



*dreaming  
of  
kaleidoscopes*

*chris  
wind*

*also by chris wind*

*Thus Saith Eve*

*UnMythed*

*Deare Sister*

*The Lady Doth Indeed Protest*

*Snow White Gets Her Say*

*Satellites Out of Orbit*

*Particivision and other stories*

*Paintings and Sculptures*

*Excerpts*

*dreaming  
of  
kaleidoscopes*

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of  
kaleidoscopes*

*chris wind*

*Magenta*

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The logo for Magenta, featuring the word "Magenta" in a stylized, handwritten-style font with a horizontal line underneath.

*dreaming of kaleidoscopes*

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*solitude on the steppes*



*i wake*

i wake.  
the sky is like soiled snow at a spring sewer.  
there are tears in the air.  
every morning we leave the apartment  
they go to work, i go to school.  
we walk along streets  
hearing the ebb and wash of the tide of traffic  
as it sterilizes the pavement with carbon monoxide.  
they go to buildings  
that do not scrape the smog from the sky.  
i go to a displeasing dome  
by dubious decree.

and then sometimes for supper  
we go to McDonalds.

*and i remember  
sitting in class  
my gaze caught upon a cocoon  
up there  
where the ceiling is seamed  
so pure and white  
i felt its rough softness with my eyes  
and when i saw it i dreamed  
perhaps i will see  
the butterfly burst out.*

*and i remember  
for my Confirmation  
auntie gave a rosary  
our fathers in diamond, hail marys in pearl  
so you can pray for the poor, she smiled.*

*when i saw it i screamed.  
in embarrassment mother smiled  
thank you, she is too young to understand  
i will put it in a safe deposit box  
until she is older.*

i listen to music  
upstairs in an attic  
that is my room of my own now  
Beethoven boasts his beating heart and  
Springsteen makes me move and  
no one tells me turn it down.  
last night, i listened to a song called "Sunrise"  
the first few bars so wakened into glory-  
in the morning, this morning  
i rose  
and bicycled six miles out of the city,  
i saw gossamer glistening,  
in the silver mist,  
crystal veins dripping opal,  
and as i sat in an open field,  
i saw the sun rise!

and i thought,  
                  i feel  
therefore i am.

*i remember hope and i remember despair  
but i forget  
which is the key for life-*

*four grown human beings*

four grown human beings  
each half a lifetime used  
sit around the table;  
playing their new game of  
Triple Yahtzee  
because it's Christmas;  
triple strategy  
triple excitement  
triple fun;  
it says so on the box.

they sit  
passing the bright shaker of dice;  
talking seriously  
knowingly  
of the best way to win;  
it matters.

the properly-dressed woman of forty-five  
yells "Yahtzee!" in glee  
when the dice fall right;  
she carefully counts and  
records her score;  
she's happy now.

she turns to me and boasts  
"I've had three Yahtzees this game!"  
and i almost answer  
i'm proud of you mom—  
but i bite my tongue,  
and my heart bleeds.

*later in the evening*

later in the evening  
long after dinner and dishes were done  
i came again to the kitchen  
and this time  
saw him.  
our beloved budgie who delighted  
in the flat chrome top of the fridge door  
hadn't turned quick enough this time  
his tail caught between  
and with the closing jolt  
he lost his balance  
flipped over the edge  
to hang helpless  
as he still hung now  
his little birdfeet clenched  
into stiff fists  
his eyes bulged wide and still.  
i opened the door  
cupped him in my hand  
and wept.

how long, i wondered—  
when last did someone—  
what does it feel like—

no, i need not ask about the pain  
of dying  
with the people you love all around  
not even noticing.

*burn victim*

i am always cutting flesh  
taking from one part  
to heal another—  
survival of the self  
sufficient.

1984

*i hurl my screams*

i hurl my screams!  
they just strike the walls  
and ricochet in hap  
hazard madness  
within the space of my room...  
they collide, explode,  
or clatter empty upon the floor  
on and on  
within the time of my room...  
it's deafening.

no,  
i know the sound of my own screams.  
this room is far too quiet.

