

DESPAIR

Years pass.
A child loses the awkwardness of childhood
 without awareness of her sensuality,
 without awareness of her grace.
Inner wall throbs, firm and hard,
Protecting growing intellect from churning emotions.

Occasionally,
There are boy/men who like to play
Daddy's game
And she, repeating lessons learned not at
Her father's knee, but close,
Does not object.

Then there is the Scot
Who teaches her the pleasure of a man.
She wants to date. She wants to date
The Scot.
NO! NO!
He is too old.
You are too young.
He could only want one thing from you.
What else could he like about you?
He is three years older than you.
The mother shakes her head gently.
The father rails.
He will not risk
Sharing her with another.
The child/woman, long since
Elevated into the eternal triangle,
Defies the father/lover
And takes another.

In her father's bed, at times, she
Learns the pleasure of Daddy's game
Until the Scot contracts a social disease
(anti-social disease?)
And she finds she has been sharing him with another
All the while. Just like
Her real lover, when she heard him with
Mother. She learns the
Exquisite pain of
Sexual betrayal
By another.

She is not yet sixteen and never will be sweet sixteen.

The intellect grasps the betrayal. Heat
From the wall radiates through

The body
 Melting,
 Weakening,
 Strengthening,
 Changing

The very fabric of life until
The system begins to fail.

Headaches, dizziness, fainting spells invade the system
 until the parents concede a medical need.
the child/woman sees only attention from her father/lover.
Wanting/loathing
 simultaneously hating/loving
 fearing/craving,
 needing/resisting

For the first time, the story spills out,
Breaching the wall but not eroding it.
White coat and stethoscope.

Tut
Tut
Shaking head
Tut
Tut
Here are pills
Take them
They
Will
Help.

The father/lover flushes them immediately down the toilet.
You are too
Damned
Young
For
This
Stuff.
(but I'm too old for other oral
palliatives? i
don't understand. i
don't want to do any more.
But i do, it was love.

But i don't
But...)

The sixteenth birthday approaches
not with kisses and lace and sweetness,
but with arguments
 with the mother
 with the father/lover.

The fighting is confusing. It is
child/parent/eternal triangle and the child/woman fears
total destruction.

So
She
Runs.

Not heedlessly, though.
The intellect plans. The wall holds. The rules say
ifthesubjectis16andselfsupportingthenthelawcannotforceher
toreturntoherparent'shome.

A few days to find a job.
One to find a room
 in the attic of a
 three story
 run down tenement.

A bed. A dresser.
A fridge, stove and sink
on the landing
shared
with the man
across the landing.
The bathroom is downstairs please use it thank you.

A call on a pay phone.
The young officer tries to be kind.
He is only
The age of the
Scot.
Tut
Tut
Shaking head
Tut
Tut
Here are words
Take them
They

Will
Help.

The child/woman flushes them immediately
From her mind.
She will not be forced to return.
It is enough.

A call on a pay phone.
I am all right. Don't worry.

No

I

Am

Not

Coming home. How will it be if i do? Stricter? More rules?
(But what about my father/lover? doesn't he want me back?
are you taking care of him? if i come back,
will someone take care of me?
no. i don't want him again.

but i do, it is love.

but i don't.

but...)

No

I

Am

Not

Coming home! Just because, that's why.
(it is our secret not yours and
i will not share
it with you)

The sudden popularity at school is
Overwhelming.
Teachers disapprove. Students cheer.
No one
 notices her.

No one
 reaches to her.

No one
 cares
 about the throbbing wall.
 about the crippling pain.
 about the crushing dark

No one knows.

No one suspects.

The wall grows firmer, harder, penetrates deeper.

It is all powerful and invincible. But
There is still the tiny worm.
Gnawing.

She hangs out in the village, Greenwich style, milling
Mindlessly with the other lost
Ones.
Afraid to use the stuff
Afraid to speak
Afraid to be alone
Desperately needing love. There is still more
Child than woman in the child/woman.

Then there are motorcycles,
their power as sensual and elemental as any male organ.

Attila the Hun,
a loner and gentle and too nice for the child/woman
he fades quickly into oblivion

Then Fred,
the leader of the pack, powerful and strong amid cruel men.
Dark hair. Brown eyes. Muscular and dirty.

