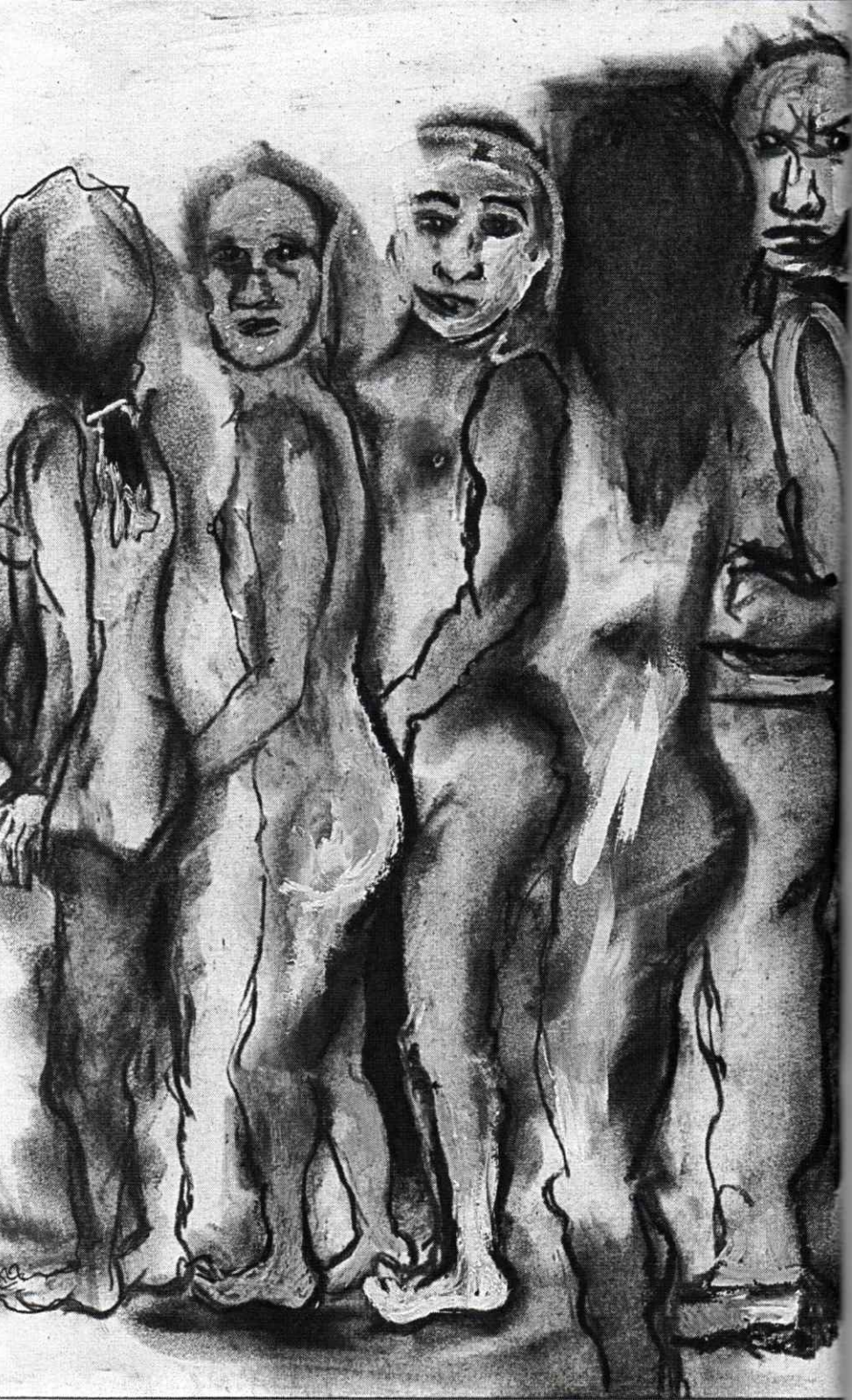
*Angry white boys
don't cry.*

*They **YELL** anger
They **SCRE-E-E-EAM** tantrum
They **RANT** resentment
They can't make
allowances
for being white.*



one august in texas

the truck
in front of me
black rubber
hip high in water
traveled
as slow as my ass
down a flooded Garland road
towards the
Gaston
Grand
split off
two MEXICANS
sat
in the back
drenched
by heaven's pee
passing cars
spit on them
making slick hair
s-l-i-c-k-e-r
and
white tees
stick to brown
the truck steered
into a right turn
the MEXICANS hung on
one dirty wave
greeted them
they couldn't
get
much wetter
two MEXICANS
sat in the back of
a pick up truck
one august
in texas
there's more
where they came from



THE CRANKY SOULS

I wrote to mama
just to scold her
dear mama, I scribbled
you didn't tell me about the old ones
with hands like maps of the world
and faces above yours
wrinkling into years
of memorable orgasms
this one during Mardi Gras in '77
and that one in San Antonio
the summer of '89
they're the cranky souls
who rattle out of bed for morning cups of coffee
wearing bell-bottom jeans to nine to five jobs
driving steadily home in reliable '72 Cadillacs
so, I'm laying here remembering the tales
after warnings
about the pretty young things
with slick black hair and no green card
who'll leave you with a full belly
for someone they saw on the corner
and of course the pretty blonde white boys
who marvel at your dusty brown nipples
born in the land of pink nipples
you're the novelty in their backseat
but, mama, what about the ones
with white hair curling and twisting on their forearms
who can't see your smile without their glasses
they sit grinning
with resilient bellies
who've weathered hot sauces from Dallas to Mexico
you fall asleep to their snores in your face
and wake up to cranky souls
with plenty of love from up above and down below
oh, mama, I'm just fussin'
that's all —
I hope daddy is doing fine —
is he still sleeping in the spare room?
I know his snores bother you so...