1979



*solitude on the steppes*

wolf wanderings  
pacing to and fro  
and fro and fro  
silverlight on snow  
g listen.

soul scavenging  
contenting with fleshscraps  
m eager.

sacrisufficing self.

1980

*down a hollow*

down a hollow  
to the driftwood  
strewn along my mind  
my soul seeks an anchor  
but finds upon the rocks  
an hourglass—  
crystal eggs in golden frame  
shattered by the ocean  
pieces reflecting nothing in the dark  
disintegrating sandcastles drifting out

the splinters of dreams  
cut.  
i bleed.  
and the waters redden,  
                    wash,  
and carve the driftwood in my mind

1978

*Portrait of the Artist, Struggling*

unarmed i loiter at the edge of the field  
casting nervous glance at shreds of flesh  
still sticking to bones of those before  
i falter at this fear of mediocrity  
turn and dally, dally and turn  
(there is hope, there is safety,  
in potential, in becoming–  
a battle unfought is a battle undefeated)  
coward, i stall confrontation  
i crawl from my anxiety into shaming naps of negligence  
but awake, always, in apprehension and despair

and still, i do not dare  
i do not dare

1982

*youth*

splashes upon a tabula rasa  
berry juice and tempera  
trees and knees  
and Jesus and clocks  
that box us in  
and sin  
making little black marks  
upon that pure white canvas  
of April snows  
and the rose beneath  
bequeathed in bitter  
comedy  
oh how tragic  
the magic is  
lost among the caves  
and berry juice

1977

*this is the season*

this is the season.

i go out

stumbling through gardens gray

dusty gossamer

barnacled birdnests

flowers ghosting on the fringe.

once

bundling through forests fey

i felt gilded treebark and

chipmunks giggling and

a falling leaf touched my hair.

1981

## *Sonata for the Dead*

### I Largo

thus i begin  
my long sonata for the dead  
upon my instrument  
this unstrung bass i play  
a dirge in the minor mode.

to choose  
    between  
either or  
yes no  
to make that leap  
or huddle, quivering  
at every door

to live can only be to die  
gripping the taper  
i fury as it flickers, fades  
the glass of water  
half empty half  
is still there  
in spite of all.

evaporating.

### II Minuet and Trio

i'm told  
the minuet adds a stately grace to the sonata.  
in corsets and crinolines and cummerbunds  
there is no state of grace  
to be had  
by jellied rosaries.

the world is full of  
unanswered prayers  
Bruckner's  
Hagar's  
van Gogh's  
mine.

but we dance  
we twitch in two-four time  
(festering beetles all of us)  
trying to find the pattern,  
the pulse.

(there is no trio  
neither divine nor diabolic.  
remember the plagal cadence is not authentic.)

### III Rondo

still winter  
shroudy skies  
in the mourning

still mourning  
dawn dribbles through curtained pain  
seeps into puddle on sill  
evaporating

still evaporating  
crusts upon my bed  
i'm holding on to mould  
and whimpers of immortality  
i twitch

still twitching  
i crawl around the wasteland of my life  
around the wasteland  
around the waste

still waste  
shall i end with a tierce de picardie?  
do i dare?  
do i care.

still?

yes.

1982



*dreaming of kaleidoscopes*  
(thanks to chris)

whirls a storm  
of scarlet and crimson  
the cobweb drips  
and black and blue

black blue shrouds  
the bleeding petals  
torn  
ragged  
scabs and scars  
blowing across the snow

desert voices  
in a white room  
stark and naked  
i  
walk slowly

twisted grey and sometimes purple  
rarefied and far too dense  
i walk  
i walk  
and every now

and then  
i pick up a piece  
like shards of glass  
some mirrors  
and i don't know  
if i throw it away  
if i lose it  
if i store it for sustenance  
to inflict  
to understand  
who.

who.

standing on a cliff  
in a silent blizzard  
    crumbling  
and dreaming of kaleidoscopes  
all the pieces always fit

and i don't know  
    i won't take the one with the sharpest edge  
and make the cut  
to end all cuts.