He sweeps by on his black charger
carries her off to his castle far away in a clubhouse
in town with drugs and sex
and booze and sex.

Then to his castle far away in the country
on a farm with drugs and sex
and booze and sex.

In his own way he loves her,
cherishes her
as much as he knows how.

He teaches her to love him and the child/woman is a willing student.
She pleases him. Obeys him.
Disobedience might mean loss of love.

Love is sex.
Orgasm
is a solitary thing
accomplished in the bathroom, in the dark.
Sex is love.

He treats the child/woman well. Protects her from strangers.
Takes her to meet his mother.
The mother and the child/woman like each other and celebrate by
getting
drunk.

You should learn to drive
Yes i should
Tonight
Yes i should
too fast too fast too fast too fast too fast too fast too fast
god, please god, make her stop screaming.
The ambulance driver makes her stop.
The child/woman is unhurt. The mother
goes away with the siren and flashing lights.

The child/woman is terrified. Fred will be furious.
He is furious. Will not speak to her.
Will not see her. Forbids the gang to own her.
Abandonment is death.
She must have someone to be there
Soon there are many.
She is nubile,
 young,
 attractive,
(she is still the ugliest girl in the school)
 available.
There are many.

There is a boss with a pregnant wife
 and he wants to fuck but not the pregnant one.
It is inconceivable to the child/woman to be
 paid for being loved. The boss pays her well and she is loved.

Sex is love.
Orgasm
is a solitary thing
accomplished anywhere, under any conditions, alone.
Love is sex.

She is loved by others.
Then she is loved by one who sees
Potential.
He teaches her the art of
Love.
How to please a man.
How to sense what arouses his blood, his passion, his cock.
She is very quick, very bright
 has a wicked sense of humor,
 that few grasp as her weapon of distance.
She learns well and is loved.

Sex is love.
Orgasm
is a solitary thing
accomplished any time and anywhere she wants.
Damn the world.
Love is sex

And sex is revenge. And then there is Shirley.

Cataclysmic change is catalyzed by gnat-sized events.
Shirley is a gnat with wild red hair,
Australian, confused, thirtyish, single
And a nurse
And a Mormon.
She lives across the hall in the boarding house
Where the child/woman waits for her new apartment,
her place of business, to be ready.
The pimp doesn't visit her there but he pays the rent.
She models at the art school during the days
The pay is good
The work is easy.
Her owner doesn't know.

Shirley lavishes sisterly concern on the
Lost child down the hall. They drink
 (aren't Mormons teetotalers?) and talk
 and laugh
 until late into the night
 every night.
She speaks of Indian legends,
 of mystical experiences,
 of men from space,
 of things beyond the ken of mortal men.
She teaches the philosophies of men mingled with
 scripture of her religion
The child/woman learns willingly.
There is seeking, searching, struggling,
And there is the religion with its structure
 and answers
 and arrogance
 and certainty
 and confidence
 and controls
 and direction
 and explanations
 and government

and keys
and management
and ordinances
and regulations
and rules
and solutions
and strength
and supervision.

There is a church meeting one day.
One indistinguishable day there is a church meeting.
The child/woman is late
No one to greet her in the
Church foyer. A picture of
Christ-risen towers over her head, looking down,
Smiling, midst hosts of heavenly beings, welcoming
Inviting her
Her wall reflects the welcome, the artfully painted emotion
And she
Weeps
Believing that the response comes from her heart
Never knowing that she is only a shiny mirror
Used to enhance the reflection of inlookers.

Missionaries teach her
the Faith
the Truth
the Way
the Light
And it is ice water to her hot town, summer in the city.
It is cooling relief on the fire of her mirror
So she drinks without question.
She embraces without restraint, or thought, or caution
envisioning a life of peace,
directed and guided in the
light of christ, never questioning the right of the light.
Not eighteen, she lies about her age to enable
her entrance into the church of
Truth.

Her owner is angry and upset but is not violent and she thinks that
she is finally free of something
she only dimly recognizes
and does not begin to understand
and will not for many years to come.
She believes herself to be her own,

unowned,
uncontrolled
unfettered
by exoteric control.

She glows from within
(but not from within the wall, it is still firm, hard, shiny)
with the happiness of conversion.

