

FREEDOM

"Freedom is a word I rarely use without thinking,
oh yeah,
without thinking."

-- Donovan Leitch

It wasn't like the way the surgeon said it would be.
In the emergency ward
a nurse took every piece of clothing I had
including my wedding ring, pierced earrings,
ponytail barrette and my glasses.
And she gave me an outfit to wear
complete with paper sox, a sort of cloth shower cap,
cotton gown and robe, and a wheelchair
which I waited in to go upstairs.

A white doctor whose eyebrows met in the middle
and a young oriental surgical nurse
wheeled me up there. We went up in the elevator.
We went through these double doors,
it said, ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE.
Across the floor lay electrical cables
feeding to medical machines.
I quit looking at things.
I pressed my white handkerchief to my eyes.

The surgeon already hated me
because I had cancelled out my first appointment.
But now I was a desperado. After having had an accident.
I was up there to get a piece of a needle
taken out of my ass.
The metal was in my buttock turning black
and I couldn't get it out myself.
I turned myself into the surgeon
already sick with fever.
They never gave me a sedative. only a local anesthetic.

They operated on me,
I remained fully conscious of my surroundings,
and afterwards everybody was depressed
because I had acted badly.
I had cried silently but chokingly
the whole time, and when they wheeled me
back to emergency,
everybody in the room had stared at me.

I am back in the admitting room in emergency
in this little partitioned room
with bottles and labels and thermometers.
I am sitting on the little black footstool
on the floor trying to get my levis on.
The aching in my butt and the tight white bandage
makes it almost impossible to get my leg

into my pants.
I struggle there in elemental anger, on the floor.
Finally I get them on, I stand up, button myself.
The nurse comes in
and gives me a tetanus shot in the shoulder.

I get angry. I am no longer a prisoner.
I give her shit about giving me the shot
in the shoulder where it hurts more
than in the back of the arm.
She is stunned that a patient has addressed
her directly.
She blinks.

My blood pressure is outlandish
and I finish dressing, get my glasses back on,
go out to the waiting room
and meet my husband.

We go out the glass door,
walk through the parking lot
and drive home. I am out. Still kicking.
I left the bandage on 3 days
and then tore it off, took a shower,
and put a bandaid on.
I pulled the stitches out myself after a week.
I healed up real good.

Freedom.

IT RAINS IN NEWPORT, OREGON

First time I have been through Newport, Oregon.
Dirt parking lot above wharf front. Two P.M.
We park facing the harbor
and eat hot fish and chips
gazing out over fog and rain in harbor,
green painted bridge up to right.

Afterwards I walked around the parking lot.
Found a large beef stew bone with hole through.
It is bleached very white but is still dense.
There is some dog shit, trodden down beach grass,
wild flowers, dark sand, a trail leading off.
I find a bent piece of somebody's
discarded home movie filmstrip,
black and white, it is of two little girls
standing in front of a livingroom tv.
maybe they are in costumes, dancing.

All the fishermen here are about 20 years old,
wear dirty blue levis, knit caps
and hooded sweatshirts.
Looking for a mystical sign in Newport.