THOSE GODS IN BOXERS AND COTTON BRIEFS

They were not gods
they were mere men
mere fools for the plucking
no thrones to bow down to
pink meat-eating flesh
soft, kneadable, eatable
ears, arms, legs

Strummin', stinkin' Indian man
pores clogged with OLD SPICE
he's a medicine man
art for the sick
the sick in the head
TEACH ME TO BE A REAL MEXICAN
TEACH ME TO BE A REAL WOMAN

***and over there
pretty boy wacko
tatoood like the big boys
wants to be macho
like one big beef taco
so, just give him the eye
he'll open his fly
give you a slice of his pie
making you scream, oh, my!, oh, my!, oh, my!***

*look up in the sky
dark-haired ponytailed man
it's a galaxie, a space
full of red sucking cunts
you could run, you could hide
but you stand your ground proudly
with a tilt of your head
and a raise of your eyebrow
as a million pink saucer breasts
descend on that bald spot
in back of your head*

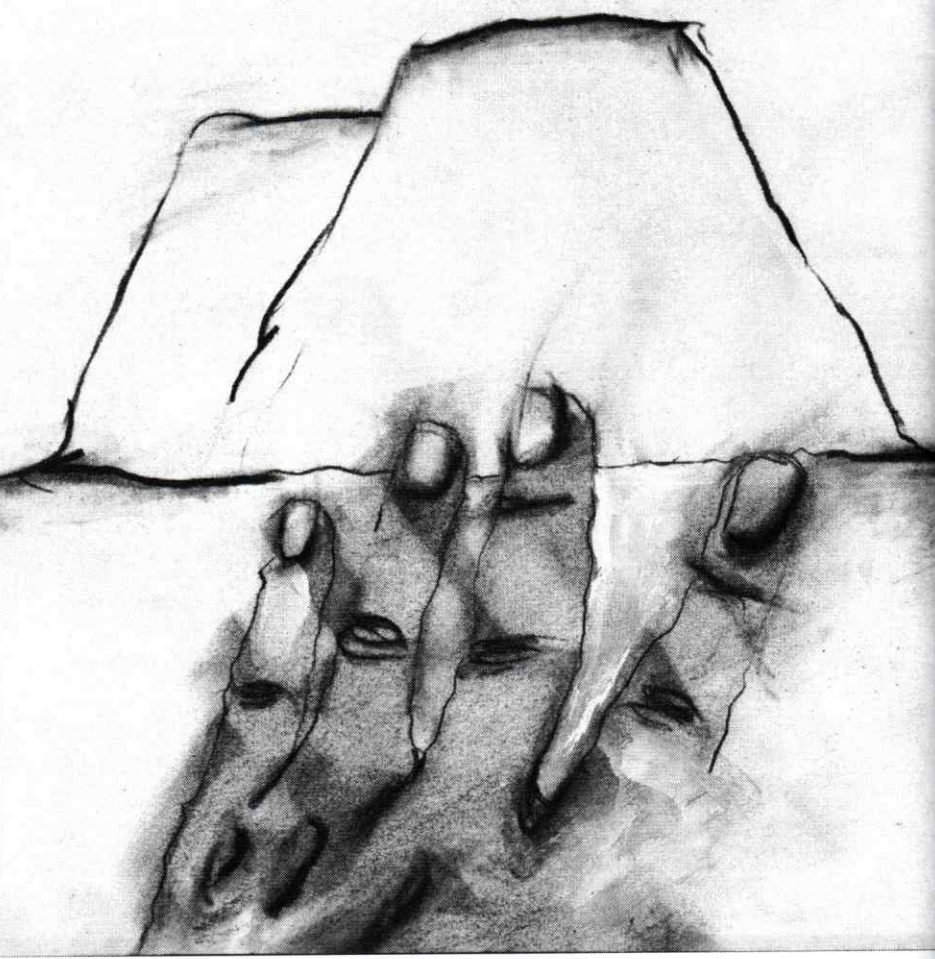
Then came a man
his body lives in Texas
his mind's in New Orleans (nawlings)
child of the sixties



hey!, it's the nineties
what good is the bass
if you're not gonna play it
use your instrument now
while you can, old man...
one day it'll shrivel up
just like a jalapeño
without the umpf...

***Babycakes, you are the sweetest little babycakes
he was my babycakes, my sweet babycakes
I'd strum a hundred guitars
I'd go to every bar
in search of my babycakes
one day someone took a bite
then they ate him all up
now my babycake's just crumbs
dumb, brushable crumbs in a rusty dust pan***

They were not GODS
They were not WOMEN
they were men
the end of w-o-m-a-n
and the beginning of m-e-n-s-t-r-u-a-l



