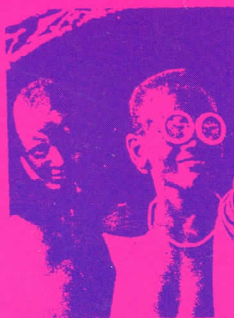


IKON

creativity
and
change



ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Focus on Autobiography & Short Fiction

Focus on Autobiography & Short Fiction

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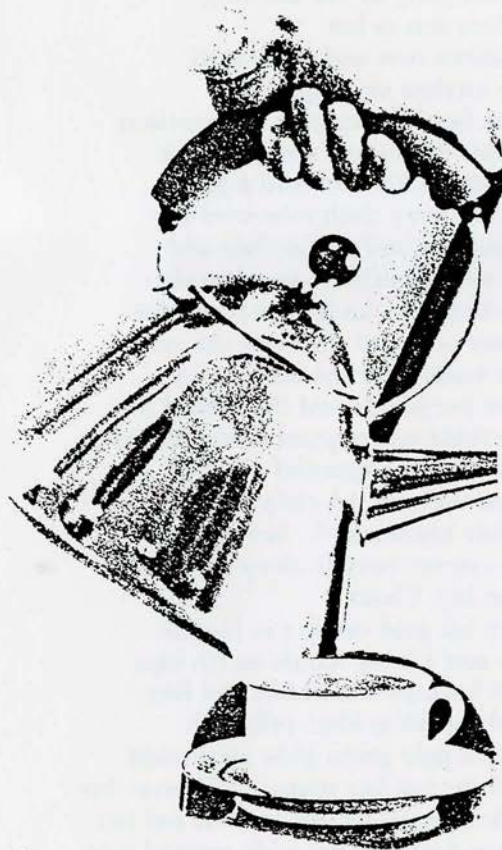
Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following

DIANE GLANCY: "Brown Wolf Leaves The Res" from *Brown Wolf Leaves The Res & Other Poems* published by Blue Cloud Quarterly Press, 1984. Reprinted by permission of author.

CAROL TARLEN: "White Trash" will appear in an altered form in an anthology of working women's writing, *Coming Home*, edited by Janet Zandy, to be published by Rutgers University Press in the spring of 1990.

IKON: an image combining separate symbolic elements into a unity in which all are perceived simultaneously thereby eliminating the separation of body and mind, spirit and intellect, feeling and thought.

SAFIYA HENDERSON HOLMES



goodhousekeeping #13 the well pampered kitchen

she wanted a pretty kitchen
yes she did, she wanted a real
live pretty kitchen, she really,
really did—wanted it unlike her
Mama's and unlike her Granma's
and unlike her neighbors down
the hall

so she painted her kitchen walls
sun-rise orange and she painted
her kitchen cabinets sun-set
orange and she shopped in this
store and in that store, trying
to find just the right shade of
burnt orange table and chairs
and curtains and linoleum and
she begged and cried to her
landlord for the closest thing
to twilight orange that he could
find for a refrigerator and
stove, she threatened to withhold
her rent if he didn't comply,
said if he did she'd consider
letting him see the frog shaped
mole on her thigh,

oh she wanted a pretty kitchen
a real live pretty kitchen, and
she looked in a magazine and saw
rose-pink tulip tiles and she
worked double time on her department
store job and she worked time
and a half at her telephone
company job and she bought them
rose-pink tulip tiles and she
put some on the wall behind her
burnt orange stove and she put
some around the wall of her painted
burnt-orange sink and she put
some on the sun-set orange cabinets
for highlight, she said, just like
a picture from one of them home
decor magazines, she said