1984

*i chirp*



*canary in a cave*

i see shadows on the wall  
of things happening beyond me.

petrified into paralysis  
by too much and too little,  
i sit in the dark

and chirp.

1983

*we move*

we move

with  
wooden

spasms

marionettes  
with

umbilical

strings

1985

*nuns*

nuns  
habits of black and white  
explaining their faith

1984

*In An Art Gallery*

tourists through life  
posing with Rodin  
for a photo  
of their vanity

1978



*“All I would ask would be that people do not meddle with me when I am busy painting, or eating, or sleeping, or taking a turn at the brothel, since I haven’t a wife.”*

van Gogh

### *Vinnie*

my idol  
my starry starry night  
my symbol of the misunderstood  
you are all too easy  
to understand.  
i’ve looked at each painting  
i’ve read every letter:  
it is a portrait of a young man  
as a commercial artist.

you’re not trying hard enough to sell  
my pretty flowers and sceneries,  
you scold your brother as he supports you  
too incompetent or too greedy or too selfish  
to support yourself, to support your own art.

and that bit with the ear—  
the madness of genius?  
hardly.  
a childish tantrum is more likely  
or the madness of syphilis.

*my pet parrot*

my pet parrot  
was kidnapped  
taken from its home  
its family and friends  
taken by force  
by net, lasso, or glued stick  
i'm sure it squawked and screeched  
in protest, in panic  
viciously pecking  
struggling, bright emerald feathers flapping, breaking  
to no avail—  
rammed into a cage too small.

i imagine it trapped  
puffing and hissing  
trying to stay balanced  
with each unseen bump  
in the road  
trying to survive decompression  
in an aircraft hold  
i imagine it huddled  
alive, alone  
in the far corner of that cramped cage  
crying, as parrots do  
trying to dream of rain and forests  
haunted by nightmares instead  
of endlessly cackling for a cracker  
i imagine it pecking at itself  
plucking its green plumage gone dull  
tearing at itself  
hearing the cries of the hundreds stacked  
kidnapped the same way

i imagine it staring straight ahead  
breathing too fast  
the foul air of blood, shit, and fear  
wondering what next  
waiting anxiously

to be sold

to me.

1992

*“Each year, due to an unexplained phenomenon known as stranding, entire families of whales and dolphins attempt to beach themselves on Canadian shores and die devastating and preventable deaths.”*

Green Living

*it's like a hunger strike*

it's like a hunger strike, you assholes  
or dousing ourselves with gasoline  
then lighting a match  
it's a protest, a media thing  
understand?  
it would take too long  
to teach you our language,  
understand?

do you understand?

1992

*Blacks founded great empires*

Blacks founded great empires–  
but of course you've never heard of  
Ghana, Mali, and Songhay

Before the Europeans came  
life in Africa was as advanced  
as that in Europe

The first Black immigrants  
to the U.S.A.  
were *not* slaves

We were with Pizarro in Peru  
Cortes in Mexico, Menendez in Florida–  
a Black founded Chicago

We were at Bunker Hill, Valley Forge  
Abilene and Dodge City–

hard to believe  
black can be so invisible:  
it's the first thing you notice  
when you see me

*gameboy*

i saw my son the other day  
playing with one of those gameboy things  
i asked him where he got it  
he said he bought it  
with his birthday money and saved allowance  
so i let him be  
his dedication was admirable

though i was awful curious about the key at the side  
silver and shiny like on a wind-up toy  
gameboys usually don't have those, do they?  
it's a new model, my daughter explained  
you have to move up through levels  
just like before  
but the last level activates the key  
and what does it do, i asked  
dunno, she said, don't care

but my son did, it was clear  
he was addicted  
put it down for a while, will you?  
he ignored me  
how do you get from level to level?  
he ignored me  
by following the instructions, she said, bored,  
correctly and quickly

well that's pretty lame, i said  
son, listen to me for a minute—  
he wouldn't listen  
he kept right on playing  
and in no time at all  
he reached the last level  
we could tell by the look on his face

and when the thing commanded  
TURN KEY NOW  
he did  
and the thing said  
CONGRATULATIONS-  
YOU HAVE JUST DESTROYED THE PLANET.

