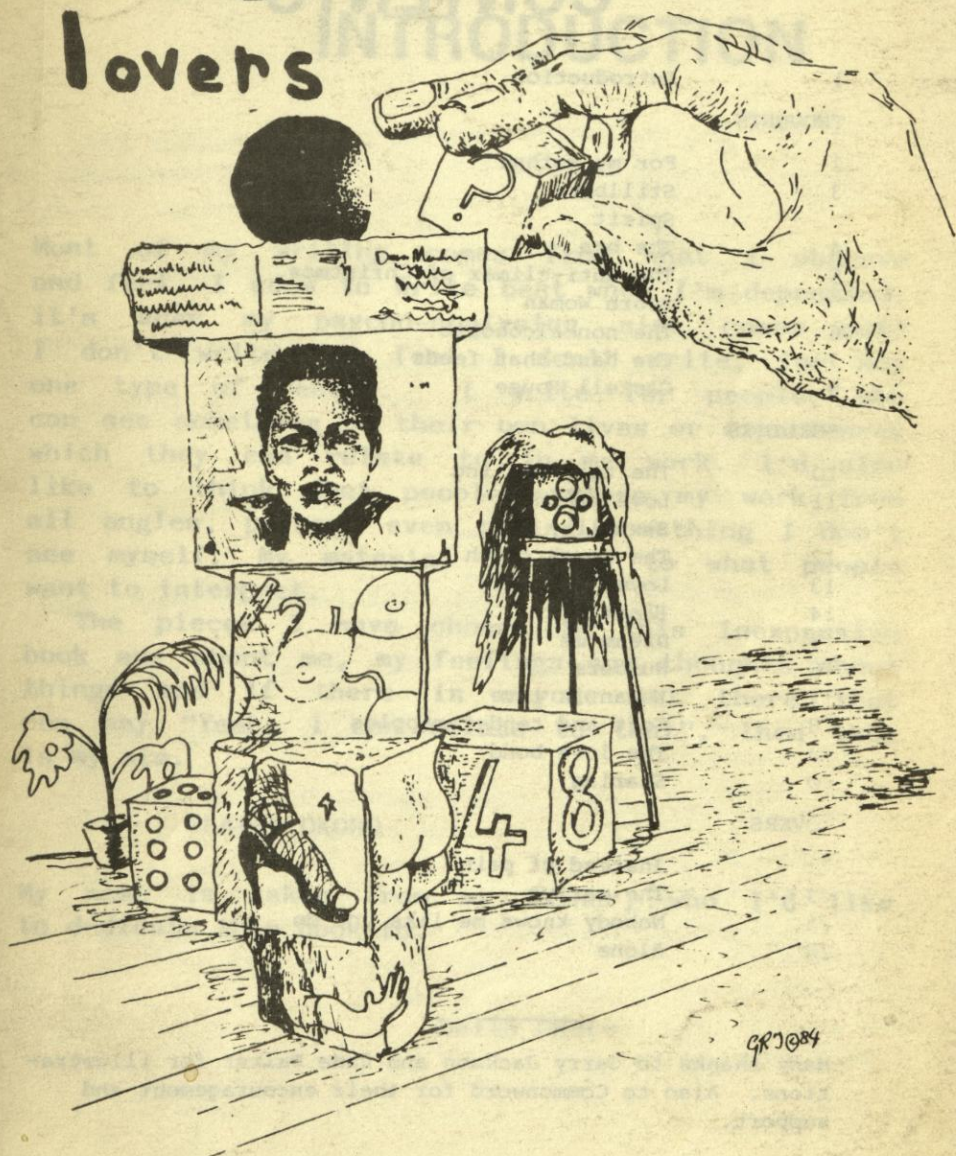


# Thoughts Feelings and Lovers



Elaine Okoro



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# INTRODUCTION

Most of my writing comes from what I observe and feel. I seem to write best when I'm depressed; it's when my psycho-analysing side comes out! I don't write, or feel I don't write, for any one type of reader. I write for people, who can see something of their own lives or experiences which they can relate to in my work. I'd also like to think that people explore my work from all angles, perhaps even seeing something I don't see myself. My material is open to what people want to interpret.