I LIKE TACOS...A LOT

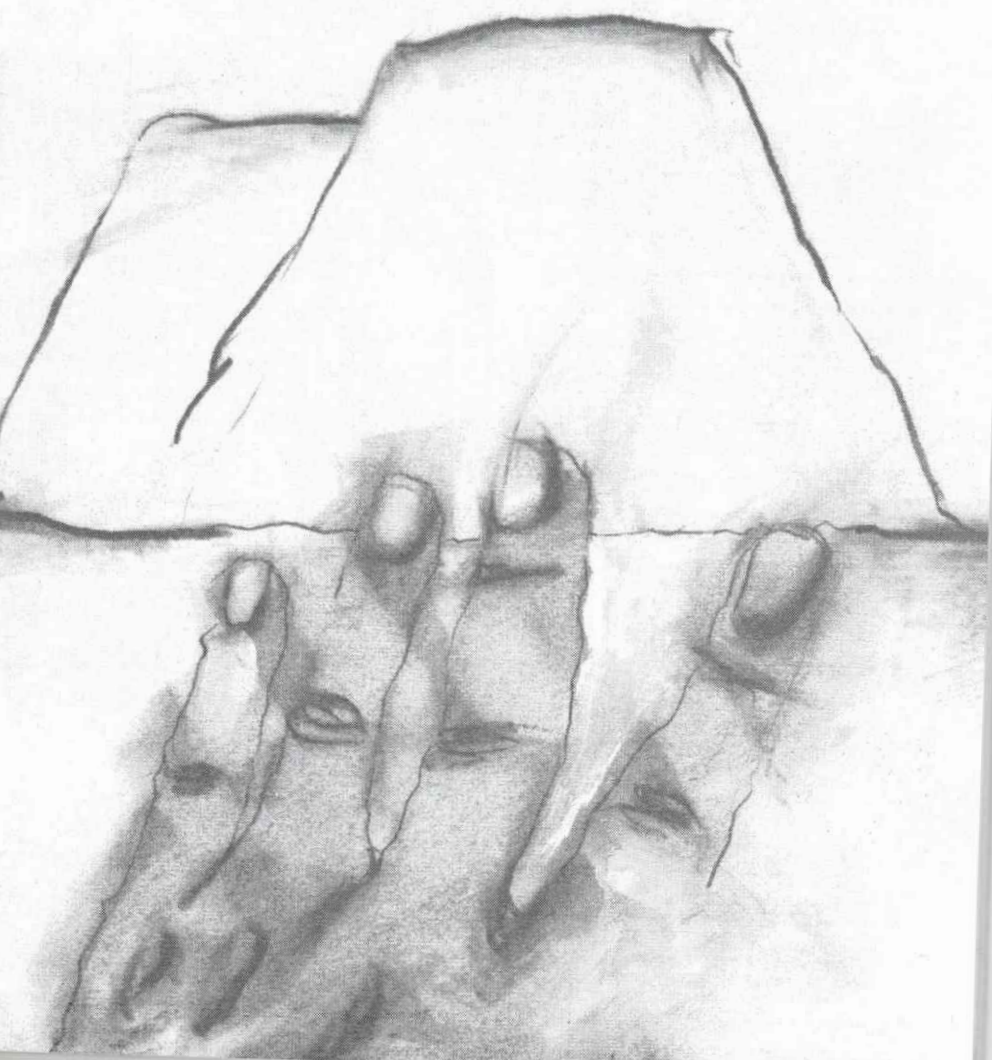
Here I stand
black, brown, tan
at a reception
with more than one
conception
of
La Virgen
de Guadalupe.

"Do you like
Mexican food?",
he's asking me.
Me, in my mood
answers
"Why, yes, I do".
"I like tacos a lot."

¿por qué no hablas español?"
"Why don't you
speak spanish?",
she asks.
"Or at least
spanglish?"
The zero accent
on my tougue
begins to reek.
I close my mouth.
Pienso,
'mi gente, mi lengua-
¿dónde está?'
Otra vez, ella pregunta
"¿por qué no hablas español?"
"You are Mexican,
aren't you?"
"Sí y no",
I smile
and mutter.
"But, I like tacos
a lot."

"MEZA"
Mi nombre,
you see.
She says,
"MESA"
correcting me.
M-E-S-A
sides so steep
plateau up high
I reply,
"M-E-Z-A"
loud and distinct
ZZZ...ZZZ...
"Zee, I like tacos
a lot."

Disrobing me
he's asking me,
"Are you really
Mexican?"
"Shoudn't your skin
be darker?"
He wants a rosy
dusty
brown
a saucy
olive
tan
against the
glowing
soft
white
of his thigh.
All I can do
is beam
proudly
and say
"But, I like tacos
a lot".



I Am Not a Man

Billie Holiday said love is like a faucet, you can turn it off and on.

Towards the end of 1992, I wrote a poem called "Love Lush". I think of it as a single woman's anthem. It rants about a state of being in which our emotions blur and there becomes no distinction between the ready acceptance of love or simply sex. 'Love lush' refers to a state of drunkenness... drunk on all the possibilities and promises of love.

This poem and the others in this section speak about that gray area between the act of sex and the emergence of love. Most of them are performed as rousing cheers celebrating two seconds of muddled emotions. These poems lend a voice to those feelings so rarely put to words or uttered aloud.

I see the subject of a woman's sexuality as an endless source of inspiration: it is about taboos, the unspoken and the mysterious. While a man's erection is an obvious testimony to his sexual prowess, her sexual core is within, and not readily visible.

Yeah... Billie, love and sex are like faucets, you can turn them off and on.



THE LAUGHTER BETWEEN MY LEGS

The laughter
between
my legs
came back
around my
birthdays
to haunt
me.

It sounded
like
the cackle
of
the "Joker"
in a
Batman episode.

Sometimes
this
tasteless joke
was
on
me.