1992

*Desert Storm (the video)*  
(only \$19.95 from J-Tel order now)

i thought snuff films were illegal in this country.

1991



*you tell me about your son*

you tell me about your son  
finally discharged  
after three years

and i think of an institution for the mentally ill

you say then,  
he was in the army

i shrug—  
same thing.

1992

*(Blind) Lady of Justice*

we were talking about war and sports  
and the whole double standard thing about violence—  
it's okay if you're in a uniform:  
a uniform legitimizes, i say  
it anonymizes, you say at the same time

we stop  
wondering if they're the same

wondering why they're the same

wondering who put the blindfold  
on the Lady of Justice

1988

*tanka*

more terrifying  
than Hiroshima victims  
whose eyes have melted  
is the awful knowledge that  
it will not move me to act

1983



*counterpoint*



*you will wash over me*

you will wash over me  
    like the waves of the sea  
        till the stones in my heart  
            turn to sand  
there you will build castles  
    in the sun  
        and the wind...

*-but the moon changes  
and the night-*

    ...then as the tide rushes in  
        it recedes  
leaving shells along my shores  
    that hold nothing  
        but the sound  
of you

1979

*Aria Cantabile*

I

is this the way it is to be then?  
no farewell?  
no see you soon?

i still watch the moon and wonder.

II

i grasp  
and clutch  
the bleeding roses.  
you hurl me aside  
and i lay alone  
cast upon my virgin snow.  
but it's my april  
let me love!  
why can't you love me  
as you love all that is living  
i am living, look, damn it!  
i breathe  
i bleed.

the piercing thorns remind me so.



### III

an art–

to reconcile two realities–  
the intangible conceives  
the tangible must create.

i fantasysoar  
    choreography scored  
    by the sound alone:  
reflections, in the studio mirror,  
a toad caught in motion.  
    i have read Shelley through  
        left ope the casement  
    for Erato's breath:  
and still i write  
these high school lines.

and you.

    upon my soulscape  
        i have touched  
oh i have touched–  
    a child, discovering,  
your brow, your cheek,  
    in the candledark  
    the prelude of our eyebeams  
        reaching out  
        intermingling  
    and merging adagio our mouths  
seeking, hungrily, sought.  
    trembling your touch  
        upon my face, my neck  
    flowing along the sands of shape  
a sculptor, knowing.  
    exploring gently  
        probing then finding  
–a quick breath at the dormant quickened–

finding again  
and again  
    rising as you enter,  
        crescendo, climax.  
    and ah, the floatfall after  
into warmth, washing  
between the spaces not there  
    between  
us.  
upon my soulscape  
so have i touched.

overwhelmed with the strains of song  
    why can't the words be written well.  
ah, the strains—  
we played a presto  
    perhaps therein lies our fault  
or we, singing in dubious melody  
    expected instant harmony.  
caught again in our hopes, our dreams,  
we silence the screams that will not be mute.  
    our eyes tell.  
we found the cadence imperfect.  
        you left.  
before the piece was through.  
    and i lay alone, a piece, through.  
dissonance unresolved.

    there may be a perfect close  
    or yes, perhaps, deceptive.  
we must let the music play.  
string the lute, let the fires be lit,  
a pas-de-deux may still be tried.

IV

amidst a winter collapse:

heavy clouds had long shrouded

starry, starry nights.

wandering along those fields of waste

cold snow packed my lungs

i could not breathe

i could not believe

i could, not.

dreams deferred so long

they were scabbèd skeletons

hanging

in the sanctums of my soul.

then a spring miscarried:

i waited years, yes years

to love body with soul

but touches, tears,

you couldn't stay with me

wouldn't lay with me

all through the night.

you knew my need

before i knew your greed.

and i doubted myself once more

once more the hollow woman.

(naive, Miranda believed.

a novice no longer

hurt burns into anger

anger smolders into bitterness

Ophelia knew.)

