RACHEL ZOLF

Blackberry baby and the half-Jewish princess

for Hagar

... We shrink from touching
our power, we shrink away, we starve ourselves
and each other, we're scared shitless
of what it could be to take and use our love,
hose it on a city, on a world,
to wield and guide its spray, destroying
poisons, parasites, rats, viruses—
Adrienne Rich to Audre Lorde, "Hunger"

I.

Fuck y'all
Fuck you all, she says to a swarm of lily-wasp hypocrites

I am not going to make you invisible, she says pulling me back gently to ground from a faraway place nowhere, catching my glazed eye, holding my chattering hands, smoothing my windswirled hair, waiting patiently for me to tell my story

i am not going to make you invisible, i want to say knowing how wrong it sounds meaning from the inside out not the outside in

You make me believe in best friends, she says and i curl away shamefaced feeling my fingers dissolving reaching out gingerly towards

I can't afford to split/ or I'll be dead/ she says and yes my first urge to abracadabra!!! disconnect leave the scene make myself invisible while she is left to fight off marauders with one fist outstretched and one wrapped round her son

I love you, she says
how can you
with this inky knife
jabbing your back

I walk down the street at 3 a.m. she says and you can't see the whites of my eyes fuck y'all fuck you all

(No Jews or Niggers Allowed)

(She doesn't <u>look</u> like a Jew)

i am the whitefaced one lily-livered marauder II.

the day you touched me and i curled back *like the half curled frond of the fiddlehead* fern in forests and i couldn't tell you baby i couldn't tell you my fear not of you not your liquid energy not your succulent sweet blackberry wine

the day we had the fight at the farm about all the material *things* there and i remember the rage most the unleashing the fear that maybe it wasn't okay to feel it to express it all maybe that wasn't allowed but off we went through the fire and we came through cleansed and free and unburned

the day we gave that workshop for those wasps, yet again put our faces to their fears, and i was to speak and all the dead. choked screams scarring my insides, and i curled away from the swarm into your gathering eyes, sputtering I am a Jew, I am a lesbian and no one pointed a finger, no one said pick her, burn her and we stood tall, touching

the day you showed me the criss-cross scars on your ankles and (i never told you) my first foolish urge to kneel down and kiss them/"better"

that was the day you taught me memories don't have to be so clear that the panic feeling the loss of breath the sore throat stuck jaw dead neck are

III.

i dream your drum talking my sax singing

now i try to play alone and my fingers flub i forget what i know feet halfway off the ground bound for nowhere

(she lost her step)

And I pull myself back gently from a faraway place nowhere, catch my fugitive glazed eye, hold steady my chattering hands, smooth my windswirled hair, and set myself down here in this space to say I love you I miss you I thank you

what a magic trick! cutting your dreadlocks opening up then weaving them back in with your sorrowsweet heart and now cut open again blackberry blossom

Rachel Zolf's work has been published in Tessera, Prairie Fire, and Fireweed. She has recently been awarded a Canada Council Explorations grant, and will soon begin working on her first book of poetry on a full-time basis.

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