'cause she wanted a pretty kitchen,
a real live pretty kitchen, sure to
amaze and dazzle and set the heart
to jumping pretty kitchen, unlike
her Mama's and her Granma's and
her neighbor with the five kids
who lives down the hall

and she worked triple
on her department store job
and she worked triple on her
telephone company job and she
bought new pots with copper-
orange bottoms and she hung them
elegantly from a peg board and
she bought sun-rise orange cups
and swung them lavishly from
fluorescent orange hooks and she
bought sun-set orange plates and
stacked them according to size
and frequency of use in her
sun-set orange cabinets—

such a grand sight
and not a drip from the faucet
was allowed, not a dish-rag hanging
out to dry was allowed, not a
roach or a rat or a man or a child
just like a commercial for spic and
span ajax or top job, she had a
top job of a kitchen, a real live
pretty, pretty hurt your eyes
kitchen, unlike her Mama's or her
Granma's or her neighbor who had
five kids and lived down the hall

and when asked the secret of her
kitchen's beauty—meaning does she
clean it every day, does she reclean
it every night—meaning, does she have
a strong-arm crew of women come in
on the weekends with a mammoth
supply of brillo and bugspray and
ammonia, meaning, does she pray, do
magic tricks

she smiles as she stands at the door
of her pretty kitchen, as if she's
at the gates of heaven and she
says, it's simple and without a
doubt, I don't use the damn thing,
I just like standing here and
checking it out.

goodhousekeeping #17 kitchen fable

it was early in the morning
before sun or her
children rose and she was at
the kitchen sink squeezing
pink liquid soap over the previous
nights dishes and she had pink
curlers in her hair and a pink
frayed terry cloth robe over her
shoulders and a worn bra and
an over-bleached pair of panties
peeked from under the pink robe
every now and then and she ran
hot water over the dishes and
over her hands and she looked into
a bubble and popped it with her spit
and then it happened
right there in the early morning
in her kitchen sink, before her
own never enough sleep eyes
rose Mr. Clean

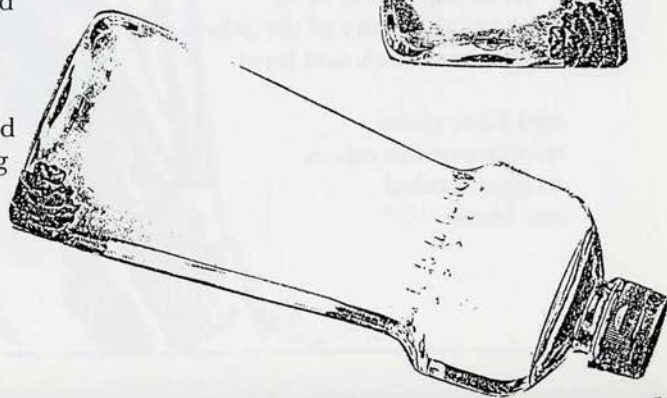
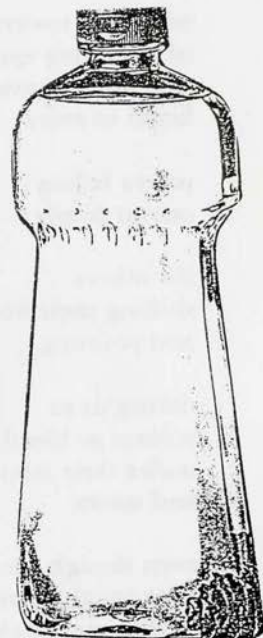
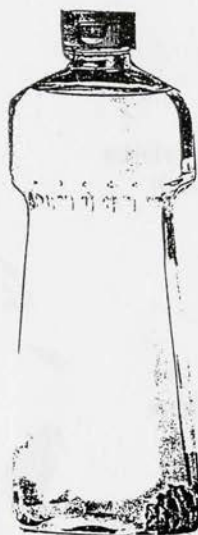
with his gold earring in his left
ear and his big hands on his hips
and his hips and hands and face
and legs all golden-yellowish
with a pale green glow all around
and she put her soapy hands over her
wide opened mouth and she put her
soapy hands to her wide opened eyes
and to her stiffen in disbelief neck
and Mr. Clean with his gold earring
in his left ear and his hands on his
hips and his hips all golden and
muscular winked at her and sparks
of light flew from his eyelid
and she covered her breast and
Mr. Clean smiled and sparks of light
shot from his snow white teeth and
she picked up a nearby knife
and Mr. Clean said, I can make your
work disappear and she held her
robe closed with one hand and raised
the knife higher with the other
and Mr. Clean pulled on his gold

