



ASW/6J

# International Women's Week



## Mothers

the last time i was home  
to see my mother we kissed  
exchanged pleasantries  
and unpleasantries pulled a warm  
comforting silence around  
us and read separate books

i remember the first time  
i consciously saw her  
we were living in a three room  
apartment on burns avenue

mommy always sat in the dark  
i don't know how i knew that but she did

that night i stumbled into the kitchen  
maybe because i've always been  
a night person or perhaps because i had wet  
the bed  
she was sitting on a chair  
the room was bathed in moonlight diffused through  
those thousands of panes landlords who rented  
to people with children were prone to put in windows

she may have been smoking but maybe not  
her hair was three-quarters her height  
which made me a strong believer in the samson myth  
and very black

i'm sure i just hung there by the door  
i remember thinking: what a beautiful lady

she was very deliberately waiting  
perhaps for my father to come home  
from his night job or maybe for a dream  
that had promised to come by  
"come here" she said "i'll teach you  
a poem: *i see the moon*

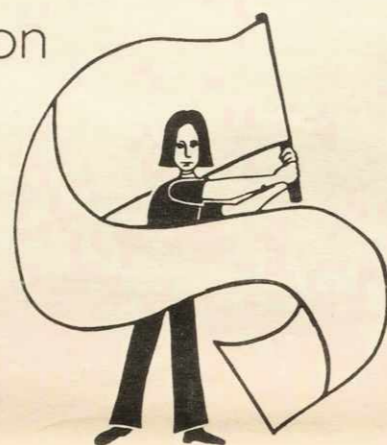
*the moon sees me  
god bless the moon  
and god bless me"*

i taught it to my son  
who recited it for her  
just to say we must learn  
to bear the pleasures  
as we have borne the pains