The pieces I have chosen in this inexpensive book are about me, my feelings and thoughts about things and if there is anyone out there that can say "Yeah, I can relate to that", then that is my aim.

ELAINE OKORO

My name is taken from my mother, who I'd like to dedicate this book to.

Delia Okoro



## FOR MY MOTHER

I've lost you somewhere between the generation gap  
and your marriage.  
You ask me for help, in fact you beg for pity, crying

I've lost you somewhere between the generation gap  
and your marriage.  
You ask me for help, in fact you beg for pity, crying  
out in your lost, unwanted voice,  
condemning me for not caring enough, trying to make  
me feel guilty.

Who bought you flowers?

Who listened when you were low or unhappy?

I could have sworn it was me.

Still you push me in corners, wanting more than I can  
give.

I'm only a daughter, and it makes me only flesh and  
blood.

You force me into the ungrateful role for the things  
you've sacrificed.

I tell myself, I never asked you to love my father,  
nor to seek the reconciliation you sought.

You asked me and I told you it was your life in a  
non-committal way.

He's my father, that's all I know, and I still say  
(to myself)

you were wrong to take him back.

But who listens to me?

I only buy you flowers.

## STILLBORN

Life stood still...inside of me

I carried you

With all my dreams

I'd forefill - for you.

You lived - inside me

Then life stood still  
for you.

## SCORN SPIRIT

Silently a woman caresses me, bends down to kiss my  
cheek....and I smile

and

Through misty windows I see your face

Through lonely nights and interrupted dreams

I feel your presence near.



## THE BRA.

Bra clip - unfastened  
Shaped like half-cup daggers,  
All following myths and fashions  
Of pretty patterns, bust sagging  
Sex symbol dreaming  
Women undesired

Women going braless,  
Shaking off their harness  
Tits - slowly showing through.  
Men's eyes staring  
Fascination wear  
Still, the choice is really up to you.

Women in their half bra's  
Women in their squashed bra's,  
Women in their black bra's,  
Sexy too.

Women with no bra bra's  
Women burn their bra's.  
That's how the media portray -  
You!

Live inside your bra  
Or hide behind a car  
Take it to the park  
But ask the question,  
Is it really you?

## THE ANTI-CLIMAX OF CHRISTMAS.

Christmas with mother  
Still trapped in the kitchen  
Christmas with boredom  
Still set in the telly  
Christmas with family  
Christmas with turkey  
Christmas - what is it  
I'd like to know!

## SCORN WOMAN.

Although...it wasn't my fault, still I'm not saying  
I'm not to blame  
The cause can never be rectified and the pain remains  
Still, I'm not saying you are not to blame  
But the guilt still lies greatly like a weight  
Whilst you shed a tear and withdraw into great  
depression

(with friends)

I remain alone with feelings of "bad mother, poor  
wife and adultress", sticks as a label for my name

Whilst casually you remain the injury part.

Poor father, sad man, lost man

Scorn wife, Scorn woman

No rights to a new life.



## THE NON-ALCOHOLIC

It will never happen to you.  
You only drink to console your soul.  
The things you read about will never happen to you,  
the lover being beaten, the liver being eaten,  
This will never happen to you, you only drink to  
console your soul.

The A.A. doesn't apply to you.  
You only drink three or four nights a week,  
three or four pints a night,  
so it doesn't apply to you  
so nothing applies to you.

You're not the stereotype drinker  
You're not a heavy drinker  
You're just a social drinker  
so nothing need ever apply to you.

## THE HAND THAT FEEDS

Next week won't be like that -  
trapped by circumstances,  
financed by a relationship,  
waiting for that green cheque  
to pay the others back.

Dependent on a lover to feed you,  
losing all identity,  
thinking: next week won't be like that.  
Humiliated by the mouth that feeds you,  
angry at yourself.