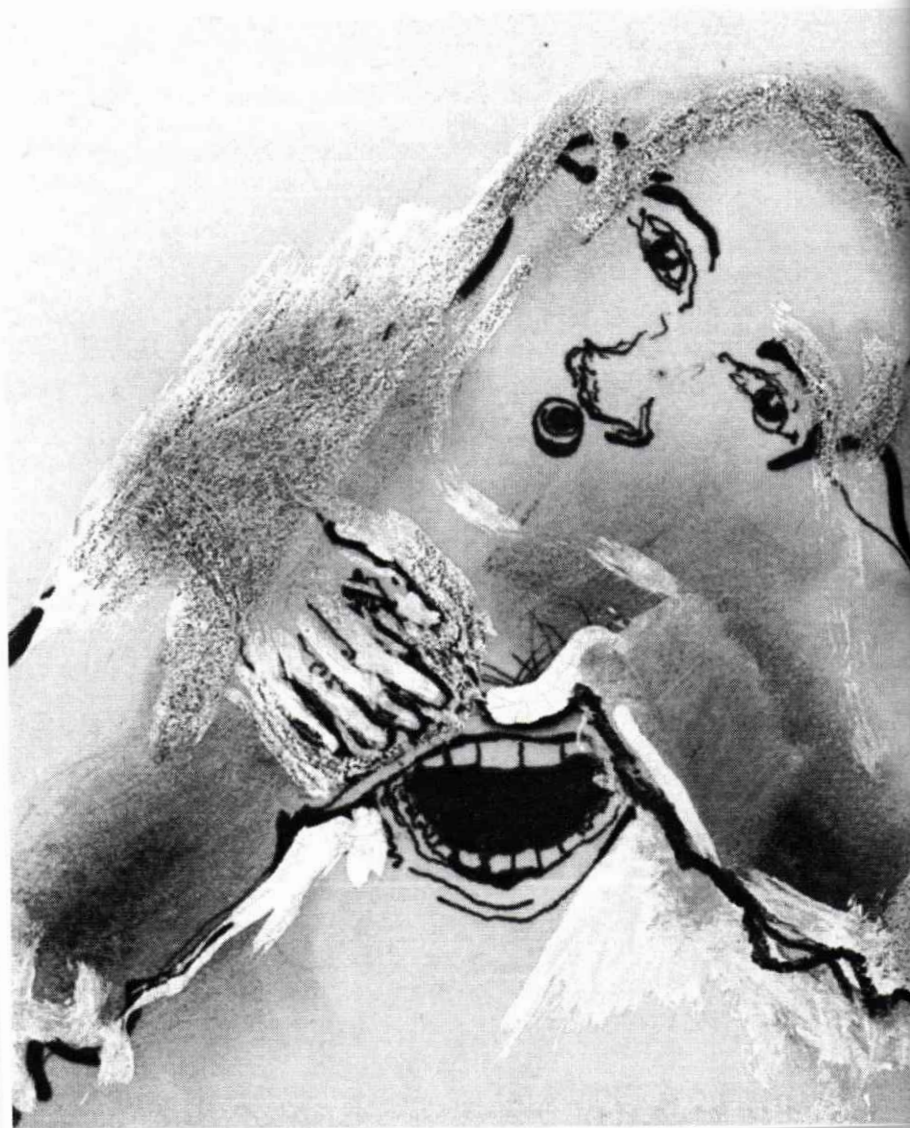
And, sometimes
on
him.

In bars
I stood
in the
"OK Corral"

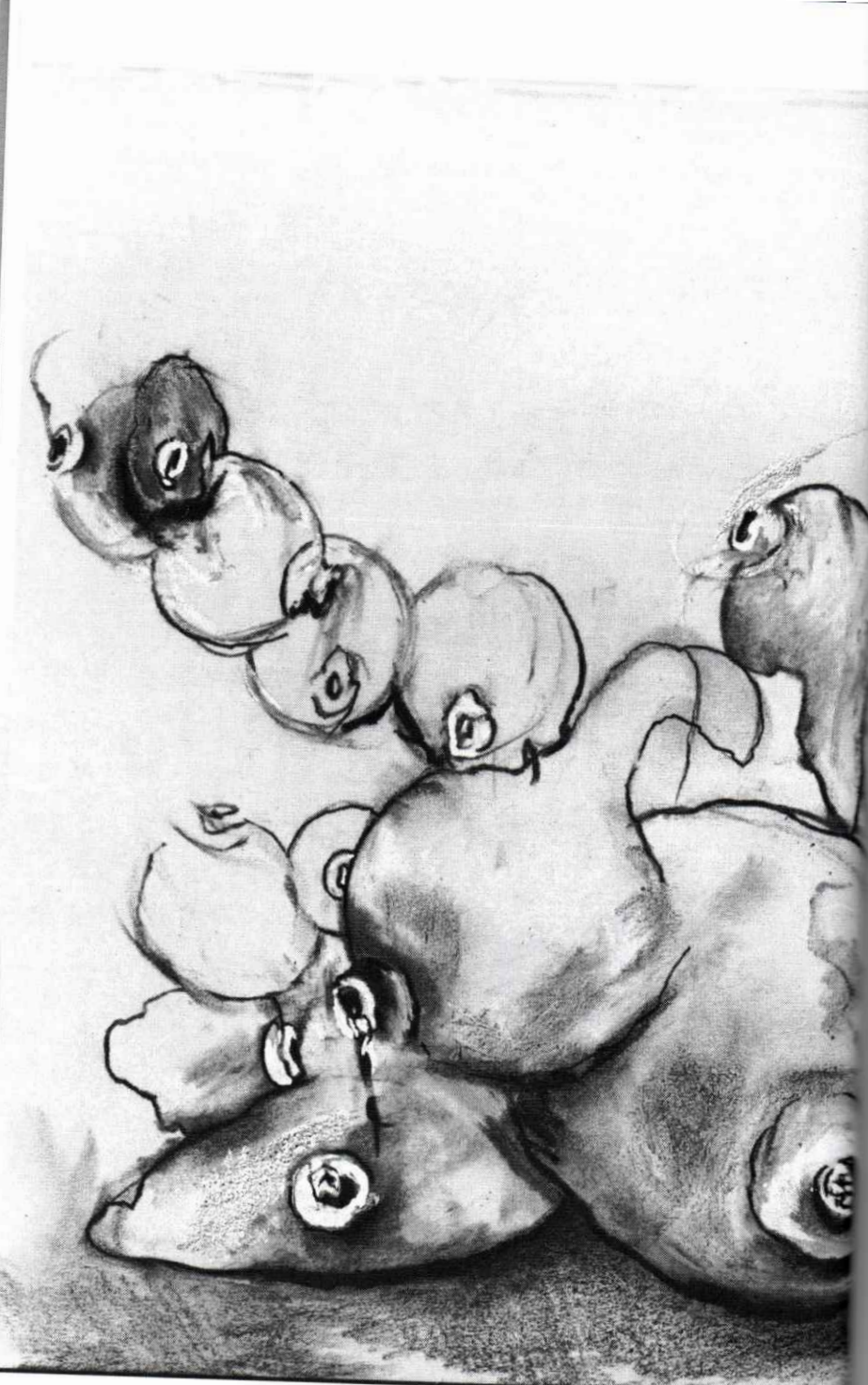
stance:
legs
spread
far apart,
hands
poised
by the
hips —
only...

I didn't
have
the guns.