10 mar 72

Nikki Giovanni  
from *My House*

## Liberation

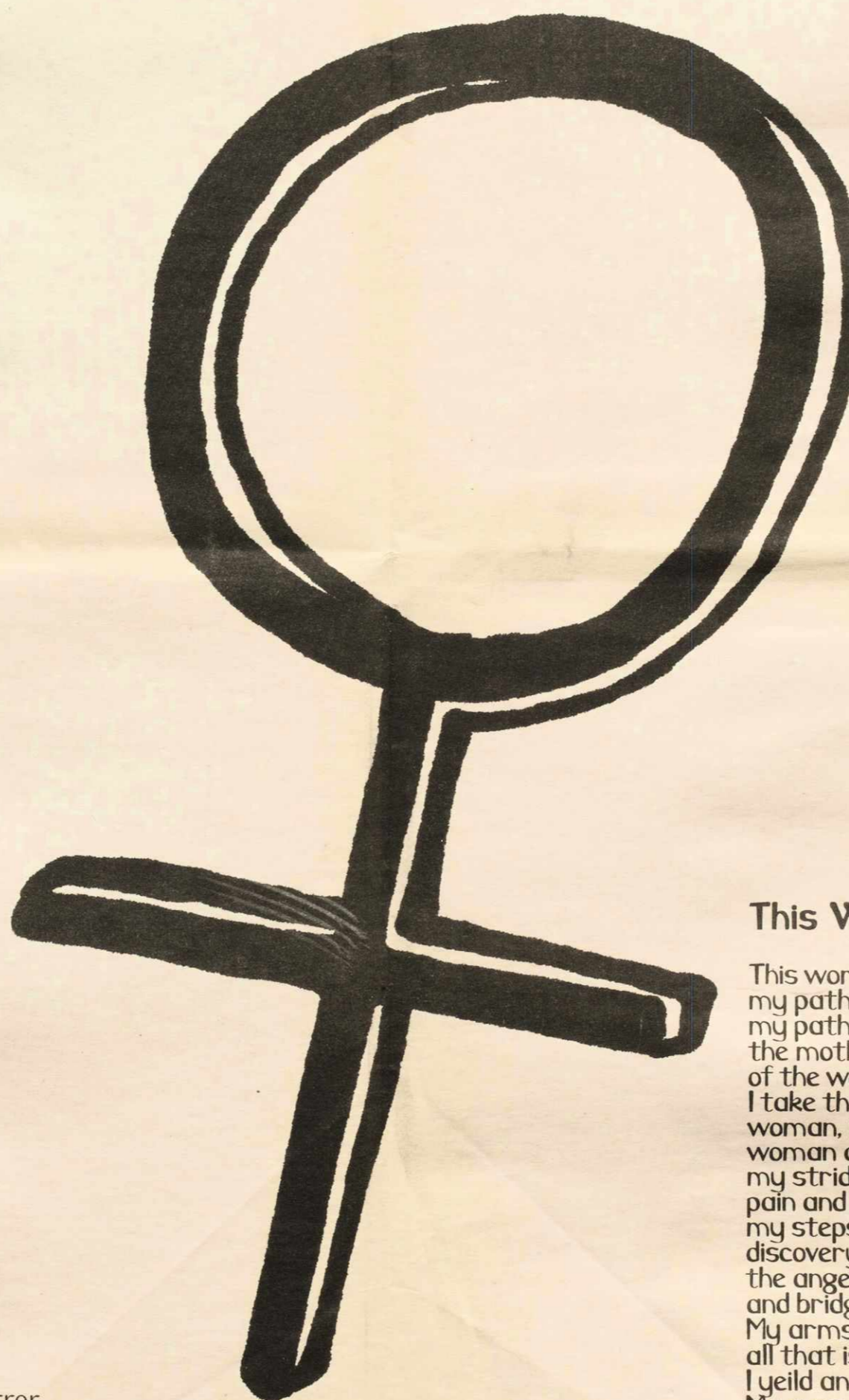


## All the sisters

All the sisters in some parade  
of the female side of things  
trailing sister sibling memories  
and rivalries and, the heroes  
we were each, in turn,  
for one another.  
I wanted her handwriting;  
You wanted the skirts and bracelets,  
The shoes and colour of her.

I watched my little sisters listen  
for the phone to ring and ring and  
ring for me,  
with some George or Mike or Glenn;  
waiting for some-man-on-the-line  
future rings of their own.  
We all, in turn, watched and wanted  
and tried on each other's style  
and hair and lipstick-mouth in the mirror.  
Now, each sister, her, under these August trees;  
sitting and seeing and, saying we're o.k.

Maxine Tynes  
from *Woman Talking Woman*



## This Woman

This woman walks the world  
my path is broad and narrow  
my path is the way of  
the mothers and sisters and daughters  
of the world.  
I take the steps of  
woman, man, and  
woman and man together;  
my strides are passion and  
pain and pleasure;  
my steps are wonder and joy,  
discovery and  
the anger that builds and breaks  
and bridges trouble times.  
My arms swing wide to embrace  
all that is warm and welcoming.  
I yeild and I give and I love.  
My eyes sweep wide  
this velvet-brown vision.  
Thorough this eye darkly,  
I take the measure of  
this woman in this world

Maxine Tynes  
from *Woman Talking Woman*

## Sister Justinian

She would reach deep into her habit pocket  
For the morsel my heart desired  
Or maybe a small gift my welcome cried.  
We shared this feeling my loneliness needed  
For the spirit not die.

She would tell me in so many ways  
The trails I should someday venture.  
The word of honor I then welcomed  
Not knowing what the future may bring.

This future one day arrived  
When my husband and I visited her  
And we embrace in loving warms  
The forty years washed away in tears  
Our need cried.

She is a lady not in a habit any more  
The deep pocket replaced by beauty of age  
But love remains in my heart for this beautiful person  
To me long ago she was Sister Justinian  
Today she resides at the Mother House  
Of the elegant Mount Saint Vincent.

Rita Joe  
from *Kelusultick: Original Women's Voices of Atlantic Canada*