The past will be eradicated, all forgiven.

The future will begin as she rises from the waters of baptism,
wiped clear as tide swept sand.

Follow the program, she hears, and be
transported to heaven and eternal life.

We have the system, the plan.

(a prepackaged mass transit system to god,
merchandised and peddled with skill and sophistication
far beyond the ken of the child/woman to resist)

Pay your fare, sit in our train,
let us do the driving and we'll get you to GOD.

We, alone, know the route to GOD.

We, alone, know the straight and narrow way to GOD.

We, alone, can deliver you safely to GOD.

We, alone.

Pay your fare, sit in our train.

The child/woman is ready to pay the fare
she is ready to transfer control
from one owner to another.

There is Fred in the subway station. He was
Good to her and she can be good to him, now, too.

He still hasn't fixed that broken tooth, but
his wonderful brown eyes are now warm and friendly.

He still doesn't bathe often, but
the earring in his left ear still glints brightly in the light.

I've missed you, baby. The old lady's fine now.

What are you doing? Where are you working?

You're looking great.

His embrace is fervent, and public,
the child/woman feels familiar fires rekindled.

She has God now, though, so she
can control the passion, she knows. They go to her place -

She can't teach him about God standing in

The mass transit system!

Fred, the most wonderful
(he shuts the door behind them)

thing has happened to
(he takes off his black leather jacket)
me. I can hardly
(he takes off her coat)
explain how much it has
(he embraces her passionately)
changed my life. My whole
(he feels the fire returned in her kiss)
perspective of myself has altered.
(he slips his hands under her sweater)
No. No. Fred that's not
(he kisses her body, feeling the response of her flesh)
what I invited you here for
(he leads her to the bed)
Fred, I'm trying to tell you
(he presses her tenderly backwards)
that I've found a religion that I believe
(he murmurs encouragement)
and I'm going to be baptized
(he caresses her breasts and rises to mount her)
NO! I can't do that any more
(he stops and looks at her in disbelief)
I'm going to be a MORMON!
(he laughs he sees conviction he darkens)

Time freezes the bodies into one motionless tableau,
The black clad figure poised menacingly above
The half-dressed child/woman, pinning her limbs
Beneath him with his own.
You're joining some goddam convent?
You?
A fucking mormon? I'll kill you first.
I'm gonna kill you, you fucking bitch.

his fist crashes towards her face
over
and over
and over

SMASH

POUND...

SMASH...

the world dwindles to cold, white skin

stretched over combat worn knuckles
the pillow is soaked with the sweat and stink of her fear
she lies motionless.

again his fist crashes down
over
and over
and over

SMASH...

POUND...

SMASH...

now there are only pores
bristling with black spikes
glistening with wetness
christening with pain
finally, the heat of the rage is dispersed
he raises his fist from the pillow
molecules from her face.
ThankyouGod,
hedidn'tkillme

(Brutal laugh, heated breath inches from her face)
Fucking little bitch. I'll let them
have you. Maybe you can teach them some tricks.
I'd like that.
you can fuck your way to heaven.
The contempt in his voice is like ice. He doesn't love
Her any more and she shrinks inside herself
Be a goddam mormon. They deserve you.
They're all fucked up and so are you, baby. So are you.
(He grabs the studded leather jacket and storms back into the past)
ThankyouGod,
hedidn'tkillme

The wall screams the truth.
She IS the ugliest girl in the school.

Weeks flash by filled with fresh faces
 deep doctrines
 incredible ideas
 hopes,
 plans,

and visions from God
The old, stately railway station is subdued in the predawn hours
as friends gather tearfully to launch their
newest convert on the overnight boat train
on the trip home to England.
Don't forget to write. Don't forget to pray.
Don't forget us. Don't forget God.
I won't.
I won't.

Debarkation is overwhelmingly intense.
 screaming gulls,
 boats, traffic, people
 banners and streamers cracking in the wind
 balloons rising like crayola effervescence in the chilled-wine spring air
Thousands line the quay and
 flutter handkerchiefs and hands at the
Thousands who line the rail and
 flutter handkerchiefs and hands
And weep.
The emotion washes over the child/woman
 is reflected from the wall.
She weeps and waves with them at no one.
And they wave back but not at her.