No amount of consolations  
will make this money stretch.  
Wanting but never having,  
never gaining things I desire,  
I keep thinking: next week won't be like that!



## GASKELL HOUSE

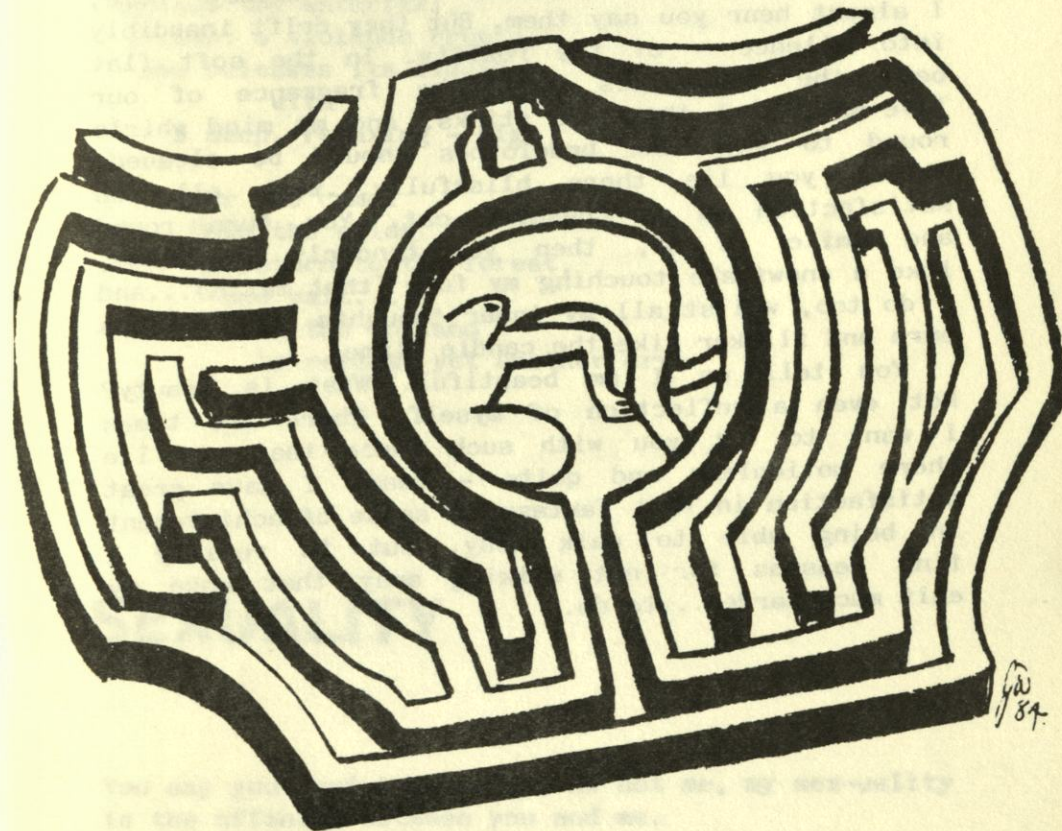
In my head - I knew what I was doing  
With my hands I had no control  
Clawing and scratching my face.  
Friends called an ambulance.

After that there was Gaskell House.  
A chance to escape from parents,  
Pressure eased away from them.

I didn't stay long,  
Only a day.  
Friends laughed it off.  
Parents said they'd lock  
me away.

For me it was heaven,  
sanctuary,  
a place to think,  
People to listen to my pleas,  
my cry inside.  
If only for a little while.

## Section two Feelings





## THE TRAP FEELING

Eagerly I await those words, when your lips press passionately against mine. In a dreamy haze, I almost hear you say them. But they drift inaudibly into silence - of the reality. In the soft flat bed, the bedclothes waft the fragrance of our love-making. I think it stinks.' And my mind whirls round to when the bedclothes should be cleaned, whilst you lie there blissfully...with all the satisfaction of a Cheshire cat. You turn round and smile at me, then you tenderly touch me, like a snowflake touching my face (that melts)...and I do too, whilst all my inner thoughts and emotions burn and flicker like the candle flame.

