

Then the world stands still. The earth stops spinning, the sun shines in one single long ray and except for my pulse throbbing gently in my ears, silence is everywhere. For a wrinkle in time I'm breathless and speechless and I want to puke because no matter how many post-colonial, post-modern binary pedagogues I suck from the lily white asshole of some underexposed academic, YOU CAN'T THEORIZE BREAKFAST.

Hungry children are not concerned about political nuances.

Where is the value of my course in Strategic Adjustment Policy in this land where the American-owned Standard Fruit Company is mother's milk, the juice of life, fueling the Honduran economy while matricide pulses through the blood of the people? Who do I think I am in this wild west armed only with a university degree?

And Maria Reina Santos Montes and I lock eyes and I recognize what it is I have seen in her stare from the moment we met. She knows me. She was expecting my arma-ment of questions, my textbook sensitivity. She has merely been watching to see if I will recognize myself. If I will catch a glimpse of my reflection in the mirrors that are her eyes.

And now that I have, what will I do? Will I escape from this parallel universe, slinking away, tail between my legs in search of a more comfortable reality? Will I return to fill my head with someone else's words? Until I forget the hot green stink of the earth and those omniscient eyes, my thoughts sterilized and sanitized, my brain rocked into an academic stupor by the embryonic lull of saniflush? Or perhaps I will go home to twist, bend and shape my words until, like bulimic consumption and eruption of meaning, I can purge my mixed-up self. And pass it on to you.

So as I stand before you, my bones racked with the ache of expulsion, perhaps we can build a bridge, or do something lyrical and metaphorical and uplifting. That will make us all feel better. Conflict resolution. Or closure, or some such thing.

Or maybe, for a brief moment, we will take a breath between the spewing forth of academic bile. Because if somebody says the word "problematic" one more time, I'm going to scream. A silent beat between syllables. In our ugly language, our long vowels that reek of imperialism. We will stop and shiver as a gust of reality makes this comfortably heated room seem cold. And know ourselves.

And now the shimmering edges between questions and answers become blurred, wavering in the stifling heat of revelation. And I'm still wondering....

WHY AM I A FEMINIST?

Samantha Sacks is a recent graduate of York University, with an honours degree in English Literature and Women's Studies. She is an avid rock climber and inveterate traveller, having travelled extensively in South East Asia and Central America. She is currently in the Phillipines where she is planning to combine her interests to make documentaries on rock climbing, nature, and the status of women.

PHERYNE WILLIAMS THATCHER

The Fire

I can't remember what I looked like,
With no childhood photographs to show
To either my children or me

My Father lit the kitchen wood stove
In a drunken stupor. He left
My Mother to sleep upstairs.

It was a two-storey house, circa 1910
Unpainted grey, clapboard exterior,
With original cedar shakes.

Within minutes, they said, engulfed in flames,
Like a tinder torch; directly above
The kitchen, my bedroom.

Mother fell from her window. Suffering
Smoke inhalation and broken bones,
She was rushed to The Toronto General.

Earlier, we'd had another horrible row.
In defiance, I stomped out, spent the night
With friends in Sprucedale.

Mom was six months recovering in hospital.
She wrote, but she never came back to us,
And Daddy soon spent the insurance.

Pheryne Williams Thatcher is a teacher. She lives in Vancouver.

ELAINE RUTH MITCHELL

For my daughter

The only good from the divorce
for you
are the loopholes in the dense pattern
knitted by 25 generations
(on both sides)
the wool is unwinding
your sweater looks as if it were bought
in one of those shops in Kensington Market
as if we don't give you a clothing allowance
kind of embarrassing at a family party
But light gets through the constellated gaps
And your whole body can breathe

Elaine Ruth Mitchell is a feminist and a teacher at an alternative high school. She has previously published some short stories, and has just started writing poetry.