Salt spray blowing through her hair,
 over her face,
 into her heart
(but never breaching the wall, only washing down it)
she feels whole and cleansed, embarking on a new life of purity.
Alas!
Her spirit obeys, but her flesh is weak and
Yields quickly to the champagne, but
Only takes two men.
(there are more who want her but she fights the urge to please)

She sails through the journey in a mist of
 parties, food, men, and drink
 arriving at her new life with the
 shreds of her bridal-gown purity
 clutched forlornly in her hands.
No one knows. No one cares. No one suspects.
She is safe.

In time the shreds will be rewoven into a modest dress of virtue,
stained occasionally, torn periodically,
mended and remended continually
until even she will hardly remember
that it once hung in shreds
mere moments after construction.

England is a time of building.
A time of building new images of herself
New ways of discerning her reflection.
Paintings from her mind carefully built,
Stroke by stroke,
Upon the burnished veneer of her wall.
Reflections without depth,
Without substance, only paintings
Of projections exposed on the receptive film of
Her wall.
With vigor, with fervor, old images, the past, are
Brushed from the surface of the wall like
Frost from a window.
Too late!
Like age, each year leaving its tracings in the flesh,
Each image leaves its tracings on the mirrored surface.
Tiny etchings, invisible to the eye, mar the wall,
Distorting, forever, each new projection,
Imperceptibly changing and blurring each new painting
With the fine lines of the old.

England is a time to play at youth,
at girlhood and sweetness
and other illusions.
A time to learn that mormon girls are
Responsible
For the mores of mormon men.
When mormon men play at passion, like other men,
She says No! once, twice, maybe thrice
And then, to be nice,
She says Yes.
She never quite understands why
The morning after she says yes
They say no,
Goodbye.
And she is alone, unloved again.
The game of mormon man meets mormon woman
Is alien to the child/woman.
Not only are the rules obscure,

the game itself is hidden from her view.

With England came
Mike and John
Of Ireland and of England,
Who loved her as she was
No pretensions,
No double expectations, impossible to satisfy.
 nurturing love to lead the way to virtue,
 to grow the skills of self-caring.

One she could have had
To love and cherish 'till death do us part
But
She had learned the ultimate prize for
Mormon Woman
Is
Mormon Returned Missionary,
One who has served god and church
By selling the system to straying sheep and
Saving the souls of some who
Sought a savior.
The one she should have taken was not one
Who was an ultimate prize
And she,
Not yet knowing that there is more to man
Than an organ and his
Reflected status,
Would not take the prize that might
Best have filled her life
But might have not.

And there were some who filled the bill and thought to take her hand,
But always, deep within their hearts, some small red flag would wave
And they, with no awareness why, would simply fade away.
Until one spoke for all the rest,
Mere weeks before The Day.
The closer I get to you, my dear,
 the less there is to see
 until I think that all there is
 is images of me.

While bonds of future love dissolved
New bonds transpired
The child/woman found a
Family.

Strong, religious, founded on tradition with
Father/provider the patriarch and
Mother/nurturer the supportive matriarch,
The child/woman gratefully accepted the role of
Obedient daughter.

Recognizing the wounded bird child, the family
Accepted her, made her theirs,
Reflected into her
 their hopes,
 their expectations,
 their visions,
 their images
For their own daughters,
The child/woman made them hers,
Patterning her dreams, aspirations, on those
Noble projections from beyond.
The dreams brought self esteem, stability
To the mending of the dress of virtue, and the
Aspirations were good and high.

Accepted as a daughter,
She responded with filial love and
Obedience, wanting/needing authority in
Her life, equating authority with love.
And, with the new family, it was.

Dissolving manlove brought pain, but
Pain softened by the new found
Familylove
Pain made bearable by plans
To join twin sisters
Already pursuing degrees and letters.

With spring's arrival
The child/woman arrived at church college
(student body of 25,000,
 high standards,
 noble expectations,
 good hunting).
Triumphantly the fit was made,
 the fit of images within, projected from without.
 good mormon college student, young, capable, doing the
Proper Things, and
Belonging
To the group.

Within weeks she met the man.
Within weeks he professed undying love,
 mistaking the reflection of his expectations for hers.
Her new family approved the match and the man was everything
 he ought to be
 except right for her
And who could have been right
For a mirror?

