

# Diane Cluck, Touch Deprivation

they did an experiment with babies  
back in world war II  
and the babies all were orphans  
so no one cared or knew  
they called it touch deprivation  
and this is what they did  
if a baby started crying  
put a hand out from its crib  
the nurses glit on by  
as if they'd seen nothing at all  
the nurses glit on by  
and checked the chart off on the wall  
writing  
nothing unusual here  
subjects continue rocking  
back and forth  
as if they sense a  
thunderstorm is coming  
and that flock of springtime babies  
nesting quiet in the lab  
were just fist fulls of feathers  
stuffing pillows after that  
and those second world war nurses  
who had killed the orphan kids  
lived out cursed lives as spinsters  
in trade for what they did  
they did a similar experiment in new york  
and this is what they did  
they rolled out the sheets of tarmac  
and sliced them into grim  
then they filled the maze with people  
but they told them not to touch  
they convinced them it weren't civilized  
and we believed as much  
why do you apologize when you bump into my arm on the train  
did you apologize three times like it really caused anyone harm or pain  
being bumped into - do you, know you are the first person to touch me in a  
month  
and sometimes i like the feeling of accidental touch  
an experiment with ladies  
with ladies and with men  
we could decide to lose our language  
so that we might try our skin  
strangers piggyback each other  
the thrill of contact sport  
and i finally could talk to you  
but this time without words  
cos' you don't realize how you pollute the game  
when you keep speaking circles and your circles sound the same saying  
i'm fine how are you i'm good how are you i'm fine how are you i'm good how  
are you i find  
it hard to relate to situations  
where i am asked to speak