

Driving Years

by Ann Bogle

I have been this person alone for months at a time, without the usual constraints of time placed on me. I suppose it was a deep luxury, but it came about through poverty in its ironies. I had to learn not to be angry at financial limitations, galling stops, and to become soft about it, my poverty. I played to an audience of one, but the more convincingly I did this, the more it started to feel as if there were listeners. No, I did not plug in a camera or turn on a recorder. I suppose, as it heated up, I ought to have written or something, but I didn't want to write. Call it dream, but it was physically active. It reminded me of acting. I was a statesman, too. I was men; I was women. I looked like certain people. My looks, never studied in much detail before, became plastic. By attitude, I could enact anything. I pretended to be John Stuart Mill on an errand to Carlyle's house, with his woman waiting in the carriage. I was Rod Carew. Harrison Ford. Julia Roberts. I wasn't on drugs. Or alcohol. My mother, who has grown deaf and with whom I live, didn't know this or what was going on for a very long time, years, I suppose. Local friends saw me as in hibernation. This is what they *saw* or else they were polite about it; I was so together, yet so alone. The aloneness was a magic barrier. I talked to myself incessantly even in stores, and passersby never seemed to notice. Thinking of books, much, and doing a kind of architectural drawing of them with my steps. Two years I quieted and read constantly.

Once, driving, I was outlounging to myself that certain women make more money at marriage than Mailer makes at writing. All these goons came in the car then, novelists. It was like a poker game, and I was a gal in it. This is the imagination. I called "Help!" feeling friendly out of league, to a writer I know in Pennsylvania. I was driving east, and he's east of here. Then he came, in presence, to guard me for a night. It was phenomenal. I called him on the phone two days later, and told him what had "happened" and what it was

about, and he seemed to realize something. Another time, art punks from Houston were driving the car which was riveted to the road, to the orange signs by it and the lines. My imagination was perfectly open. There was a form to it, not reproduction. I wanted to write *Moby Dick* without a man in it. [I wanted to write *Moby Dick* with only a woman in it.] But I didn't do it. It's like a seven-year diary, and it did happen. I might write it as memory then.

So, for you to imagine the diaries unwritten as the best ones, or the real moment when there is no audience as the ultimate in freedom, I salute you.

This is not what I put on the women's list.

My mother likes me much better now that I'm more normally sociable. Not just laughing too much. It's really due to her that I ate or slept at all. She is a civilizer, a strong ark. I was taking medications for bipolar while my years rained on me. It must have blown over, because I feel creatively ordinary now and misunderstand people's sense that I have written anything yet, you know, because ... did I?

In a message dated 11/30/2007 10:26:33 A.M. Central Standard Time, BL@.com writes:

—frustrating to be narcissist in diseased state—for isn't it a diseased state, this need to make in order to...?...(however that manifests) with or without drugs the voices come and Conrad thinks: no Muzak (sp?) anymore: i cant be on the streets this time of year anyhow...and non-existent journals are always the best as are non-existent poems paintings/ isn't that why we keep making them? our anonymity is our freedom i believe—why careerism is the real disease (narcissism: isn't that just looking into lake searching for reflection of what's inside?)—but think: to finally be free to speak to nothing but the earless air?—BL