On the steps of the church
She cries
No!
It shouldn't be!
They smile knowingly.
 maiden modesty
 shyness
 cold feet
 typical bride
 how sweet just
 wait
 until
 tomorrow
 then see her smile
She believes the reflections of their gentle teasing and enters the doors.
Doors leading to
 life eternal, to perfect union, to everlasting joy
Doors leading to neverending life
 frozen on the surface of a wall.
The worm knows, but what is one worm
 against the might of
Right.
It gnaws, but makes no hole,
And still it tries and keeps alive the hope
Of healing.
Some time.
Perhaps.

She sees from those around her that it is
Right
To drop her studies
(they are not as important as his)
And support her fledgling family while
He-who-has-authority completes his studies.
The others do that and so
It must be right and so

She paints that image, too.

Then she learns that it is wrong
To use control to stay the
Birth of young.
Let god choose when the child shall come
And so they cease control
And Nature takes Her course.

The man is king, within his realm.
The man, the priesthood bearer, is
Representative of god.
And she, devout believer,
Transfers her life's control again.
He, beset with crushing burden,
Retreats into the strength of silence
And she
With nothing to reflect, is lost
And turns to another.
Captivated by reflections of himself,
He, too,
Professes love and passion,
Watches with delight the swelling of new life within
Although he did not seed it.

Lovers chained within the web of
 god
 family
 culture
 community
They talk and nothing more
'Till duty tears them part from part, and heart from heart.
Yet life with him would have been none
Else.
Still she would have been a mere reflection of him
Nothing more.
Echoes from above reverberate throughout her mind.
 "god will judge what's in the heart", and in her heart,
 she knows, is vile and filthy
 SIN,
Now etched irrevocably on her soul
 a blaze of desolation,
 condemnation.

The wall reflects the truth.
She IS the ugliest girl in the school.

Life goes on with procreation. She walks a line 'twixt death and life
Each time she swells with seed, and
Some survive and some do not
But she persists, perhaps endures.
Her health is poor.
Her body weak
And who who's to say and who's to know if the
Problems are purely physical.

In time
Child/woman surrenders to pedestal woman
But pedestal woman has no
Balance.
God and life have trapped her on a pedestal
Shaking,
Trembling
In every gust of life.

The years come and the years go and god
In infinite wisdom tells the mighty
Military machine to send
He-who-has-authority to serve god and country
In England.
Finally, there are those who do not care to see
Themselves reflected and she
Begins to grow some images from within.
Two years are good. Then silent change.

A crisis,
 unannounced and undeclared,
 with deadly portent,
 passes unremarked across their lives and
 sows its seeds of death.
His military role, the part he plays in war,
 necessitates the launch of birds
 with radiating death.
Perhaps just one would be enough, a squadron is too many
And Vietnam kills once more,
Not with knives, bullets, bombs
But silently with boiling pressure, guilt and shame
Too great for one alone.
He helped
To send the squadron up and knew the final cost to
 women, children, life would be
 untold

uncounted
unaccountable

Birds recalled
Clouds never grown
But one would bear the price, unknown, of fury never scattered.
Those who might give help, will not.
There is no problem here, they say.
These men are all anomalies, predisposed
To stress,
And weak.

Pedestal woman knows nothing
Of the Bombs, or of the part her husband plays
Holding firm the wall of
Shaking dominoes.
She knows he leaves
Sometimes for weeks
Is
Distant, cool, withdrawn
On his return.

With children, church, community
There is no time for introspection and so she doesn't see
The man she loves, for good or ill, has simply ceased to be.
And time goes by and he retreats behind a wall of steel
Containing all the grief and shame he's told he doesn't feel.

They pass the years in tragic insensibility to
Reality.
They are two mirrors
Endlessly reflecting images that reflect
Endlessly reflecting images that reflect
Endlessly reflecting...

The worm turns over and she feels that something is not
Right,
Somehow, within her home, she
Doesn't know just why.
She turns to god and those ordained by him to point the way.
Dear sister, you must be
 more patient
 more kind
 more loving
 more feminine
 more womanly

more humble
more obedient
more fruitful

Dear sister, you must be more
Because he-who-has-authority is enough.
So she paints new pictures, piled on old,
of all that she must be
and never sees the incompatibility
of everything she paints.