V

go then.

exposed by foil

i am coward

afraid to risk

too full of doubts and wayward wonders.

i am the small pretender

calling myself poet.

i would be parasite

soul-leech to your strength.

go then.

give all to your art.

and be great.

VI

your art?

your sterile passion! your egocentric obsession!

god it sickens me.

Your Art.

it exists at the expense of others

if that isn't Art for Art's Sake, what is?

you're a cliché!

No, you cry

Art for the sake of the Objective Truth!

oh,

then,

perhaps i can.

perhaps i can climb onto your altar

-but do you know? couldn't it be?

Art for the sake of the Subjective Scrawl.

VII

you make me strong  
and you make we weak.  
    i look at you  
        and think i can.  
    then i hear you  
and know i can't.  
        and when i touched you  
            i-

VIII

i have leapt  
    into the whirling pool  
i have passed through  
    the Centre of Indifference  
    again, again,  
and again the extremities  
    of each turning circle-  
either the Everlasting Yea  
or the Everechoing No.

tired, i have wept.

IX

    i am not asking  
        come live with me and be my love  
i too must  
demand damned solitude.  
    yet,  
    being a lone, alone  
dives  
dark

deep  
into the abyss.  
    and sometimes,  
        another voice,  
            another hand,

these words have become flesh  
    look! they bleed upon the page  
        pulsating  
bright red against the grey.

1982

*no*

no,  
i shall never be totally devoted  
totally dedicated,  
to anything  
again.

once capable of conviction  
far beyond the human norm  
a single deception  
spilled doubt upon my soul  
like a stain.

1981

*your words scrape across my skin*

your words scrape across my skin  
    nerve-strings recoil, stretch, twist  
    trying to phrase a melody  
        trying to  
wrench beauty from truth.

1983



*counterpoint*

two lines of melody  
refusing to coincide  
collide  
again and again  
with each beat  
they twist and tangle  
leaving all my notes  
in knots

1982

*a rush of flames*

a rush of flames  
at the core  
and all of me is melting, down  
there's nothing left  
but the hot liquid  
in a pool upon the floor

soon,  
i'll harden.

1978

*distance softens, darkness too–*

distance softens, darkness too–  
but only for those who look, it seems.  
a mountain still feels hard at night  
and colder.

so as we lie, soft and warm,  
only looking at love, at dreams–  
whenever will we dare to feel  
the glaciers  
and gouged flesh.

1979

*to paul*

no more shall i quiver  
as our eyebeams twist and threat  
upon one double string–  
you have made me too aware  
such conversation is in the ear of the beholder.

winds no longer whisper  
waves do not reassure–  
that is personification  
a literary technique  
a pathetic fallacy.

the moon was once a marbled orb–  
now it is pockmarked  
with named craters.

my music is not the voice of my soul–  
it is organized sound  
synthesized by neurons.

and if some gypsic minstrel should beckon  
come live with me and be my love  
i shall have to answer  
it is too late–  
my passions are but chemicals  
bleeding through my brain.

*leave*

leave.  
a decision.

sever.  
quickly done.

but as i walk away  
each fine tendril drags out slowly  
back through its burrow  
(mined through the days and years and effort and love-)  
singeing exposed nerves at each millimetre  
    pulling  
    retreating  
    extracting

leaving.

and finally,  
the fibres dangle  
tingling,  
    twitching at the harsh cold air  
then,  
lifeless,

1980

## *Modern Math*

1.

lines for my love

unlike those in relation parallel'd  
we two are as lines intercepting:  
therefore, covering more, we are close less,  
yet, our separate distances upon the other  
do not depend for measure,  
and our facility to direction change  
rests, perhaps, unparallel'd;  
so let us love our intercepting lines  
forgetting not that parallels  
in touching doth self-negate.

2.

$1 + 1 =$   
it depends:  
there's so much to consider:  
i mean sometimes it equals 2

but what if one of them is negative  
then you end up with nothing at all

and in base one  
it equals 11

and anyway  
perhaps the more important question is  
what is  $1 + 1$   
greater than

or less than

3.

why is the circle  
the symbol of love?  
because it's never-ending  
so is the square–

and it has corners to hide in.

