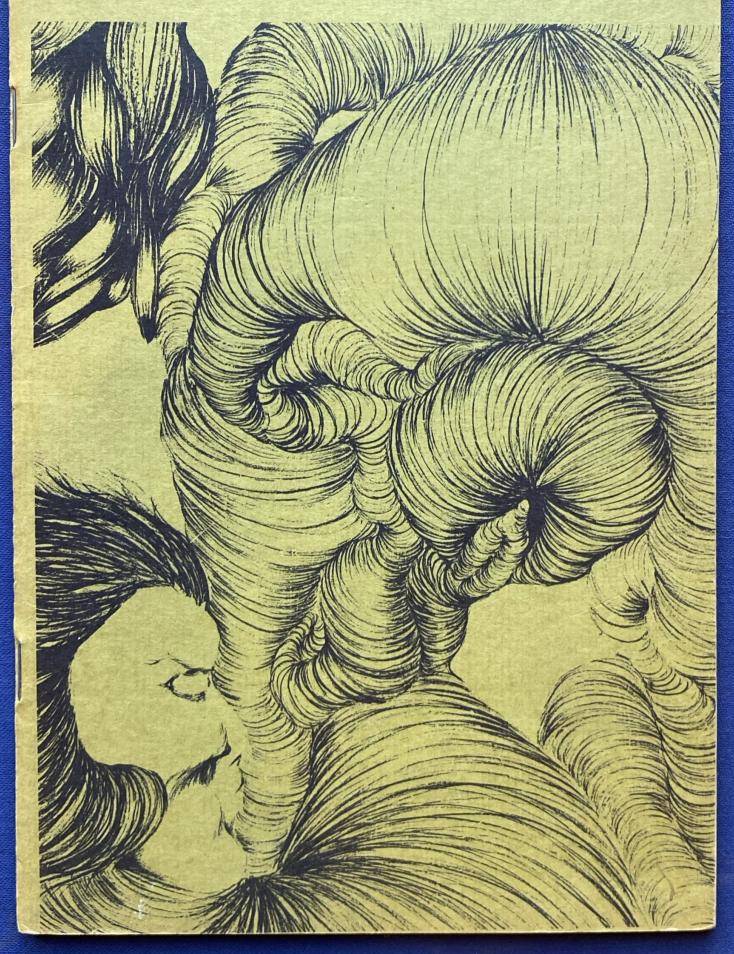
A WOMAN IS TALKING TO DEATH

POEM BY JUDY GRAHN
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a woman is talking to death

One Testimony in trials that never got heard

my lovers teeth are white geese flying above me my lovers muscles are rope ladders under my hands

we were driving home slow my lover and I, across the long Bay Bridge, one February midnight, when midway over in the far left lane, I saw a strange scene:

one small young man standing by the rail, and in the lane itself, parked straight across as if it could stop anything, a large young man upon a stalled motorcycle, perfectly relaxed as if he'd stopped at a hamburger stand; he was wearing a peacoat and levis, and he had his head back, roaring, you could almost hear the laugh, it was so real.

"Look at that fool," I said, "in the middle of the bridge like that," a very womanly remark.

Then we heard the meaning of the noise of metal on a concrete bridge at 50 miles an hour, and the far left lane filled up with a big car that had a motorcycle jammed on its front bumper, like the whole thing would explode, the friction sparks shot up bright orange for many feet into the air, and the racket still sets my teeth on edge.

When the car stopped we stopped parallel and Wendy headed for the callbox while I ducked across those 6 lanes like a mouse in the bowling alley. "Are you hurt?" I said, the middle-aged driver had the greyest black face, "I couldn't stop, I couldn't stop, what happened?"

Then I remembered. "Somebody," I said, "was on the motorcycle." I ran back, one block? two blocks? the space for walking on the bridge is maybe 18 inches, whoever engineered this arrogance. in the dark stiff wind it seemed I would

I just wanted to go somewhere.

How many times did you get into the cab with him?

I dont remember.

If you don't remember, how do you know it happened to you?

Nine Hey you death

ho and ho poor death our lovers teeth are white geese flying above us our lovers muscles are rope ladders under our hands even though no women yet go down to the sea in ships except in their dreams.

only the arrogant invent a quick and meaningful end for themselves, of their own choosing. everyone else knows how very slow it happens how the woman's existence bleeds out her years, how the child shoots up at ten and is arrested and old how the man carries a murderous shell within him and passes it on.

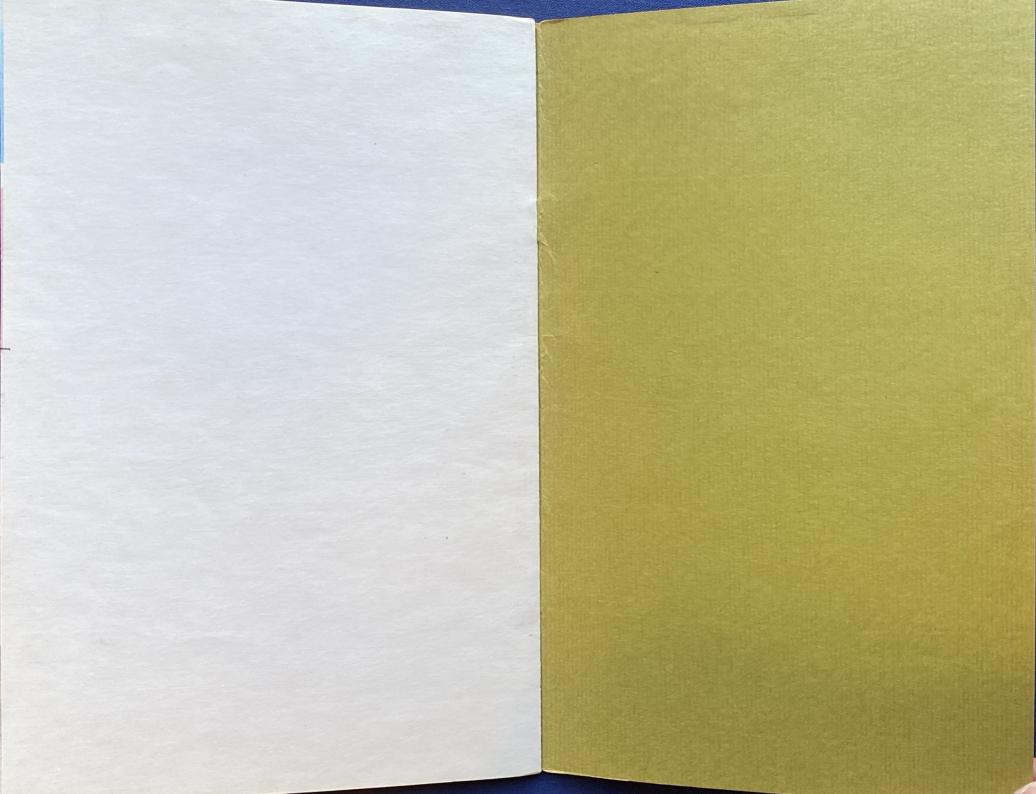
we are the fat of the land, and we all have our list of casualties

to my lovers I bequeath the rest of my life

I want nothing left of me for you, ho death except some fertilizer for the next batch of us who do not hold hands with you who do not embrace you who try not to work for you or sacrifice themselves or trust or believe you, ho ignorant death, how do you know we happened to you?

wherever our meat hangs on our own bones for our own use your pot is so empty death, ho death you shall be poor





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