

Notes From the First Year

(for my sisters, a trilogy of revolution)

Susan Saxe

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I Patience

There is no need now to rush about my life,
I have time, each day, to unfold
carefully, my rage —
no longer impotent,
But the most powerful force in the universe.
(Do you hear me, Mother?)
Slowly like a sunflower, like a tree,
Revolution unfolds before me:
Newspaper pages beginning with world news,
and ending with the comics,
and classified ads announcing the end
of things as we know them.
Inevitably the world, the nation, the city,
the arts, society, sports
and personals
will be recycled
By patient origamists, armed with love.

II Questionnaire

There is unfeminine (but oh, so Female)
sureness in my hands,
checking "No." to every question
in the Harris poll, Reader's Digest,
Mademoiselle,
I am an outlaw, so none of that applies to me:
I do not vote in primaries, do not wish to increase
my spending power, do not take birth control
pills.
I do not have a legal residence, cannot tell you
my given name or how (sometimes very) old
I really am.
I do not travel abroad, see no humor in uniforms,
and my lips are good enough for my lover
as they are.
Beyond that, no one heads my household, I would not
save my marriage if I had one, or anybody else's
if I could.
I do not believe that politicians need me, that Jesus
loves me, or that short men are particularly sexy.
Nor do I want a penis.
What else do you have to offer?

III I Argue My Case

Gentlemen of the Jury:
I have had the time and opportunity to appear
before you in the guise
(disguise) of every woman:
to you, sir, I was the dumb hand
that wiped your
table,
to you, sir, a flimsy black
skirt on legs,
to you, some hard
down-on-me woman who might
(or might not) yet
be downed again.
To him, an ass,
to him, a breast, a leg
to him.
To that one, just another working bitch.
To each, another history, to each
another (partial) lie.
We women are liars, you say.
(It is written.)
But you have made us so.
We are too much caught up in cycles, you say.
But your gods cannot prevent that.
So we act out our cycles,
one or many,
in the rhythm of what has to be
(because we say so)
our common destiny.
And so, before you are taken in by one of our
perfect circles,
remember also that we are in perfect
motion.
And when you (and you will)
run counter to the flow of revolution,
the wheel of women will continue to turn,
and grind you
so fine.

Susan Saxe wrote this and other poems while she was living underground as a fugitive for 4½ years, during which time she was on the F.B.I.'s Ten Most Wanted List for "overall radical activities." On March 27, 1975, she was arrested in Philadelphia and since then has been tried for allegedly taking part in a Boston bank robbery 7 years ago in which a policeman was killed. Saxe became "a feminist, a lesbian, a woman-identified woman" while underground. She is now in prison awaiting sentence.

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