

# RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

*Poetry*  
Unsolicited

by Willa Schneberg



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## Unsanctioned

Like any grand manor's garden this institution has a topiary--  
kangaroos, elephants and turtles, but we are the real animals,  
jezebels, segregated from male patients.

Dr. Gray calls himself "Our Protector."

In this bucolic setting, safe from noxious vapors  
we are instructed to dance virtuously, recite  
poems that will not excite, and become ladies again,  
as if we ever were.

Tourists picnic on the manicured grounds to stare,  
feel self-righteous, leave contented, and certain  
that we aren't contagious.

We hide scraps of purloined butcher paper  
and writing implements in our corsets,  
limn depravity, and godlessness on rags  
inside our thighs and behind mirrors.

We are the women relieved  
our children are born dead.

In the wards at night, if we pace or scream,  
we are tied to our beds, and matrons shut  
our mouths with their palms until we blubber.

If Dr. Gray's minions could, they would tat  
scalloped edges around our death wishes,  
turn them into doilies, but sometimes  
our unsanctioned words have wings:

with pieces of chalk and pencil nubs  
we scratch green and yellow hot air balloons  
that lift us over the padlocks.

**Willa Schenberg** is a poet, essayist, visual artist, curator, and psychotherapist in private practice. She has authored five poetry collections including: *Box Poems* (Alice James Books); *In The Margins of The World*, recipient of the Oregon Book Award; *Storytelling in Cambodia* (Calyx Books), and her latest volume, *Rending the Garment*. Willa has read at the Library of Congress and has been a fellow at Yaddo and MacDowell. Her work has appeared in numerous anthologies and literary journals, including: *American Poetry Review*, *Salmagundi*, *Poet Lore*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, and *Psychohistory Review*. This January, her newest collection, *The Naked Room*, will be released from Broadstone Books.



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