earring and the knife and every dirty dish disappeared and she reached for her curlers as though she expected them to go too and Mr. Clean shook his gleaming hairless head at the stove and all the pots and pans disappeared and the stove sparkled and she swayed into a faint, her head bowed, her knees bent, her eyes rolled and her hands flew way above her head

and Mr. Clean saw her go down and scooped her up, actually removed both hands from his hips and scooped her up and held her close and his ammonia and bleach and pine like sudsy smell revived her and he said I could make your life more enjoyable and he pulled on his gold earring in his left ear and her curlers left and her robe went and the worn bra and over bleached panties were zapped away and she was butt-naked in the arms of Mr. Clean and she didn't know what to do and she was speechless and swore her eyes had gone totally bad

and Mr. Clean said, I could make it real good for you and he smiled and sparks of light covered her thighs and in all her years of standing at her kitchen sink, her thighs had never been touched by anything, let alone light and she looked at her thighs all aglow and she looked at her sink and stove all aglow and she looked at a roach that had been watching the whole damn thing and felt something warm and itchy rise from her stomach to the tip of her head and in all her years of being in a

kitchen she had never been held so close in a kitchen before and she had never been so warm in a kitchen before and she braved a look into Mr. Clean's golden eyes and braved a touch of his gold earring and somehow from somewhere words swelled her neck and she said as she held on to his gold earring, could you make me shine Mister, could you really make me shine forever more. . . .



SAFIYA HENDERSON HOLMES

strength #7 for winnie mandela

some of us women
know the weight
the pressing
winneba

when the walls
begin to crumble

when the towers
of unending expectations
that others have built
begin to sway

pieces falling
on our heads

the others
shifting their burdens
and pointing

daring us to
scream or bleed
under their stones
and stares

even though some of us
have taught many of the others
how to rear back and howl

and have given
to many of the others
as they howled
our blood

strength #11 heroines

what about
full moons and sojourner

slow music
and harriet

what about those
nights in the heat

when they didn't
have to run or hide
or pray

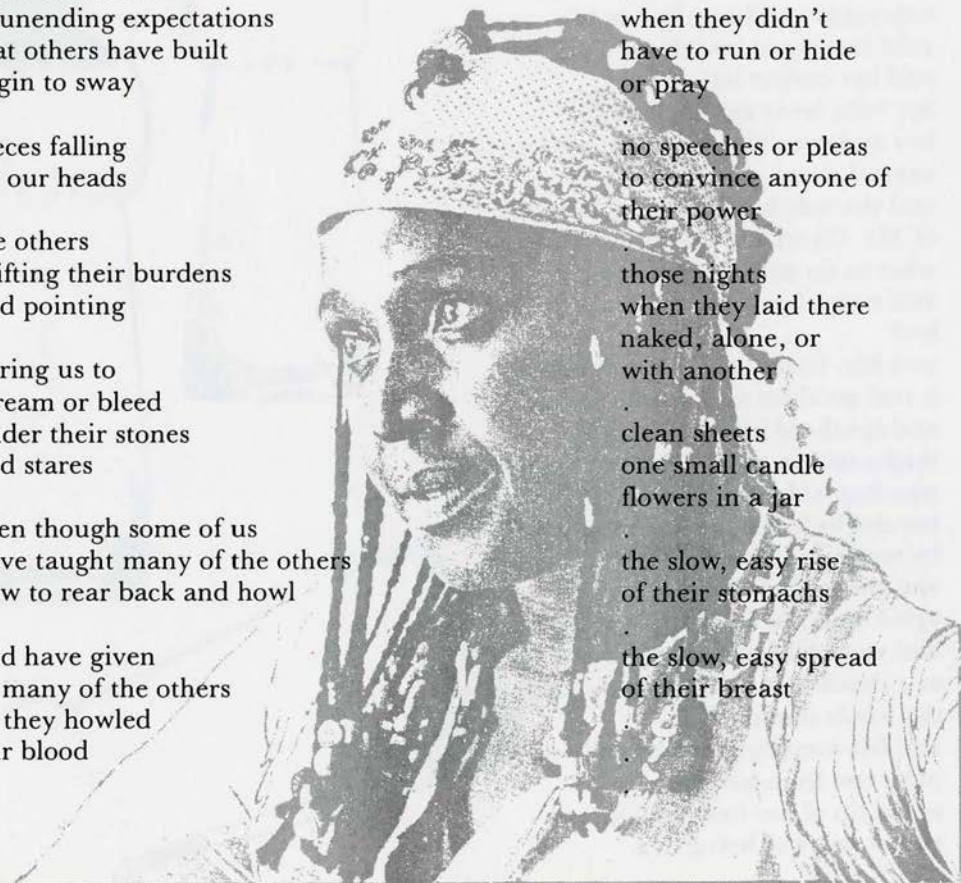
no speeches or pleas
to convince anyone of
their power