You tell me I am beautiful. What is beauty? Not even a reflection of myself. There are times I want to hit you with such force that you lie there motionless and quite - dead. I have great satisfaction in that fantasy. A sense of achievement in being able to walk away. But in reality I find reasons for not walking away that make my exit much harder...to do.

## LOVE-MAKING

Along the mountains...into the forest  
Against the waterfall,  
Inside: a violence erupts,  
and releases its liquid  
with  
a deep, relaxing - sigh

Over the camel  
Down the slide  
I return to the forest,  
and wait...  
for the volcano  
to release yet another cry.

## SEXUALITY

You say you want to know me, not not me, my sex-uality is the affinity between you and me.

You say you want to support me, not I but my anatomy  
You don't want to know the inside me that still  
cares for people not sex-uality

and if I decide to go to the never, never land  
and decide to take a man  
will you still want to know me or my sexuality?



## THE CRUSH CLOTH

Release that part of me  
Unfold me like unravelling material  
Release the creases  
Stretch the cloth  
Feel the quality

Touch my skin  
Feel me, near you  
Press against the fabric  
See the pattern.

Feel the mood  
Feel the colour - flowing,  
heavy-warm  
The soft, soft texture  
of my cloth.

## LOVER'S BREATH

Lover's breath -  
breath -  
breath,  
pressed against my neck.

Lover's kiss,  
Pressed against my -  
breast.

Loverman laid in my  
bed,  
bed,  
bed.

Lover woman hangs in my  
head,  
head,  
head.

Lover woman clings to something - dead.



## BLACK

Black skin,  
Lying against white silk,  
Cream coloured flesh  
Fills my life.

No other shades  
No greys  
Or browns  
Or blues

Just white silk  
Followed by white skin.

## DREAM ME

Dream me a song  
Sing me a song  
about blue skies.  
Wash over my life  
Whisk me through green grass,  
White clouds, yellow flowers.

Dream me a song  
that sings about sunshine  
and laughter.  
Sweet kisses and deep  
pressed bodies.

Dream me, Dream me a  
song about you and I  
Love pie high in the sky  
Shepherd delight sunsets  
Romantic untouched love.

Dream me, Dream me  
something so unreal,  
so everlasting  
That it takes me away  
from all I feel.



## NUMBERS

Look at us entwined as two,  
a couple, a me, a you,  
The figure, the number,  
The inseparable number  
me and you.

Names joint locked together  
Number 2

I can't go nowhere without  
you

Without some one asking

" "Hey!"where's" you!

Life doubled

Identities muddled

No personal likes or  
dislikes of you or me.

We're confused with

people numbered

$1 + 1 = 2$

## WOMAN IN LOVE

Woman in love

Man seeking future

with opportunities in view

Relationship cemented

(one-sided view)

Man seeks future

with no woman in mind.



## SOFT AND TENDER RIPPLES

Soft and tender ripples on the water's edge.  
Warm loving kisses pressed against my breast  
Strength and affection wrapped in a linen bed.

Deep contented smiles  
Eyes that do not lie  
Like soft and tender ripples on  
the water's edge.

## THE LOVE BOND

There is nothing more that we can add. We've exhausted all avenues. We are too close. I feel as if we were born in the same womb, tied by the same umbilical cord: unable to separate.

There is a bond between us, a bond that seems to question our own existence with each other. We cannot separate, our thoughts are with each other. Even in the arms of some one else.

The whole situation seems crazy, ludicrous. We owe nothing to each other...no more. But still we can't explain our thoughts and feelings for one another.

We seem unable to escape from memories and experiences that we have shared.

Which is our bond and yes, of course,  
love.



## SHARING

A space filled in my life  
sad songs, lovers' tunes,  
Ticking clocks, time a certain place  
A moment, a memory, laughter here  
Intimate kisses, sunshine in your smile  
warmth in your arms  
Tenderness flowing from here to eternity.