4.

the shortest distance between two points  
is not a straight line–  
it is a line that detours around dreams  
lest it get caught or confused  
in their multicoloured spirographics  
and either change direction or never come out,  
it is a line that encloses broken promises  
with the deliberation of an etch-a-sketch  
before moving on,  
it is a line that arcs around conflict  
and crisscrosses over canyons of pain,  
no, the shortest distance between two points  
is not a straight line–  
it is a line of curving tangents  
that never connects

5.

they say the line is an illusion:  
solid, continuous–  
it is only points, here and there, seen together  
make it seem so

how appropriate, therefore,  
that we sign today  
on a dotted line

6.

we were binary  
an ordered pair of single values  
and even as we grew complex  
each of us a string of values  
for a long time  
we were even an identity

but then  
exhausted by the conflicts of range and domain  
frustrations of circular functions  
delusions of rational and transcendental functions  
i attempted transformation–

but it always stayed the same.  
through translation, rotation, reflection  
it was always still the same thing, really.  
but then what can you expect from  
such rigid motions?

so i stretched, and sheared,  
mapping myself into new territory  
–you didn't even notice the ellipse–  
broke open a bit  
and found myself a perfect parabolic!

(i dream of hyperbolas  
of becoming two by myself  
each curve extending into infinity)

1992



*to phil*

once  
misunderstanding my fascination with flame  
i saw myself moth  
dusty descendent of maggot  
fluttering blinded to your light.

later  
i flew to you as firefly  
misbelieving i recognized kin  
in your intermittent flashes.

now  
i burn alone, taper  
dying as i live  
at peace with my passion  
and phoenix.

1981

*we who have cast off polite camouflage*

we who have cast off polite camouflage  
dare to move in undressed desire;  
sleek and restless in our naked need,  
we slip through social labyrinths  
crammed and crowded with stiff costume,  
easy in urgent search for kin, we seek.  
perchance we collide or coincide:  
in our fugitive couplings we grapple and clutch  
desperate flesh screaming from the heat  
leaps pulsing into exultation—  
stilled, slaked, we lay then,  
we who are free,  
laughing.

1982

*for my brother*



*in the night*

in the night, your mouth at my neck  
a long passionate kiss arches my back  
then stronger, hungrier, more purposeful—  
i wonder how close you are to my jugular  
do you mean to suck at my core?  
but you stop  
and i am still alive  
so i think of leeches instead of vampires.

the next morning, i stand at the mirror  
from behind you wrap your arms around me  
i am looking at my neck  
and seeing the truth of your intent:  
a territorial claim to ownership.  
then i look at your face and see more  
the arrogant leap from brand to birthmark.

during the day, someone asks about it  
and realizing the truth of accomplishment  
i turn and say to you  
it is merely a bruise,  
and therefore, nothing permanent.

*now that there's AIDS*

now that there's AIDS  
now you want to use a condom  
now when it's *your* life that's at stake—  
all this time, all these years  
when it's been *my* life  
when there was a risk of screwing up *my* life  
    (it would've changed forever,  
    whatever i decided—  
    to abort, and suffer the anguish  
    before and how long after,  
    or to give it up, and know forever  
    she or he was out there somewhere,  
    or to keep it, and give up instead  
    my own life)

you'd say no we don't need one  
it feels better without one  
you've got cream and an IUD and the pill  
    (yeah and they all feel just great—  
    the bleeding, the cramps, the headaches,  
    the depression, the nausea,  
    the increased risk of death  
    from a blood clot or cancer,  
    the chances that it won't work  
    —all of that feels real good)

now you want to advertise them all over the place  
now you want to take them into the classrooms  
now you want to test them more rigorously  
because *now*, *your* life is at stake  
now you want to use a condom

*“rape with a foreign object”*

i've always liked that one  
i mean an unwelcome dick  
is about as foreign an object  
as you're going to get, no?

