

Unmailed Letter to B'go

by Ann Bogle

B'go, I am thinking of submitting VERY short stories, one to three (100-500 words) to a journal online called *A Minor*. As I write to you, I am listening to Mahler's quartet for piano and strings in A Minor, hoping to understand what A Minor "means" in literary terms. Could you translate that in Bb clarinet terms? If I were playing a Bb clarinet part in A Minor, what would be the flats and sharps? I feel helpless in understanding this without your guide. (Do you like Mahler? To play or hear? I recently heard Mahler at a St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concert but the name of the piece has left me ... Did Mahler write Kindertotenwaltz? No, it's Kindertotenlieder. I thought that Franz Wright had named a prose poetry collection Kindertotenwaltz but now cannot find it.)

Memories of my outings with you return. I have been back for a week and already, except for my "house," (my apartment), I see little to like about being here, though the area is so naturally beautiful, the lakes and trails. We are having very hot weather. Yesterday it was 98 degrees F when I checked and "felt like" 110.

I went on a Match dot com date with an interesting fellow who works as a ___ for a ___. His ___ escaped ___, later met his ___ in ___. They are ___ and ___, his ___ now passed and his ___ about to move. He has hobbies as a (long-time) ___, ___, and ___. Nice guy, never married, no kids, 50 something. Good correspondent by email, gentle presence. So why am I so romantically disinclined, not only toward him, but toward all men except in dreams? I never dream of sex with women. I once dreamed of refusing to kiss a woman. I remind myself sometimes that I evaded lesbianism. I still would evade it, and the gay women, as they call themselves now, if they are still political, would evade me for having chosen heterosexual privilege. I *like* to listen to average women talk about beauty and fashion. I think average women are fascinating and foreign. Average men seem imposing,

despite my tact with them. Only exceptional men are of interest, and they are never far from being "spoken for."

I NEED TO WRITE A SERIES OF PUBLISHABLE STORIES ABOUT IT.

I really detest dating that leads to sex (sex = ownership) or to the expectation of it. The men are so quietly demanding and authoritarian and pushy. Who are these nice fuckers? Strays a'hounding. I want to tell them: I have friends, real friends with art agendas. When there is dating without sex—as would not happen if I were not so direct about it, my stating that I like celibacy (inspired in my journey by the celibate hooker from ____), and never without some sort of tiff over it, a tiff between acquaintances who met via the Internet—the men try to blame me for being on a dating website at all, as if dating is a euphemism for free sex with strangers. Sex with strangers is WHY hookers charge. I wonder if most women go along with it who date there. ____ said that psychotherapy is a legal form of prostitution. It is bringing back my early feminism to consider it. I detest what is usually meant by dating. Hardly anyone has the style or instinct or seasoning to think of any other pattern to pursue. Sex is a rote cow path that leads to STDs and calls up past violations—we all have them—without a sense of what else there could be, among mature adults. Friendship insults most men to hear it mentioned in this context. The average mature man feels jerked by a woman who says she wants to be friends. The men want exclusive physical access to a woman they do not marry or support. ____ has turned my head around totally on this subject, whether or not that was his intent. The divorced moms live in houses and have careers, many of them, because they were married at one time. They are "financially stable," if so.

I feel it is important for me to mix with people here, to try to know people socially, to expand my interests, perhaps to find better friends than the old friends turned out to be during the later part of the NY year. I am newly friends again with ____ and ____—our migrations and life patterns have sorted out much we couldn't sort when we parted. My woman friend here, ____, daughter of ____,

doctor living in ____, is divorcing. I haven't had the courage to ask her about it. I rarely see her, but we like each other. She is in her 60s but looks 50 something.

My ____ keeps fighting me. I want to put her on Ebay. The fighting must serve some purpose, because it is usually philosophical in an unschooled way, philosophical meaning tactical regarding life and how to live.

I get dejected thinking of possible scenarios. I cheer myself imagining others. I blame "the economy," in particular the "academic hiring economy" for makeshift existence, for the shock of dependence, a total shock when it started, that gradually sank in and furrowed me, that went against my whole grain at the beginning and even later, until now I would not fight it, now that it seems over. The present young generation has relatively little security compared to its elders. The economy is supposed to support us, as Wendell Berry says. You might already know his essays, his collection called *What Are People For?* I adore Wendell Berry for his soil conservation (by hand on his own farm in KY) and his ethos. He is so very traditional yet super hip at the same time.

How is the week going? Your writing about it is better than any question I might ask.