## Section three lovers





## INSTEAD OF PAIN

Tired of giving  
Tired of being misunderstood  
For what!  
For what gain and for what achievement?

I've given what I could  
But like a stretched piece of elastic  
You pull on me for more.

For more understanding  
More sympathy  
More love  
More me!

There is nothing more.

Yet...you have the knack of pricking my conscience,  
Making me feel there are answers.

But where?  
Not inside me.

I search you.  
I attack you  
with words  
with violence  
in desperation  
But still you keep running  
Shutting doors.

I keep clinging to the last vessel of hope,  
The last vessel of light  
Pushing faith-belief in front of  
you.

It carries on and on  
It snatches things away from you  
Your faith, your trust, your love in me.

You're a bomb,  
With your own self-destruction device,  
Turning emotions inside out,  
Thoughts in to paranoid,  
Sensitivity into tears.

I keep giving you my strength,  
My faith in you  
Trying so hard to make  
You

see

feel

Understand what you are!  
Instead of pain.



## THE MARTYR

Tired of giving  
Tired of being  
Am I the martyr, carrying you to your destination?  
Am I the martyr, that sacrifices all...for nothing?  
I'm not so brave - nor so strong.  
I am not what my image would like me to believe  
I am.

Have you not given as much as I?  
Tortured yourself with guilt and remorse?  
You have.

But still I ask more.  
Wanting you to succeed, achieve  
But wanting you, all the same,  
Here, now,  
Not with some one new.

Am I not the Martyr? I wanted  
to believe?  
I am not.

## NOBODY KNOWS ME LIKE YOU DO

Walk through that door  
and there'll be another blast from the past.  
Mind you, it won't be music to your ears  
But words said with venom  
Tears felt with pain.

Walk through that door  
and I'll let you know the way I feel.

The way I feel abused,  
The way I feel cheated.

Up to now!  
It's only been your feelings  
that have been spared  
Up to now!  
It's only been your needs that have been nursed  
Up to now  
It's only been - you!

But what about me?  
What of me?



NOBODY KNOWS ME LIKE  
YOU DO

It no longer mattered  
What was important was your feelings, when  
there was no longer tea and sympathy  
No longer kind words, gentle touching,  
kisses and hugs  
Nothing mattered but you.

You only cared about love.

Your rejection

Your loss,

Your pain

But not mine.

All I get is -

"I don't understand."

All I get is -

"I don't see."

All I get is -

I don't care.

"I" only use words

"You" use feelings

"I" use try to reason

"You" run to escape

You don't know what love is.

You don't know what pain is.

ALONE

You use suffering as some sort of cure,  
to get you through and over hurdles.

My love doesn't equal yours.

You can never feel my emotions.

You're never here when I toss and turn at night

Waiting - for the day to come

Watching the clock for your usual arrival home

Rushing to the phone

Breaking my legs to get to the door

Just in case

Just in case.

Every person who has the same colour hair

I stretch myself above the crows to

Catch a glimpse of you.

Conversations become meaningless

Words become an embarrassment

Nobody knows me - like you do.



# ALONE

I breathe in the air consciously  
and I am aware how it feels  
light and warm

As I lie on the bed...alone  
I spread out and feel the space  
I have to grow and stretch  
So good I smile, is this what  
loneliness means?

I hear every sound in the sound  
I make

To know every decision is mine  
Is that what freedom is meant to be  
If I had dreamt it would be like this  
I would have ended our time together, so much sooner  
then.



This book is one of a series of cheap, accessible pamphlets produced by women at Commonword. We're all members of writers' workshops in Manchester, whose aim is to prove that writing doesn't just belong to an elite. Our books speak for the working class, blacks, gays and women - all of us who are normally ridiculed or unheard in published work. If you'd like us to read to your women's group or if you're a writer yourself, contact us at the address below.

Elaine Okoro was born in Reading, Berkshire in 1960. She moved to Manchester when she was one, attended Lostock secondary modern school and slowly declined from there.

#### TIGHTFISTED POETS

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