those nights
when they laid there
naked, alone, or
with another

clean sheets
one small candle
flowers in a jar

the slow, easy rise
of their stomachs

the slow, easy spread
of their breast



MARGARET RANDALL

Alice and Carlos, Three Stories

*"... we cannot develop and print
a memory."*

—Henri Cartier-Bresson

Can I call it Alice's story? All I knew were a few of the corners, tangled years sloughed off in memory.

Alice was a big woman. Stately, large-boned: those would have been the words used by people for whom it was all right to be big. A few might have said amazonian. We were raised in an era of pinched waists. Petite as eager necessity. The chin and eyes tilted upwards in admiration and support for the men we were learning to adore in every possible way. Definitely a preview to today's wistful anorexic disappearance act.

But Alice would not disappear. Her carriage was a statement. The clean openness of her face, eyes that took you in, straight on. Her eyes challenged me. The woman Alice told me in her bearing she was big and beautiful. And she moved through her days with a particular grace.

Alice was big. She looked down or straight across and took long effortless strides, picking up one or another of her three small children with a strong yet gentle arm, gesturing endless amusement with the other. Endless possibility. She most often wore dirndl skirts, the New Mexican marriage of Indian and old Mexican striped or solid chambray. Sandals and simple peasant blouses. And her breasts were heavy, full, very beautiful.

Alice was an artist. She painted and made prints, shaped clay pots in her large hands, demanded space for her work, and art was that work of hers. But she was also a wife. A housewife and a mother. Her husband, Jack, was a university professor, an artist too, and accepted as such in the community. Professional, artist: identities not in conflict.

Alice's three small children — and they *were* hers, in every daily battle — were towheads. Smelling of soggy crackers, they trailed loose wet diapers across a cluttered floor. Alice looked at her husband. Lifted and set down her children. Entering a room, she spoke, or her voice came from the next room over, the next project, something she was explaining or showing. Her focus seemed always for the work.

Perhaps I didn't really understand that then. Or, I didn't understand what must be sacrificed to that. It was part of the mystery, its staying power when she was gone. "Alice is strange," people would say. I couldn't, then, have articulated all that they meant by that, nor exactly how I felt her presence and her strength. But I knew I wanted to be close to her.

I do not now remember the order:

Alice married to an artist, Jack. Alice herself an artist. Alice's work unnoticed. Sometimes not even getting done. Alice's work beginning to gain recognition. Was that the way it went? "Alice got a lucky break! She's been commissioned to paint a mural for the First National Bank Building!" Was that how it was?

Years later people spoke about twenty murals, one on every floor of that building which was then the city's only skyscraper. As if I should have known: there were twenty, not one. But I couldn't remember. Three decades later, when I returned to my city, visiting the murals would be a pilgrimage.

