

Trapping for Poetesses

by Con Chapman

In these days . . . so many ingenious traps for catching and hamstringing female poets have been invented that it is a rare editor who ever really sees one.

H.L. Mencken, Memoirs of an Editor



I set a snare before the door
of a shoppe that brewed its coffee bitter.
An Adrienne Rich-type took the bait,
and scurried through where the deadfall hit her.

She was stunned, to say the least,
her poetic gifts, for the time, suspended;
her close-cropped hair couldn't go awry
but her *derriere* was, of course, upended.



"Why'd you do that?" she finally asked
when sense and sensibility returned.
"Has a bounty been offered to those who trap
a female poet, by passion burned?"

"Sorry," I said, "just doing my job,
don't think of me as your natural predator.
I was asked to capture all feral bardettes
by an overworked, underpaid poetry editor."



"I assume," she said, "that you speak of a he,
a man with a plan to bar feminine verse."

"Uh, yeh," I replied, "it's an editing guy
who decreed that distaff stuff's the worst."

"What about Dickinson, what about Moore?"

What about Sappho, to give you one more?

What about Edna St. Freaking Millay?

I could name you so many you'd probably get bored."



"Sure, they're fine, each in her way,"
I danced in response, I practically *pavane*d her.
"The problem is not just the poems in themselves,
They're written on paper that's scented with lavender."

