

## Poems by Lucille Clifton (1936-2010)

### poem in praise of menstruation

if there is a river  
more beautiful than this  
bright as the blood  
red edge of the moon      if

there is a river  
more faithful than this  
returning each month  
to the same delta      if there

is a river  
braver than this  
coming and coming in a surge  
of passion, of pain      if there is

a river  
more ancient than this  
daughter of eve  
mother of cain and of abel      if there is in

the universe such a river      if  
there is some where water  
more powerful than this wild  
water  
pray that it flows also  
through animals  
beautiful and faithful and ancient  
and female and brave

(2001)



## to my last period

well, girl, goodbye,  
after thirty-eight years.  
thirty-eight years and you  
never arrived  
splendid in your red dress  
without trouble for me  
somewhere, somehow.

now it is done,  
and i feel just like  
the grandmothers who,  
after the hussy has gone,  
sit holding her photograph  
and sighing, *wasn't she  
beautiful? wasn't she beautiful?*

(1991)

## Poem to my uterus

you uterus  
you have been patient  
as a sock  
while i have slipped into you  
my dead and living children  
now  
they want to cut you out  
stocking i will not need  
where i am going  
where am i going  
old girl  
without you  
uterus  
my bloody print  
my estrogen kitchen  
my black bag of desire  
where can i go  
barefoot  
without you  
where can you go  
without me

(1991)