Alice was big. She was crazy. She had a husband. He was a professor, you know. And children. Her work was just beginning to be noticed. She painted those murals. Then Alice and Jack separated. They came apart. He came apart. Nothing much was said. His sadness and her anxiety were noted. A silence grew.

Alice was sick. She was very sick for a while, and when my mother visited her in the hospital she said "I don't eat anymore." But later no one knew exactly what Alice's sickness should be called. They couldn't find "anything wrong." "There's nothing wrong," they said. "It's all in her head . . . psychological . . . you know how women are . . ." And Alice went home, felt better, walked through her house with those long strides of hers, picking up a child, pointing out a slash of color, the contour of a clay pot.

Then Alice was dead.

Alice died swiftly. Did someone find her? Someone must have. Was there surprise? Was there another story, crouching behind the first? No one said suicide, but the word hung in the air, displaced. No one mentioned the name of an illness. Her illness had no name. No one pronounced a syllable, a word, there were no answered questions. The children disappeared. They must have gone with their father. Once, several years later in Mexico City, he appeared on our doorstep. I came from the market to find him sitting there, head down, his sorrow like a blanket. Over two or three days: a half dozen words.

Alice began to visit me then. Over these years she has spoken to me of necessary space. When the angry demands of men close in, threatening to leave me without room for words or images, Alice appears, looking straight into my eyes. However I turn my head, she meets my gaze. Her large hand always palm-open, signalling. She makes me look at my work, at the space it occupies.

In 1984 when I returned to Albuquerque, I wanted to visit the murals. I had never seen them complete. After initial weeks, in which I could go nowhere, I began driving past the building—now one of many such high rise structures standing for progress, for change.

One day, almost a year after I arrived, a friend and I talked as we drove. I looked up. There it was. We had time, why not? And I turned the car into the parking lot, explaining as we almost ran, entering the space, pushing the glass doors, asking about the murals.

"What murals?"

All the walls were office-gray. Nobody seemed to know. "Not in this building," one smiling secretary after another told us as we went from floor to floor. I unwilling to give up, not ready to say this did not happen, it is a dream, something imagined into memory.

Then on the fifth floor, the suggestion we go to the seventh. "The receptionist there has been here longer than the rest of us. She might remember." Up we went. And she did. "Yes, they were beautiful," she agreed. "It was a real shame when they painted them over. They were peeling, you know, flaking . . ." By way of explanation. "They needed repair . . ."

This is how they repaired Alice's murals: they erased them completely.

I went, then, numb into the elevator, out the glass doors, slowly back across the parking lot, wondering if there was a way in which Alice's brush strokes might still inhabit that space, still visit the receptionists mix-and-matched on twenty floors. I wondered if the language of art can remain as a person does: presence and visitation.

Alice comes to me regularly now. Sometimes the folds of her white cotton blouse just graze the corners of my mouth when I rise before dawn to write or work in the darkroom. I smell her freshness beyond inks and chemicals. The odor of wet crackers Senlin, Gracie or Carlos trailed as they laughed and ran.

Now I must tell a second story.

In the Albuquerque to which I returned in 1984, homeless people claim a space as they do across this country; a wandering, shifting, growing group of men and women for whom a roof, a job, "adjustment to society," are no longer givens but pieces of memory that have broken and fallen between the cracks.

On Central Avenue, along the few blocks that border the university, some of the homeless have become permanent fixtures: living from handout to handout, taking small shelter in doorways, foraging for scraps of food in the garbage bins behind El Patio or Pizza Hut.

One of these was The Rag Man. Some called him, simply, Rags. Ageless as so many who shun ambition are, he possessed three qualities that set him apart. He was more than repulsively dirty. He was more than commonly angry. And he enjoyed being given some item or other which he would carefully pin to his tattered clothing. He liked bright colors especially, and often a student or someone in the neighborhood would present him with a cluster of ribbons, a strand of bright yarn, a bit of tinsel, a feather.

