



HEATHER TOSTESON

LIVE QUESTIONS

This anthology can be seen as flowing naturally from two of our earlier anthologies dealing with reinvention and repair (although it is very capable of standing on its own). All of them feel to me quintessentially American in their interest in how we conceptualize human connection—or the lack of it—within oneself, between us and our family, friends, romantic loves. However, the two earlier ones are filled with that constructive, can-do stance toward human relations that permeates much of our national philosophy and our psychology of self-actualization, self-realization, self-transformation, self-acceptance, co-dependency and our recovery from it—even as they contemplate the costs and limits of trying to reform our lives (and, intentionally or not, the lives of those around us) to better match our ideals of what life in general, and our lives in particular, could and should be.

In contrast, the stories, poems, and memoirs in this anthology invite us to take a more musing stance towards our experience and our relationships. They invite us to contemplate a reality that exists, often despite our best (or worst) intentions, often outside our consciousness: something continuous, impermanent, its shapes and expressions continually challenging and superceding our ideas of what love should and can be, a reality that lifts and carries us and grounds us simultaneously. For one of the essential elements of a sense of connection is a sense of time, its ineluctable flow, the losses inherent in that movement and in its inevitable destination. As a character in Margaret Karmazin's story "40 Years" observes bitterly: "They don't tell you this when you're young. . . . That by the time you love someone exquisitely, your life or theirs may soon end. If they did and you actually listened, you'd be too scared to live."

Another interesting difference here is our understanding of volition, for a sense of connection, like belief, cannot be willed into being. But it can, through the simple conjunction of presence *and* change, come to permeate