1987

*electronic studio*

it's getting so i can't work:  
every time i patch a connection  
i'm reminded of confinement, restraint,  
bondage, forced entry–

holding the plug  
–any plug, they're all the same,  
RCA, quarter-inch, mono, stereo,  
all little silver phalluses  
visibly active, everywhere–

i move toward the jack  
–any jack, they too are all the same,  
input, output, mic, headphone,  
all fixed vaginas, immobile,  
necessarily passive, in their units–

(oh i know why it's like this:  
the female part is stationary  
instead of the male  
because it has more energy, more power–  
but this knowledge only makes it worse.)

unable to rape  
i stand there, unconnected,  
without any sound.



*evolution*

i wince to hear the sudden yowl, that feline scream  
i was never convinced was the sound of orgasmic ecstasy  
and i know now how the hair on a tom's cock  
has evolved into tiny bristles  
growing backwards from tip to shaft  
so they tear at the walls  
as he pulls out  
when he is through:  
no puss will *want* to pull away–  
needless to say, it helps the species to survive.

some humans have gone beyond  
such quantitative criteria for success.  
so now it is i who have the bristles:  
well-oiled by my desire  
they are but tendrils  
to tickle you as you come;  
but otherwise,  
the barbs will puncture, pierce,  
incise streaks along your prick–  
needless to say, you will never again  
come this way.

1986

*crease, flip, crease, flip, crease, flip*

crease, flip, crease, flip, crease, flip,  
i fold the kleenex into an accordion  
then tie it with a tiny piece of string  
(it's important to tie it right in the middle-  
i have the strings all ready-)  
then i separate  
(don't pull it)  
ply by ply  
(it must be done carefully-  
the layers are so thin-  
they tear easily-)

IT'S BORING  
AND TEDIOUS  
AND STUPID

i pretend to fluff it up  
as if it's something important, something artistic  
then i toss it into the large flat box

WE HAVE BEEN AT THIS FOR THREE NIGHTS  
my mother and i  
my sister's getting married

and my brother's upstairs  
allowed to do his homework  
instead

i feel again those tears  
of frustration and injustice

and reach for another kleenex

*(for my brother)*

I

with a grunt of irritation  
you condescend to be interrupted  
and move your chair back a bit  
so i can crawl  
under your desk  
(the one dad built special for you  
now that you're at university)  
so i can dust the baseboards  
as is my job  
(i've already done the rest of your room)

i'm quiet  
careful not to disturb  
because it's hard stuff, important stuff  
you're doing  
(i'm still only in high school  
but you're at university now  
it must be harder  
you're getting only 60s)  
i turn around in the cramped space  
on my hands and knees  
and see your feet

i think about washing them

i think about binding them

II

the guidance counsellor pauses  
then discourages  
"philosophy's a very difficult field"  
and i thought

(no, not then, later)  
i thought, she's telling the kid  
who has the top marks in the school  
it's too difficult?

### III

it's true  
i just find it easier  
besides, compared to business  
philosophy is such a bird course

no, that's a lie:  
i'm smarter  
and i work harder—  
while you're out with your friends  
friday nights  
i'm at work  
because *my* summer job didn't pay enough  
to cover the whole year  
and while you're watching tv  
i'm at work  
(at ten o'clock  
after six hours of lectures  
and just as many of typing and filing)  
i move the set  
so i can crawl  
into the corner  
to dust the baseboards  
you lean and yell in irritation  
because i'm in your way

because *i'm* in *your* way

*To My Philosophy Professors*

Why didn't you tell me?  
When I was all set to achieve *Eudamonia*  
through the exercise of Right Reason,  
When I was eager to fulfil my part  
of the Social Contract,  
When I was willing, as my moral duty,  
to abide by the Categorical Imperative  
When I was focussed on Becoming,  
through Thesis and Antithesis to Synthesis–

Why didn't you correct me?  
Tell me that Aristotle didn't think I had any reason,  
That according to Rousseau,  
I couldn't be party to the contract,  
That Kierkegaard believes I have no sense of duty  
because I live by feeling alone,  
That Hegel says I should spend my life  
in self-sacrifice, not self-development,  
That Nietzsche thinks I'm good for pregnancy  
and that's about it–

Why didn't you tell me I wasn't included?