Rags sometimes walked up close to people, threatening our composure with his sour breath or the sting of his eyes. His words particularly pierced the carefully protected cleanliness of our determined forward-motion. He would suddenly be there, close to a face, spewing a barrage of crude obscenities. Later, someone would remember: "Sometimes he could be the meanest bastard . . ." Rags was angry. Through the breakdown of conventional propriety, his anger seemed the one thing holding him together.

And so The Rag Man inspired fear in people. Some tended boundaries, tried to avoid allowing him too close. Some made a public point of dealing with his conduct. There was the winter he crawled beneath a second-hand shop called The Birdsong and lit a fire to keep warm. The place nearly went up in flames. A young woman student of mine once turned in a story she'd written about her relationship with Rags. She recounted a real or imagined afternoon on which she had invited him to her home, conversed with him at her table, offered him lunch.

I don't remember exactly when Rags began sleeping out in the small parking alley behind my brother's bookstore. It took getting used to the image to be able

to distinguish the man's lean body wrapped in a dirty blanket or covered with scraps of cardboard. Then someone discarded a sofa, its stuffings running out through slits and sores in worn upholstery. Rags slept on the sofa, and he could be seen there dreaming through days as well as nights. The angry outbursts close up in the face of a passer-by became less frequent. Maybe the man was tired.

And then The Rag Man was murdered.

It might have been for his money. Local lore had it his family kept him in small cash, perhaps paying him to stay away. He didn't beg, yet rarely lacked for coins. It might have been a message from area merchants, to try to clear the neighborhood of homeless people. There was conjecture. Perhaps someone robbed him while he slept, beat or stabbed him, then soaked the body in gasoline and set it on fire. Or maybe someone set him on fire without looking for cash. Just for something to do.

The flames raged at three or four one morning. No one expects the police investigation to offer answers. But the people are speaking their own language of caring. Two or three, sometimes more, come to linger where the flames rose. Flowers, cigarettes, notes, poems, appear on the spot where Rags was killed. Crosses and messages have been painted on the blackened wall. One poem signed by Kippa D. (age 15) says: "... I envy you raggedy man / your will to live another day . . ." One night this altar too goes up in flames. The next day it reappears.

But it is the published obituary that quickens memory in my eyes, once again wets my lips in longing then throws me to my feet. For it tells me The Rag Man was Alice Garver's youngest son, Carlos. He was 34. Survived, the papers say, by a brother in Alameda, California. A married sister in Albuquerque. "Carlos Garver was the son of Alice M. Garver, a painter specializing in Southwestern murals who died in 1966, and Jack Garver, a painter and sculptor who died last year."

Carlos' sister Grace McCoy speaks through the lines of the daily: "He was very imaginative, very creative, a very likable guy. He was very artistic. He loved to write. One of his hopes when I last spoke to him was to get a garage or a little room so he could draw. He still had it in him." The article went on to say that Carlos was strung out on drugs from the age of 15, that he'd been on the streets since 1973. He had been treated at several mental institutions and his father tried to get him committed. But his sister Grace explained, "He would walk away, he would leave whenever it cramped his style."

The third story would have to be a question.

Would I find the answer if Alice appeared right now, if I could ask her about her own beginnings? How it was in her childhood, what passed as tenderness or rage between her own mother and father? How food was set out, or not, upon their early table? What flesh touched flesh, and how? Where the dark places on her way to school cried out, how they might have held her wrist or emptied her eyes of song?

How did Alice choose Jack, and Jack Alice? Could she know her longings then? Were they forced to write the ritual of blood upon their sheets? Where did form and color stumble, fall, then pull themselves upright, growing against the

tender side of skin? What happened to the art undone because of Senlin, because of Grace, because of Carlos? Or, put another way, which pictures belong to each of them? Was Senlin's canvas sold for money or for love? Did Alice offer the etchings made in Grace's name to a friend whose presence was unmentioned on her tongue? And what about Carlos?