The
partially-
formed faces

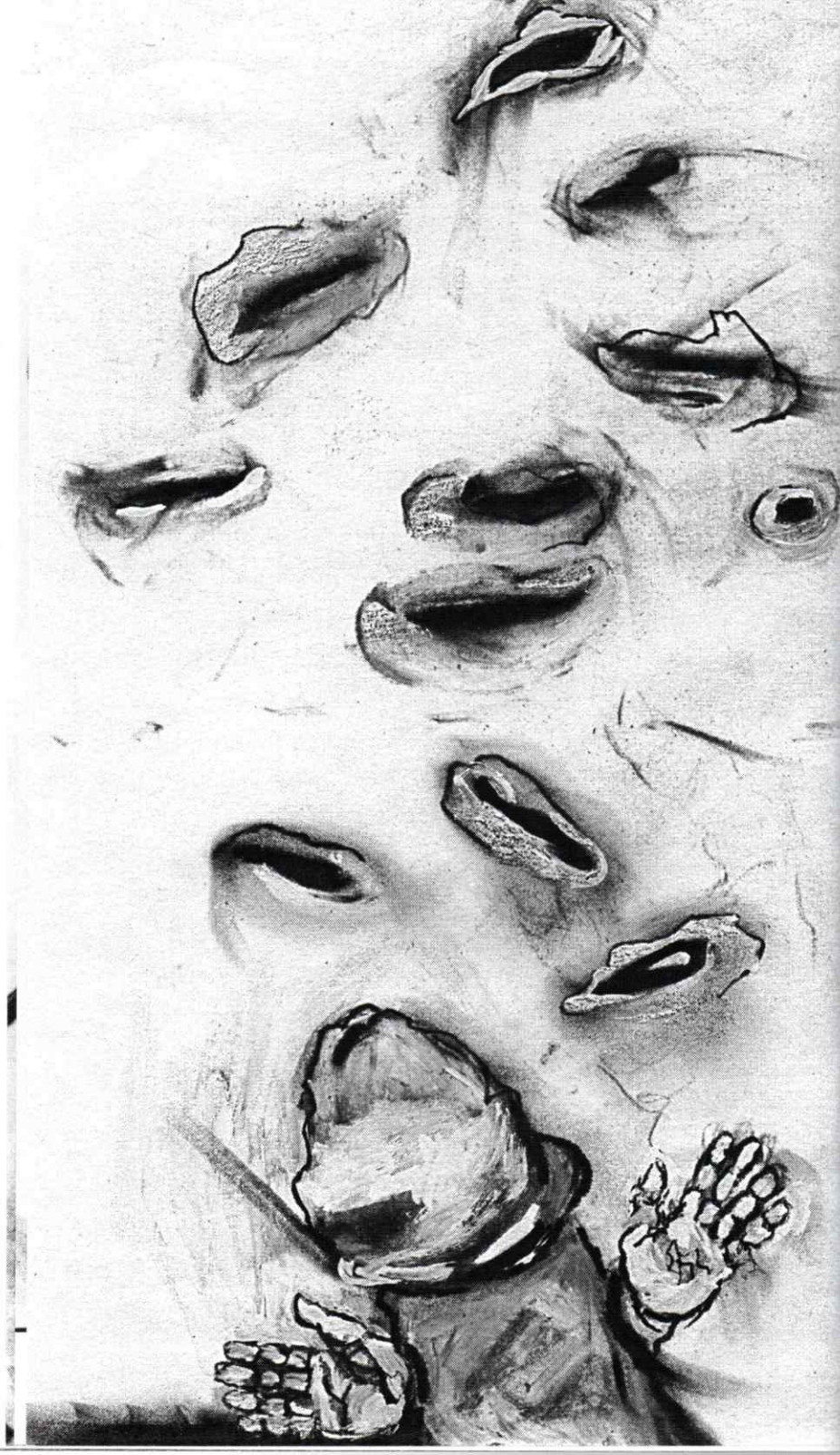


floated
in and out
of my
vagina
as if
caught
in a
revolving
door
at
Macy's.
Some smothered
the laughs
behind
closed mouths;
others
laughed
till
the cracks
became
deep
and hollow.
The
laughter
between
my legs
came
to me
each year
for
just a
day,
then
faded
into the
distance...
beyond
the uterus,
past
the tubes,
past
the past.



THERE'S CUM ON MY CHEST

there's cum on my chest
and a song in my heart
making my breasts sway to and fro
clumpy, lumpy, cottage cheese, man...
rub it in, d...d...darling
faster through glorious pores
more than a teaspoon, less than, = to
i, sperm-stricken woman utter
there's cum on my chest
and i'm fallin' in love



LOVE LUSH

little fucking men
little sucking men
traipsing in and out
drunk without a doubt

love lush, baby

Want to fuck you, maybe...

WALK A STRAIGHT LINE

say you'll be mine

you are my one and only love lush

cunt eating-penis,

angry, dark and flush

feeling tipsy, dickie?

HEY!, my name's not Vickie!

have another drink

smell my bushy mink

love lush, baby

cum inside me...

maybe?



