

ATTITUDINAL CHANGES: A Life History  
Copyright © 2010 Frances Roberts all rights reserved

The photos of the naked-topped ladies  
In the National Geographic  
Always set the little boys, tittering, on edge.  
Not me! When I saw them, I was SO embarrassed.  
I wondered what the National Geographic  
Could have been thinking,  
To picture those limp, distended things  
Hanging like the dangling bats sleeping in a tree in Borneo.

My cousin Carol sent me all her hand-me-downs,  
Which I didn't want, because I was poor, and sick of second-hand.  
One day, the box included underwear,  
Which horrified me with its straps and hooks and eyes.  
She was a big sporty lumpy girl who practiced golf swings,  
And I was, as Auntie Rosa always said,  
"No bigger than a minute!"  
Nothing fit, especially the underwire thing.

My mama, sensibly, taught me to read  
Chaucer in Middle English when I was eleven,  
Which made me supremely happy, and so  
Somehow I didn't figure I needed  
Extra support for my budding little bumps.  
I had **The Miller's Tale** to think about.

And much later, on the other hand,  
The guys in the newsroom  
Loved to whistle at me and call me  
"Lois Lane with the hourglass figure."  
By then I didn't mind—it was fun to hang out  
With twenty-two pals at the Press Club  
And be admired for my front-page news  
As well as my frontal appearance.  
Sometimes I'd do a sexy dance at the annual  
"Roast of the Politicians," and I'd see  
The Mayor leering covetously.

But then came true, if as usual, bumpy,  
Love...  
And then the children,  
Nursing away in happy ecstasy, showed  
There was some real use in the appendages  
After all. AND

I found out why some people have endless babies  
And nurse them all the time:  
It's a sex thing, sure enough.

But we don't speak of all this too much,  
Or, hardly ever. For instance,  
There's no term for "brassiere" in my  
German dictionary, and the French don't  
Even use that word. They call it  
"Soutien-gorge"—'supporting the flow.'

Imagine that!  
I wonder what it is in Japanese?

The years have gone on, up, down, up, down.  
My body followed the path, but it went mostly  
Down. Fortunately,  
One could always buy support so they didn't bobble,  
(One dislikes so to wobble).  
Now, I pity my poor bra, seeing it  
Hanging on a hook inside the closet,  
Nothing much to fill it,  
And no-one but me to take it off.  
No excitement, no pink lace enchantment,  
Just tattle-tale gray and old  
Like me,  
Yet--somewhat useful still,  
If only to avoid the resemblance  
To the sleeping bats dangling from a tree in Borneo.

52010

## **The Persistence of Memory\***

There is persistence in the things unseen,  
A scent that rises from the steaming bath,  
An empty breeze that eddies in my path,  
A hint of shadow on a back-door screen.

I swear I feel a touch of sweater sleeve,  
When nothing but your chair arm is nearby;  
I feel an anger at this obvious lie;  
The truth is, it is I who self-deceive.

I would not have you with me and in pain,  
But when no hand can reach me in the night,  
I rail at empty space—a losing fight.  
I wish we had our lives to live again—

I'd fill them to the brim with all we've been,  
And more (a summer by a shimmering Spanish sea),  
I'd gather memories to keep with me,  
Persistent, shining, warm, yet all unseen.

\*From a Salvadore Dali title

Copyright © 2011 Frances Roberts. All rights reserved

## The Unrepentant Joiner

I joined up with the Ladies Society,  
Though I never liked ladies at all...  
I knew they were full of propriety,  
While I tend to be far off the wall.  
I decided they needed a shakeup,  
So I paid them a ladylike favor,  
Giving expert advice on cosmetics, on makeup,  
I made sure they had something to savor.  
I bought a red hat just to please them,  
Wore high heels that were shaky as hell;  
With a draped purple dress I beguiled them,  
Till they thought I was really a swell.  
I was duly elected as Treasurer--  
They cheered as I met with the Board;  
Of all their funds I was the measurer,  
And I gloried in guarding their hoard.  
But, alas, I still was no lady,  
Could not be genteel if I tried,  
So I returned to my ways that were shady,  
And cleaned them out, to my really great pride.  
Now I'm wanted in seventeen counties,  
'Cause I played being lady too oft...  
I made off with lots of good bounties,  
For my ways were most womanly soft.  
So hooray for all the ladies who lunch,  
They're really and truly a generous bunch.  
As for me, I have had to head for the hills,  
Where I now oh so properly pay all my bills.

Copyright © 2011 Frances Roberts all rights reserved