I was fresh and muddled back then. I didn't really know if Alice and Jack belonged to my parents or to me. Sometimes I wondered, and my shoulders ached. My eyes learned to assume a serious knowing expression, I would nod my head thoughtfully, and avoid having to move through precise language when asked what I thought about a concept I didn't know or a name I'd never heard.

At twenty, knowing people like Alice and Jack, I had to begin halfway through a conversation among peers. They were eight or ten years older. It made a difference then. Today when she visits, Alice and I talk about these things. And I do not let the empty places bloat or gag in silence. Now I ask. I tell.

The third story would have to be question containing within itself another question which in turn holds another and another, each new wondering smaller than the one in which it lives, like the Dutch Cleanser figure with the can of Dutch Cleanser upon which an ever diminishing little girl figure in folkloric cap and wooden shoes offers yet another can of cleanser and another and another. Like Sandra Cisneros' eleven-year-old birthday experience, holding within it the ages of ten, nine, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one.

If I ask why Jack's Mexican voice did not rise above a whisper, I also need to know what Alice's eyes were fixed on when she died. If I walk the journey backwards from the fire that ended Carlos' angry life, I must wade through the unforgiving temperature of a winter dawn, bits of colored yarn, a sister's right to her own map, the place of art in a woman's hands.

Alice, I am afraid. Will my own unknotted threads trap my eyes, my mouth, tangle a detour before the finish-line appears? These three stories no longer own beginnings, mid-points, ends. They are about process, how things happen because some other unnamed something happened first, wherever we come or go without insisting upon our space, the right to own our hands.

HOME

SUSAN SHERMAN

No color. No sound. No movement. No thought.

The moment I realized what had happened, it was gone: like waking from a dream, but I was already awake, and the transition was instantaneous—if you can use the language of time in relation to something that is out of time.

It was in the spring of 1965. I was absorbed in writing. Several things were coalescing in my mind. I had just finished reading *Answer to Job*, Jung's analysis of the psychological development of God in which he sees, as does Rilke, the world as a representation of God in the process of "becoming." I was intent on the paradox evoked by this idea: "How is it possible for something to be complete, and in the process of completion at the same time?" when one afternoon, while reading what I thought was totally unrelated material, I was literally thrown into the answer to my question. For an instant, I actually *experienced* time moving differently.

I was certain of only one thing: it was no illusion, no hallucination—my experience was real.

When I thought about it later the only thing I could say by way of explanation was that there exists a parallel sense of time in which we are heading toward a past yet to happen, while the future is behind us, already set—this parallel time running simultaneously with time as we ordinarily perceive it. Therefore all time *is* literally contained in every present moment; but even more, the present, being made up of future and past moments, has no meaning without both. I began to understand the use of paradox in religion, in Zen koans, and even in philosophical and Marxist dialectics: to draw students into a place where their questions can be answered only through direct experience.

I also understood something from that experience I hold to even more firmly now. Experience which comes from such an occurrence is *raw* experience, without moral, philosophical or religious content. I am convinced such experiences are neutral and, in isolation, only prove themselves. I really don't *know* what my experience meant, I could only speculate on it after the fact from who I am, where I was at.

When I tried to recount what had happened to me later that same evening to a friend, I started to shake and cry uncontrollably. For years that experience was a constant source of frustration to me. I tried to replicate it and couldn't. I was afraid to talk about it to anyone, afraid they would misinterpret what had happened—if they believed it at all. After awhile it began to fade. Two years later, in 1967, I would travel to Cuba and the experiences I would have there, however different, would in many ways parallel this one. Turn me around and be battered too, if from other directions. As love had done to me also, when it finally came, when I was up to its demands.

I start with this particular experience because it changed my way of perceiving the world, because it is something I want to reach back toward, to fix in memory, to find again. As I would so many other experiences that shaped and will shape my life. That fade so easily in our society—a society which invalidates our idealism and memory, that affirms only the present moment, disembodied, without context, without history, denying us in the process our future along with our past.