There is not time in mortal life
to be all things to all
and she is doomed to failure ere she starts.

And starts anyway.
god says she can do all things and she believes her god,
Never questioning whether the voice
Speaks from heaven
Or
The everlasting hills.

England ends. The US calls to him, though not to her.
In time they find themselves
Civilians in a tiny town, close by the heart of
Mormon life and soul. They settle down, buy a home,
Planting trees to shade their age.
Last child is born
(their doctor, local man of god,
agrees it would be wisest, and so they have permission
to stop the flow of life, after
seven births, three deaths and
her close brush with the final bond)
And home should yield a haven,
Filled with peace of growing brood,
Good, productive.
But doesn't.

His choice of job, policeman, drives him deeper into silence
And she, unable to reflect for him, reflects for all the others.
Reflects a life agrarian, with canning, quilting, baking.
With handy skills she has not and
Social skills she has not either
Mormon social skills of
coyness,
servility,
obedience,
submission.
Skills essential to local female life. In truth she is unlike them

Regardless of her efforts
Valiantly made, to fit herself within the lines
Reflected on the wall
She fails.

These are her people, she recalls, the peculiar people
Of god. She has made them her own
And aches to be
One with them.
They do not want her. Will not
Accept her.
You are not feminine
 you are not womanly
 you are selfish
 you do not understand wifing
you do not understand mothering
 you do not understand womaning
 you are not humble
you do not submit to your husband
 you resist priesthood authority

We know the truth.
You ARE the ugliest girl in the school.

Time crawls on
She finds diversion, if not solace
Working hard she builds a business
Successfully selling stuff throughout
The region, managing half a hundred
Saleswomen.
She is adept and success is hers
Without the violation
Of god and home and mormon role
As mother.
Her husband is not neglected, much.
Her children always parented by one
Perhaps the other.
Her reaching stretch to be herself,
 to find some other purpose
 besides the shallow imitation reflected
 in the mirror,
Results in growing confidence,
 in fledgling independence.
Yet the image growing now is directly oppositioned
 to all the pictures on the wall, the many visions of submission
 and she denies the growing struggle hidden far within.

Conflict

Stress that feeds the worm
Strengthens its endeavor to gnaw one leak
Right through the shiny dam. In time the worm
Might cleft the raping wall

But once again her life is played for god and fate
Who oft conspire with brutal joke
That only god and fate
Appreciate.

The road is damp, but safe enough.
The light is good, clear visibility
Along the highway.
She does not find the road she needs, but finds the State Police
And signals, turns to meet the man, requesting some direction.
A glance!
The rearview mirror fills
With speeding devastation.
Oh shit! Oh shit! Ohshit
He'll hit me
He can't miss!
Nor does he.
She's almost braked.
He's almost 70
Doesn't see her car
Doesn't brake to stay the crash.

The impact is profound
Snapping seat in two
Whipping head back then front both times impacting.
She sees that she can have a choice
 power pole
 street sign
 switching box
She just has time to aim the car towards the city sign
 before the blackness takes her mind,
 before the second impact
 finishes destruction.
Again her head strikes fore and aft. Body strapped to broken seat.

First conscious thought
oh god the car he will be furious its trashed
She struggles out the door
Fighting to maintain consciousness

To stand alone,
Unaided

Black uniform.
Are you alright?
You're white, so white.
Let me call an
Ambulance.
You're white, so white.

No. No. She cries.
i am fine.
(he will rage even hotter if i come
home with flashing light or,
worse,
stay in the hospital)
No. No.
i am fine.
Help from kindly, thoughtful strangers
Returns her to her home,
Although her home is 50 miles away.
There is no choice, he must be told
That
She has wrecked their car, their only car,
And left it far away.

His anger is not hidden.
Although in future years, she will
See that anger was not aimed at her
Just a quirk of war based stress
Now she only sees the anger.
Pain in her head is surpassed only
By pain in her heart
To see that he could be so angry, when she is so hurt.