THE ONE

Hip Hip Hurray, Hip Hip Hurray!
He made me come
he, he the bum

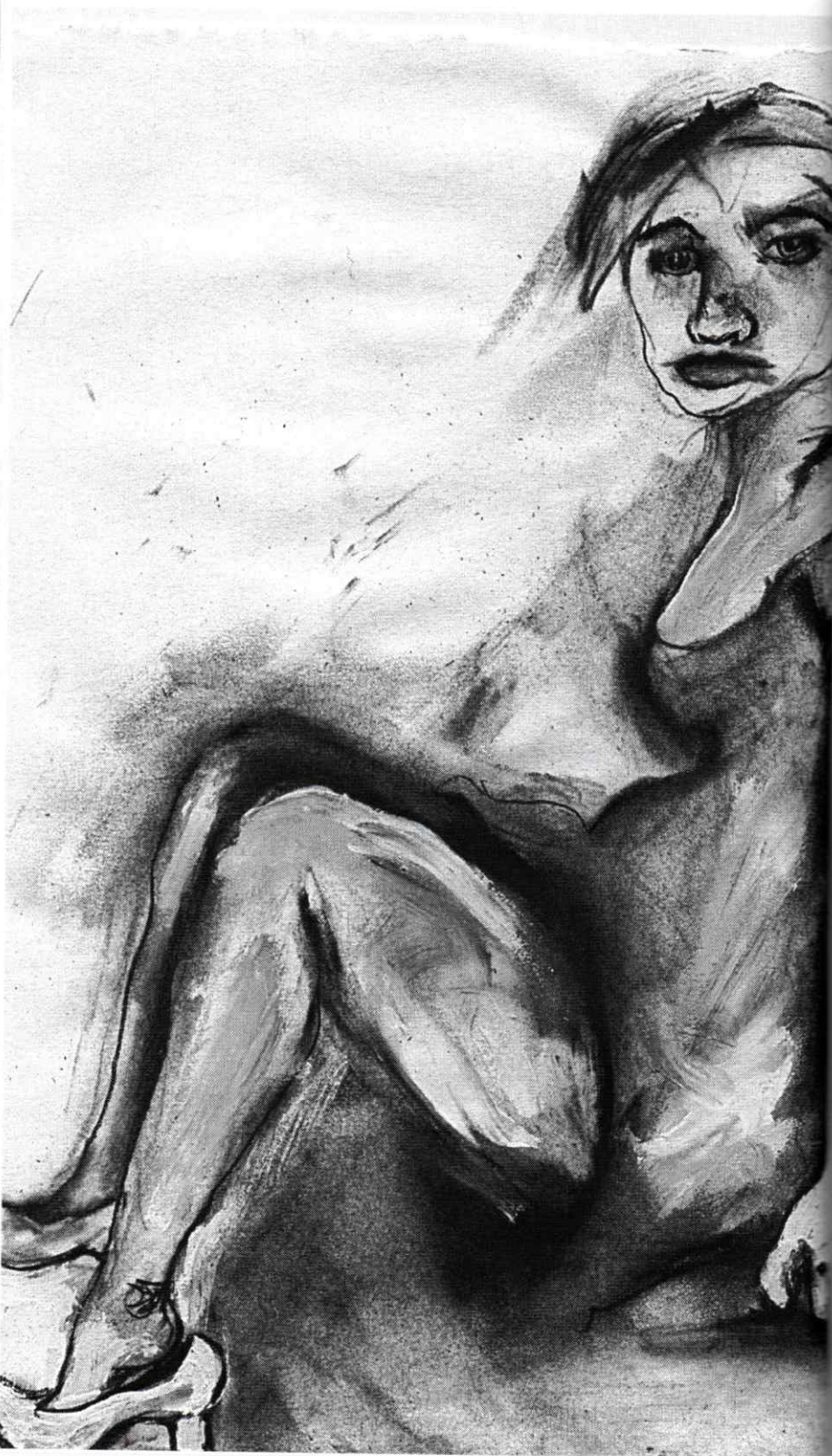
momma, oh momma
he is the one
the only one
fool that he is
and just a bum

he made me come
he made her come
then she, then he

I'm not the one
the only one
fool that I am
oh damn, oh damn

Hip Hip Hurray, Hip Hip Hurray!
I made me come
me, me, cum, cum
I am the one
the only one





HEY! HEY! PRETTY SAILOR BOY
WANNA BE MY TOY?
SHE SAID, ALL THE WHILE LOOKING AT YOU

*Hey!, Hey! sailor boy
Wanna be my toy?
This one's too old to be my toy
I sez to myself as I look at his white sideburns
laugh wrinkles etched into righteous cheeks
Hey!, pervert man
Hey, listen to me
Wanna be my toy?*

*Wanna play in the shower with me?
on a playground
in a hotel swimming pool
late at night, early in the morning*

*Wanna be the young lovers
groping in the dark
in a public park
in the car
in a bar?
Could you be my toy?
or am I lookin for a boy?
You haven't been a boy for years
and a half*

*Am I too old for boys?
Sweetie, should I put away my toys?*

*Look, now I'll play with the grown-ups
doin' those grown-up things
wearing lipstick, sucking dick
Hey, I'm a big girl
Why don't you give me a whirl?
I could make the hair in your nose curl
Hey man, I'm too old for toys I say
grinning and bearing me teeth
I watch my man shave
He's got hair down to his knees
He climbs up over and over again
Come baby, come baby, come, I thinks
If I turn to you will you cum, cum, cum
If I love you will you dum, dum, dum
Love this I say
lifting my eyes to you
Cuz, if you don't I might bleed blues
Just like the ones Irma sings
Those are rosemary blues, dear
Hey, you wanna beer?
Burp!*

