

**Collection main de femme**

48 pages

Format 100 x 160 mm

Poids : 42 g

Prix : 8 €

**PUBLIC VISÉ :**

Tout public anglophone.

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# The Seed Man

**L'homme semence de Violette Ailhaud**

translated from the French by

**Nancy Huston**

In 1852, Violette Ailhaud was about to get married when the government's repression of the republican uprising of December 1851 suddenly wiped out all the men of her village in the Lower Alps. For two years, the women lived in total isolation. They promised each other that if a man came along some day he would be husband to them all, so that their wombs could bring forth the next generation.

*It came from the farthest depths of the valley. Long before it forded the river, long before its shadow interrupted the gleam of water between sandbars like a slow blink, we knew it was a man. Our empty, husbandless women's bodies had started thrumming in a way there was no mistaking. In unison, our exhausted arms left off stacking hay. Glancing at one another, each and all of us remembered our oath. We grasped hands, squeezing each other's hands so hard that our knuckles fairly snapped – our dream, icy with fear and burning with desire, had been set into motion.*

**With an Afterword by historian Jean-Marie Guillon, University of Provence, member of the 1851 Association. "The Seed Man" has been adapted as theater, film, tale, dance, cartoon and engraving. .**

**Violette Ailhaud**

*Born in 1835, Violette Ailhaud died in 1925.*

*She wrote The Seed Man in 1919 – when her village lost all its men for the second time.*