(Perhaps because you too had excluded me  
from serious consideration;  
Or did you think I wouldn't understand?)

(I do. I do understand.)

*in essays and reports*

in essays and reports  
we call it padding-

i wonder why  
the fact of padded bras  
was more public  
than the fact of padded shoulders

(i never knew men's suitcoats were padded  
until i bought one myself)

it's funny about women's fashions:  
padded bras went out  
about the same time  
padded shoulders came in  
or vice versa

-filling in for uncertainties.

1987

*to be led*

to be led  
by a man

to not be able to see  
where i'm going

to travel backwards

no wonder i could never learn to dance

1987

## *Fashion Statement*

i've always wondered about  
women's garments that do up the back:

designed by men for men?  
for an embrace that can undress?  
behind our backs, without our knowledge?  
or easy resistance?

i strain, and reach, arching my back (is that it?)  
but i can't quite get that button, that zipper  
so like a child (is that it?)  
i must ask someone else (you?)  
to help me get dressed

hospital gowns also do up the back.

so do straitjackets.

1992



*I have taken vows*

I have taken vows  
of obedience  
and poverty  
and (modified) chastity–  
I have said  
I do.

1987

## *Crucifixion*

*Tirzah Lewin*

*1806-1883*

*children born*

*1829*

*1831*

*1833*

*1834*

*1834*

*1836*

*1838*

*1839*

*1841*

*1843*

*1844*

*1846*

*1848*

*1850*

from twenty-three to forty-four  
the supposed prime  
you were bearing children, tending children,  
    bearing children, tending–  
led by the lies your Father told you  
of wifely duties, the sacred family,  
    the blessing of motherhood

nine-month Calvaries, fourteen times  
carrying a barbed cross  
dead wood *and* live flesh  
the burden of your belly  
with aching back, swelling legs

fourteen times tied down  
sweating, wrenching  
with the lashes of labour

fourteen times  
bleeding lamb on the altar  
old maids playing High Priest

the stone doesn't fool  
this epitaph is for 1829.

1981

*when her mother explained*

when her mother explained  
what a hope chest was  
she didn't know  
whether to laugh or cry

1985

*agèd women waiting*

agèd women waiting  
for some enchanted evening  
like granite statues in a graveyard.

1981

*Mirrors in a Funhouse*  
*or*  
*On the increased availability of abortion*  
*for those involved in the revolution*

you're not allowed to kill  
unless  
it's in order to kill

killing is murder  
only when  
it's illegal

your choice is irrelevant  
unless  
you choose to serve our purpose

one of them dead  
is more important than  
one of us alive

you're not allowed to kill  
unless  
it's in order to kill

1987

*The Girl Market at Gaina*

there's something very tired about my response  
as i read of the girls  
who display themselves  
beside their father's livestock  
for sale  
to whichever of the strange men  
shopping up and down  
decides to buy her,  
who packs up and goes then  
to wherever he lives,  
and who vows, on the sap of a tree  
never to leave him.

nevertheless i ask again:  
what the hell is this article doing  
in the *Travel* section?

1992

*On the Occasion of your Ph.D.*

in a one-lined P.S.,  
as if it only marginally concerned me—  
of course i'm a bit bitter:  
five years  
i was with you  
close to you  
trying hard  
supporting  
and now i'm not there for the celebrations  
or for the thanks  
    because i left  
    three years ago

    but you probably don't even recognize  
    my contribution  
    —you never did  
    (isn't that why i left?)

    you were surprised when i told you  
    i was surprised you were surprised  
    —no i wasn't  
    (isn't that why i left?)

years later, reflecting on the relationship  
i realize how typical:  
the woman caring about, worrying about, its future  
trying always to figure out what went wrong and why  
trying to mend it, make it work, make it survive  
and the man  
going about his business  
oblivious  
to the ill-health  
and impending death



as it happens  
i read an article about the greenham women,  
or helen caldicott, or katya komisaruk,  
after i read your letter—  
and i suddenly see it:  
the banality of it

the horror of it.

1987