

## DON BAILEY

### from *Breath Control*

#### diary entry 1 (in the asylum)

this is a place of wounded women, a sanctuary where it is safe to choke up the stones that men offer as gestures of love, this is a place to spit out the sand women chew and grind their teeth on to please their mates, it is an oasis to catch your breath, to listen again for the inner music of dreams, to re-locate the rhythm of the dance.

my friend Ramone has been arriving and leaving here for twenty years. twice a year she cuts into herself seeking relief, hoping to bleed off that part of herself she is told is hateful. she is afflicted with reluctance, a condition common to our sex, a state of mind that gags the throat, dries the vagina and squeezes the sphincter muscles tight.

we joke about her husband's cock, brandished like a proud torch that will guide him to a place of intimacy but as he straddles her chest, squeezing her breasts to form a cradle, rocking like an infant, filling her mouth with his search and the taste of salt, she recalls Lot's wife frozen for a forbidden glance, and she grins, showing him her sharp teeth.

#### diary entry 2 (in the asylum)

I am the oldest on this ward, a distant shadow of the self that needed four nurses to subdue, perhaps the endless needle jabs have drained my fierce intentions. it has been years since I lay in a clammy shiver, tightly coiled in the soaking sheets on the floor of the quiet room. but I still recall the taste of rubber against my teeth as the electric current fluttered through my mind like a flock of angry birds devouring the crumbs I had left to mark my memory trail.

in the absence of treatment I dream again and each night a small boy grows more sturdy in my mind. he walks with me down to the lake and we play a game where we make our shadows walk on water. he tells me he has a brother and I weep with him when I learn the boy is dead. we build a fire in the dark and dance in the smoke, our hands reaching across the flames, making a bridge that holds our hopes, so fragile we hum them as songs, ancient lullabys that soothe our throats and make wishing easier.

*Don Bailey is the author of eighteen books. He is presently living in Toronto, working on a project with the homeless.*

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### *Introducing our new Literary Editor*

*Libby Scheier is the author of three books of poetry, most recently the long poem, SKY—A Poem in Four Pieces, which Phyllis Webb has called "a powerful and sobering work." She is also co-editor of Language in Her Eye, a collection of essays on writing and gender, and her first fiction collection, Saints and Runners, is forthcoming from The Mercury Press in 1993.*

*Her poetry, short fiction, and criticism have appeared in many anthologies and periodicals. Scheier is Consulting Editor with paragraph—The Fiction Magazine. She teaches creative writing at York University.*

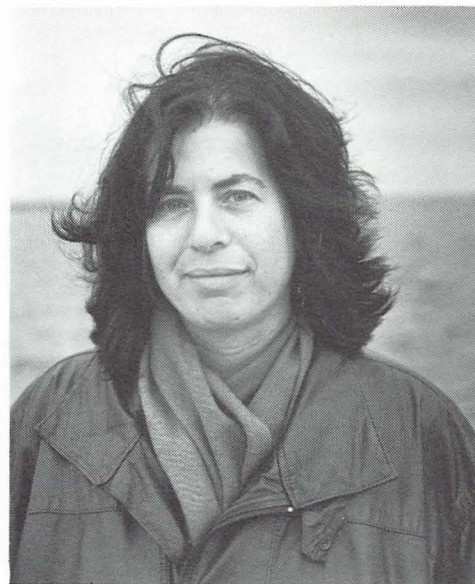


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