

Excerpt from FAST SPEAKING WOMAN

I'm the woman never made a fool of
woman who hides her heart
woman hidden in long sleeves
 sleeves of green & gold
I'm the woman shelved one night
 while he beds down with the deer
I'm the woman wandering the forest
 tilt moon
 full moon lights up a honey eye
 half moon he returns
I'm the woman waiting
the woman counting moments
a moment never existed & he walks in
I'm the woman who scribes this text
 long after the animals lie down
chopping wood outside the retreat hut
stoking the fire with my little stick
a candle lit to light a teacher's face
I learn by books
I learn by singing
I recite the chant of one hundred syllables
I write down my messages to the world
the wind carries them invisibly,
 staccato impulses to the world

I'm the woman stirring the soup pot
the woman who makes circles
 with her arm
stirring, singing this song about the
 Woman-Who-Does-Things
many actions complete themselves
& repeat
she does this
I'm the woman who does these things
many actions carry words
I say them, woman-who-signifies
I light the fire
I sit like a Buddha
I feed the animals outside the door
I blow out the lamp

I'm the woman traveling inside her head
I'm the woman on the straw mat
I bewitch the stars to my heart
 points of light, arrows to my heart
 pierce me as I sleep

I'm the night woman
I'm the terrible-night woman
I travel to steal your lover
to steal your food, to take your words

I'm the day woman
I'm the doll woman
I'm the dew woman

day woman mends & organizes
doll woman sits & stares
dew woman is moist to the touch

I'm the Amoghasiddhi woman
I'm activity demon
I wait for him
I walk away
busy woman to light up the day!

don't touch me I'm hurrying hurrying
fierce light of day he doesn't exist
mayhem on the next block a proletarian urge
& old tones deep from his gut I shut ears to
hold back, hold back
I'm the woman shouting "Hold"
I'm running down the street now
shout: "Hold, hold"

& old tones hold back ears sharp lobes hold
tainted I'll strap pathos back
that love comes to this ecto-morgue
& ties on craving & passion
but face I loved –
die! die! I'm the woman who loved
a woman who lost

turn it around
I'm the woman in charge
the woman who never succumbed
woman off the couch
woman up and about
I'm the organizing woman
I'll put this place under my spell

I'm the woman who drives
the woman who drove to Siliguri
I'm the woman who walked to Nepal
I took a train to rest my weary limbs
I'm the one who took a sponge bath
the water was cold

another woman soaped my back
I'm the woman slept upright in a cave a hundred years
I'm the woman over the next peak
I learned to drive on the Peak to Peak Highway
 all my signals intact
I provided fresh fuel to the hikers
fed children from my milky breasts
I rode the crest of my own wave
I thirsted for books, books
I took a plane to not calm my nerves
I rode a boat for expediency's sake

I'm the chopping wood woman
the woman with the axe
I'm the trailblazer
I clear the woods
I take out my own mind

Used by permission of Anne Waldman 2020. [Copyright: Waldman, Anne (1975): Fast Speaking Woman. Chants & Essays, Pocket Poets Series No. 33, City Lights Books: San Francisco (pp. 28-32). Also found in: Knight, Brenda (1996): Women of the Beat Generation. The Writers, Artists and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution, Conari Press: San Francisco (pp. 291-295).