The night is tense, sleepless. Morning
Brings no respite, yet she urges him
To work, to class held far away, and
Goes about her daily tasks.
She calls a friend to take the load of
Work, to bear the brunt.
While she speaks
Blood-red flashes
Her skull, an explosion without a sound
The last she knows, her head explodes in
Pain, in heat, in vivid red,

Then blissful black.

Awareness comes
Weeks have passed.
The pain has lessened some, they say, she doesn't know.
No memory of laying helpless in the bed
Screaming to be let to die, begging for relief.
One loving cousin holds her hands
Sentinel of the bed, and talks and talks of nothing
Much, just comfort in the black abyss.
Pedestal woman remembers nothing of the
Hospital
But knows the feel of the cousin's voice
Extending through the mists.
No words, merely
Fleeting, tenuous strands holding her
To reality. To love.

disjointed
 images
are
 all
she knows
for many months
 disjointed
images
 and
pain

Pain - constant companion
Requiring, demanding, attention.
The pressure within her skull threatens to rip the bones apart
Life is marked by valleys of
 torpor trapped between
 Himalayan peaks of pain.
There are no grassy mountain meadows of
 solitude and peace.
Needles, pills, fleeting thoughts of suicide
 (but god would be pissed
 would never understand
 so she doesn't)
Mark the landscape of her life. Old friends visit but she is afraid
Intimidated, by pressing faces
 caring arms of people she can not
 recall.
Lost job

(perhaps she could hold on, they want her to
the wall has seen the image of success and it is bad
success will threaten her existence. It is
not feminine, not womanly, not appropriate
good mormon women belong in the home, not in the world
and deep within she sees that success in the world
will mean failure in the bed)

Rare moments she is fully sensible of the world
Both outer and inner and
Rages and despairs and
Feels the midnight theft from
The garage of her mind.
Ferrari gone
Replaced with Beetle.
Parts of her mind that should do thus and so
Do not.
Instructions that she knows are commonplace because they
Flow so easily, without thought, without intent
Find no path, no route to follow
Drifting endlessly through the shattered discord of her
Mind.

The doctors concern is real
But not so real as his
Frustration.
He sees
 no major break,
 no hemorrhage,
 no fracture,
 no blood,
 no harm,
Within her skull.

Neurosurgeon spends 20 minutes
 no physical trauma. you simply need rest.
 small concussion, possibly.
Psychiatrist spends more time.
 near death trauma. common, it will pass.
 delayed stress syndrome.
Neurologist spends 10 minutes.
 psychiatrist says delayed stress.
 nothing's wrong with your brain.
 pull yourself together,
 the pain will stop
 when you stop being hysterical.

Home again she strains
To follow doctor's orders
Pulling, forcing herself to come
Together.
She aches to unify the pieces but
They resist.
Parts that should function like this
(she's sure she should be able to do...
to do...? what...?
what was that...?)
Puzzle pieces, mislaid or gone,
Evade her flawed attempts to rearrange.
Pieces gone, but where? and other
Pieces
Inhabit strange corners, seeding confusion.
Apprehension is unclear, but she believes
That things are adrift within her
Mind.

She no longer feels at home
Doesn't feel familiar
Within her head, but
Will not speak for fear
Fear of being locked away
Forever.

And always is the pain.
A rubber band, stretched too far
Snapping suddenly
Sharply, from extension
Breaks inside her head each time the headache starts.
A flash of snapping tension, then
Tsunami wave of pain
Washes the mind, the head, swelling through the body.
Side effects unpredictable and
Unbearable,
Different with every snap.
 partial paralysis
 drooping features
 nerveless fingers
 unstable equilibrium
 sightless eyes
 meaningless mind
(most terrifying of all, to be trapped inside a body
 unable to speak, sending thoughts, words, uttering only gibberish

unable to comprehend the spoken word
unable to recognize, decode lines and scratches
on pieces of paper
trapped inside, without communication)

She fears the destruction of her mind, insanity
Inability to pull herself together.

Another test, the doctor says
There's something more to this
Than stress.
Yes
Psychologist agrees, there is more.
See the specialist. He might
Be able to help. I cannot.
Pedestal woman has no wish
To see another doctor.
She does not want to hear the words
That will lock her in
Forever
No choice. No choice.
And so
She goes.