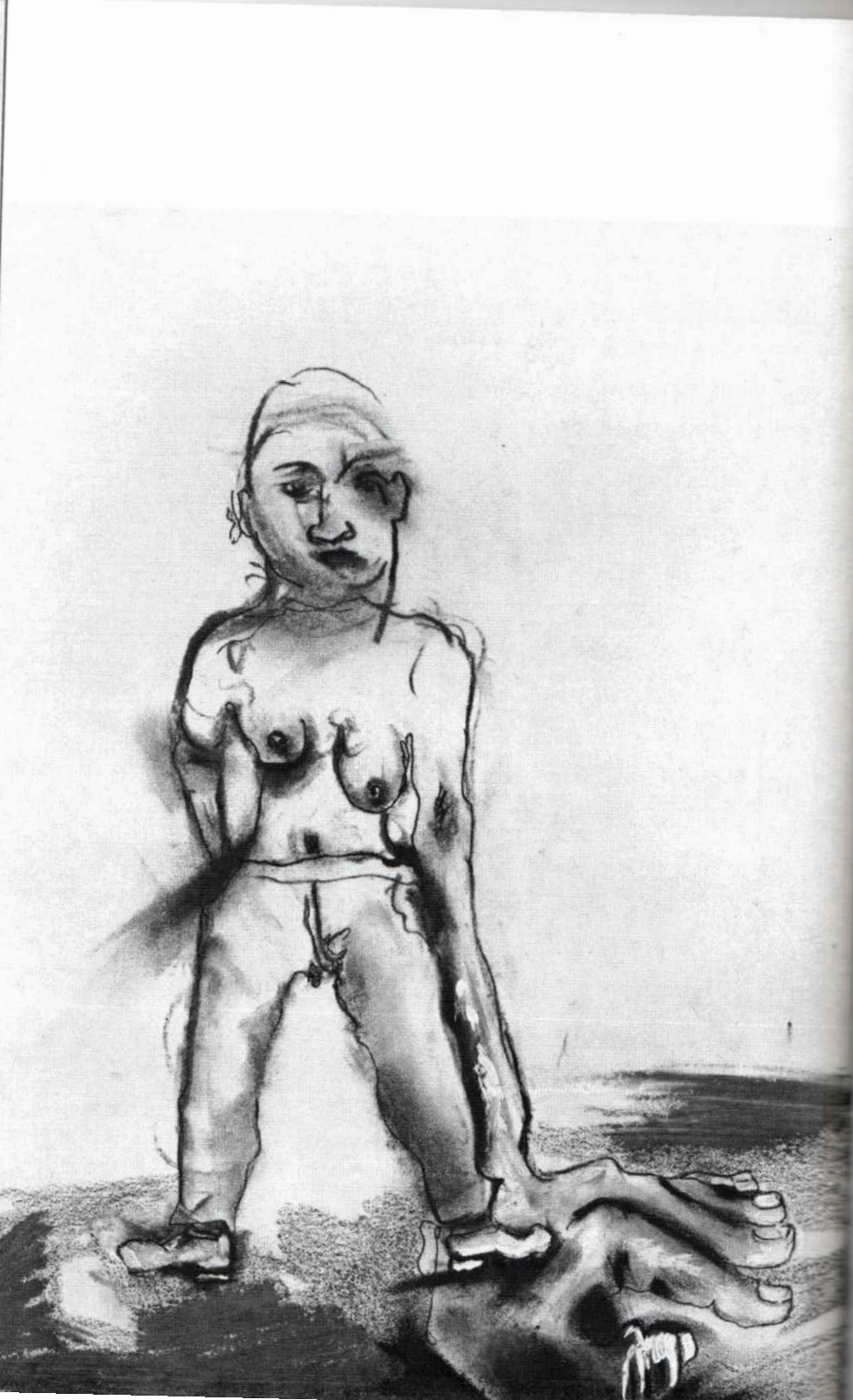


The Cause

I've seen Crawford in Johnny Guitar, listened to Lena sing about good for nuthin' Joe and thought Patsy was either crazy or fallin' to pieces. Wronged women or just women who were wrong?

As much as I've sympathized with the trials of women, it's peculiar that I've had very few women as close friends in my life. Years ago I thought the abuse and wrongs women suffered were due to their weakness and allowance of the unspeakable to happen, but then I had a rude awakening. And, in the end I realized the strongest women are those who have been wronged and walked past it.

This last section of poems are for all the wronged women who are out there waiting — waiting for him to come home from the bar, waiting for him to notice just her, waiting for him to make their life complete.



MAN

a **BIG MAN**, he was
a **REAL MAN'S MAN**
HE HIT HIS WOMAN,
this **BIG MAN**, that he was
OVER AND OVER,
ALL THE WAY TO THAILAND

BAM, BAM, BAM

SHE cried out to this man,
“**STOP YOUR HAND**,
STOP YOUR HAND, BIG MAN.”
THE HAND didn't **STOP**
the **WORDS** were for **NAUGHT**

BAM, BAM, BAM

a **NO MAN**, he was
NO REAL MAN
'NO MAN' HIT his woman,
this **CHILD**, that he was
OVER AND OVER,
TIL SHE WAS A MAN.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AN ORGAN

Just like this man of mine
it had no backbone.
Never standing straight up
for any length of time,
it would flop to one side
just like that annoying lock of hair on his forehead.
And in it's excitement, a dark flush
would seep through it.
Veins popping
in understandable Braille—
pre-mature fluids in eye-dropper fashion
would spill—
Somehow in spite of my cluttered interior
it managed to take up
six or seven inches
of my valuable space.
Why...some nights,
holding it in my hand
massaging, on his command,
with an up and down stroke
I'd think how easy it would be
to squeeze, and squeeze,
and squeeze...
Perhaps it would explode lightly
releasing hot air
like some red Birthday balloon.
Or maybe it would be more like
that angry blackhead
between pinched polished red nails
shooting pus on your bathroom mirror.
It's just a penis —



a rapist, a robber, a murderer

A p - p - p - penis.

Who would convict me?

Who would miss this one?

In this world where they

are as plentiful

as starving children

in Third World countries.

A few penises came to the door

the other day

in blue suites with silver badges

ranting and raving in typical

patriarchal style.

They say I'm a bad girl.

Bad Daddy's little girl.

Bad little woman.

THAT ORGAN WAS IMPORTANT.