The tests take weeks.
Exhaustive, exhausting tests reduce her
To tears each time
Stretch her patience, sap her nerves.
Finally
Verdict delivered.
The reason you feel your
Head is in pieces
Is
Your head is in pieces.
Organic brain damage. Nothing to do but wait
Until the dust clears, so to speak
Then assess how much permanent damage remains.
It will take near three years ere the healing completes
What you need now is patience.

Patience. Now a dirty word, ugly in
It's context.
She tries to wait without anxiety
But fear will not be stilled.

There is always fear
fear of the pain

fear of giving up the pain
fear of going crazy
fear of the fear
fear of the future
fear of the changes in her
fear of the fear
And there is the pain
That eats into her head, her mind, never leaving
Just existing
Varying levels of intensity
It becomes her lover
her companion
intimate with her every thought and
action

Its companion, drugs, is her marriage vow
Wedding her to the pain so that
She can take the drugs so that
She can live with the pain so that
She can take the drugs so that...

Dependence is complete. She cannot
Function without the drugs, without the help of
Husband, without the help of
Children.

Dependence is complete
And she cannot imagine ever knowing
Well and whole again.
With the pain/drug cycle comes dependence/dominance
Each facet feeding
Each facet
And cementing the circle of destruction
Into an unbreakable mold.

Coincidental to the healing of the brain there is often
Unavoidable
Personality change.
In bypassing damaged synapse, and building sound connection
Old paths and patterns are disrupted, personality is perverted in
Ways unknowable, unpredictable.
Her damage has been
a bomb dropped on a highway
a twelve lane super highway.
A detonation, disrupting pathways
destroying traffic

scattering debris for miles around
devastates the highways of her mind.

Slowly, imperceptibly
Damage is assessed, repaired.
The crater, far too deep to fill, requires mitigation.
 bypass,
 overpass,
 reroute,
 new lanes.
Pathways shift. Over time, traffic patterns change
Full function resurrects, almost.
But
Changing patterns in her brain
 trigger changes in her soul
 not just the mind
The wall has suffered too
The worm is working there
 determined to prevent repair.

Weakening wall
Personality shift
Combine
In ways that he-who-has-authority cannot grasp.
Pedestal woman is
Unaware that changes are occurring.
She has no way to
Scale the change.
She has no memory of any other being within.

Again, a business.
Not with great success, the business was too young
But promise of success.
Learning to work with crushing headaches
Learning to live with constant pain
Learning to live with drugs, many drugs
Powerful drugs
Drugs that dull the pain
 in the head
 in the heart
 around the wall
Drugs that stop the pressure against the cracks
 marring the glossy surface of the wall.

Third anniversary came and went unremarked
of the shattering crash. Then

in the very month
It happened again. A fool
Passing on a residential street as she turns left
Collides from behind.
Pedestal woman hits her head
 once more inside a car.
Once more the brain is hurt.
Tissue only barely healed
Torn anew and she
Struggles vainly to complete the jobs she has decreed
As good.

In months the business sifts away
Like sand clenched in a fist
And she strains with all her might to try to find a way
To hold on fast to work and mind.
Too
Much.
Too
Much.
She cannot hold.
The business doors are closed and massive bills hang overhead
Like Damocles' shining, razor sword.

Pain beyond her bearing, beyond
Her strength to fight becomes all
Reality.
Stress does nothing but increase the intensity of pain.
Pain does nothing but increase the intensity of stress.
Shots and pills are once again the fact of life within the
Shrinking boundaries of the house that holds her now.
The biting sting of needle
 sliding sensuously under skin
 becomes the welcome harbinger of peace
 release from pain.
On days when needles seem too much, or owners start to frown
 pills instead
 but their effect
 is slower, not as sure
 unless they are combined just right.
She learns the proper combinations that will let her float away
 but leave her mind alert enough that others do not know
 how far she drifts.

The wall grows dull from lack of use.
Although it still is strong

it does not shine so bright
Inlookers
No longer see
Themselves
Reflected well and so they say
 she has changed
 she is uncaring
 she is hard
 she is ugly underneath.

Though the wall is not so bright,
It has not become so dull
She knows their cruel thoughts
Reflected in the clouded wall
She sees that they are right.

Black despair comes pressing in
Reminds her soul
She has no worth
And never will

god knows eternal truth.
She IS the ugliest girl in the school.