Luckily, it's gonna be repaired

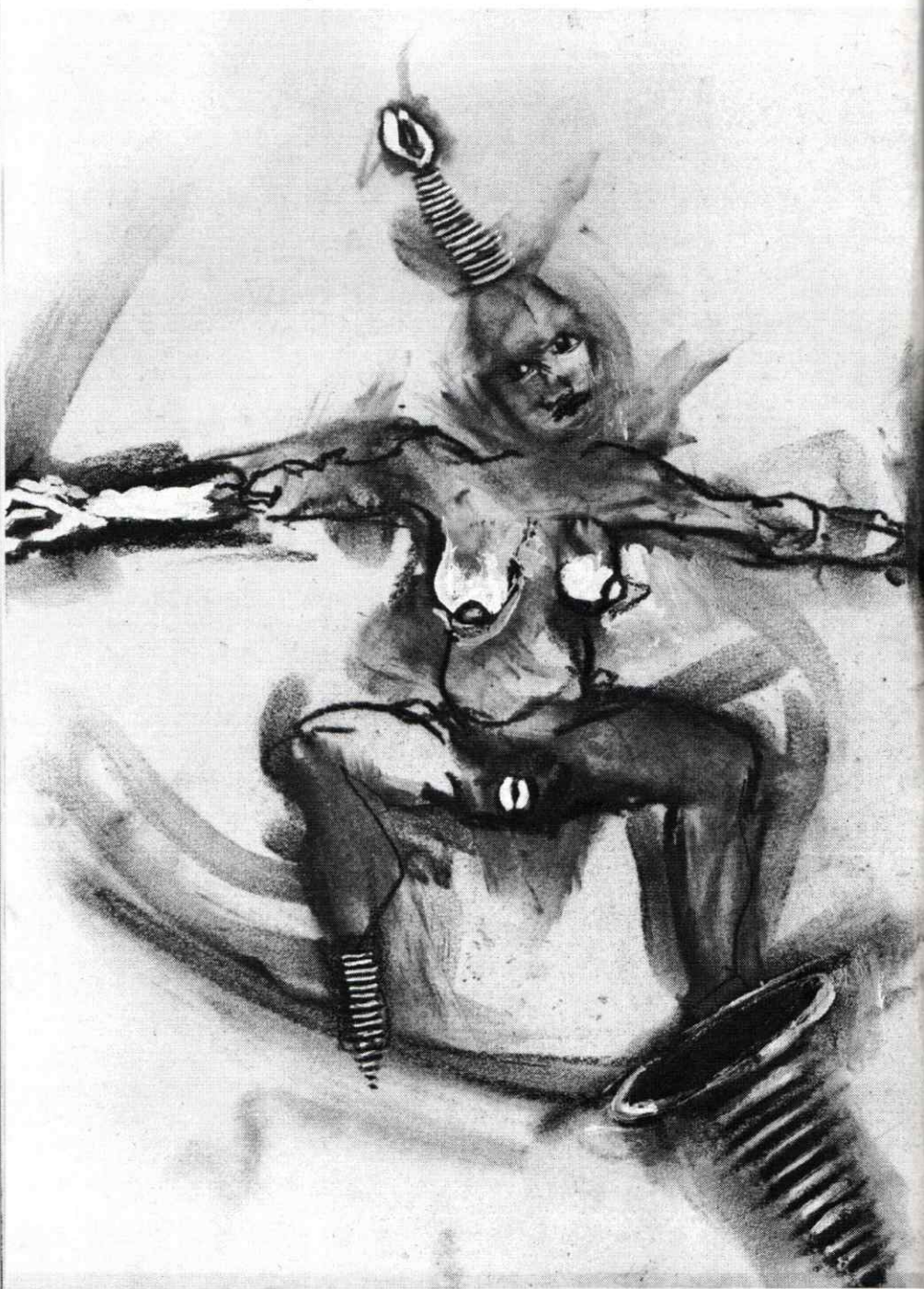
to rape, rob, and murder...again,

to steal the self-respect

of Daddy's little girl

of the little woman.

THAT ORGAN WAS IMPORTANT.



P - U - S - S - Y

P - U - S - S - Y

PUSSY, PUSSY, PUSSY

i am not a man
i am not gonna
be your
rapist
releasing
my dysfunctional-self
inside

you
i am a woman
i can
give birth
to your baby
fry'em up
in a spoon
of lard
and
claim

postnatal
depression
I AM NOT A MAN
I AM NOT YOUR GOD

with
holy day
of worship
praise
i am a woman
i can get
i can sell
i can make
i can cry
i can do
my father
brother
uncle
and son
i can keep
a secret

P - U - S - S - Y P - U - S - S - Y

PUSSY PUSSY PUSSY



THE OVERPRICING OF COW MANURE

If cow manure is
a dollar eighty nine
per forty pound,
what's the cost
of forty years of his shit?
This long-term woman pondered.
Taking into account
the escalating
cost of living
the supply versus
demand factor
and the buying power
of today's dollar.
then,
of course there's
the days he shits more.
days he's drinking budweiser.
There's crap on her face
making her wince twice.
He's selling it!
She's buying it!
...ridiculously overpriced...
Pounds per day times weeks
times years
times, times, times
whew!
Wipes her brow
sniffs his foul
next to her
watching
commercials
drinking
budweiser
"full toliet tonite
of
a dollar eighty nine"
long-term woman
thinks.



THE JOKE

How many dicks does it take to fill up my pussy?
How many dicks does it take to fill up my mouth?
How many dicks does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many more Mexicans does it take to fill up Texas?
How many more immigrants does it take to fill the United States?
How many Mexicans does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many men does it take to mismanage this government?
How many men does it take to botch every other countries' government?
How many men does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many Hispanic actors are on Melrose Place?
How many Hispanic actors are on Channel 5?
How many Hispanic actors does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many women run for public office?
How many women have run for President of United States?
How many women does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many lesbians does it take to raise a family?
How many lesbians should be allowed to raise children?
How many lesbians does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many gangs does it take to kill every teenager in Oak Cliff?
How many gangs does it take to wipe out every teenager in this country?
How many gangs does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many actresses are there who have not done nude scenes?
How many actresses are there who have not shown their breasts?
How many actresses does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many ethnic employees does it take to make a company's makeup diverse?
How many ethnic people does it take to make the United States multicultural?
How many ethnic people does it take to screw in a light bulb?

How many women have slept with more than one man in their lifetime?
How many women have earned the title of slut?
How many sluts does it take to screw in a light bulb?



Rosemary Meza is a poet, painter, and performance artist who resides in Dallas, Texas. She earned a BFA from the University of North Texas in Denton, TX and a MFA from the Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore, MD. Although both her degrees are in Painting/Drawing, she has been writing for the past ten years.

*Back cover photographed
by Kris Hundt*