One : Return

There is no such thing as an unnoticed event, a trivial subject. Only mountains are large, the sea. Things that have no consciousness, conscience, are not human. Our lives are made up mostly of an accumulation of small incidents: the crowded supermarket on a Saturday afternoon, a baby crying at three o'clock in the morning in an upstairs apartment, people marching miles on dirty New York streets protesting an unjust war, the touch of a lover's hand. Seemingly different, each one alone, a detail, but taken together an event with major importance, turning history in new directions.

During the summer of 1976, one month before I would turn thirty-seven, I made my way to Los Angeles, to the place I had once called home. After fifteen years of absence, I felt strong enough finally to face what had borne me, the place that had shamed and nurtured and frightened me both into silence and into words.

Los Angeles. "City of the Angeles." In the forties, fifties, with its trappings of glamour, its obsession with plastic and what is large, it had seemed to represent the future—America's as well as mine. But now even that was gone. It was calm, flat, with the dullness of a person grown old in emptiness, with money but without resources, imagination, wonder.

Memories flood my mind. Doors. Opening in/out. In one place, gray, shabby. In another, enameled, polished, without blemish, human presence, the trace of a human hand. Feeling, no, knowing somehow if they knew my thoughts, sensed me, what I really was, what I was about to become, they would take me from my life, lock me up as I had locked them out.

And then emerging, slowly, almost without consciousness, into other places, another life: Berkeley, London, New York, Cuba, Chile, Barcelona, Nicaragua. Rooted in another way—not in places now, but people, a person, my person. As people change differently than buildings, cities, avenues. Something remaining, always with us, providing continuity, understanding, depth.

Not the stuff of philosophy, of "higher thought," logic, the mind? To the contrary, the very stuff of philosophy, poetry, change. The white hair of my mother finally allowed at seventy to gray. The bent figure of my step-father thinned in his sickness of body and mind. Built, not on words alone, but on the violence of action and years.

On the face of it, returning home was a simple task, a matter of steps. Walking across a threshold, into a room. But it had taken me more than a decade to prepare for it. A young woman going through the Mexico City airport, destination Havana, 1968. Sweat pouring down my neck. Fear—and heat. 1961. Nights of terror on New York streets. Buildings dimming in and out of focus.

Waking in the middle of the night. Dizzy. Sick. Anything for the sound of just one human voice to pull myself back by. Just one human voice saying, "Susan." Calling my name.

But even those events were simple compared to this one uncomplicated task—to put one foot in front of the other and slowly cross a plain wooden threshold and look two old people, my parents, in the face.

Not the stuff of philosophy? Yes, the very stuff of philosophy. The cut green grass, razor sharp, seemingly endless, yet only ten square feet. The apartment, clean, ordered, showing signs of decay. Not in age—everything new, spotless, the multitude of painted flowers over the white brick fireplace, the seven potted plants each in their own particular space: the arrangement of ashtray (silver), cigarette lighter (silver), picture frame (silver), on a black enameled table. Not in age, in meaning. Everything rising to and resting finally, rootless, on the surface. A house resting on the surface of things, tied to nothing, growing old. As we all grow old, begin to resemble more and more ourselves, become more and more ourselves—whoever we might be.

My parents were immigrants, children of immigrants. My mother the youngest in her family, the only one born in the United States. My stepfather born in Russia in 1905, coming here at the age of eight. Jews, fleeing from Russia, Poland, the pogroms, the army. My uncle buried for three days under a pile of corpses, crazed with pain and fear, afraid to breathe, to show life. My father, my mother, my uncle. The old transplanted. Their enemies now reborn in them, until they became caricatures, finally, of much of what they had tried so desperately to escape.

There is nothing on this earth with one meaning only, one way of approach, one point of view. We do not exist as "one," even to ourselves. We are, each one of us, a community, collective, a set of relationships, a world. A world that must reach out to other worlds or else, in its turn, oppress and decay.

Contradiction is defined in *Webster's Dictionary* as a "statement in opposition to another; denial." "... a condition in which things tend to be contrary to each other; inconsistency; discrepancy," "a statement that contradicts itself." In Aristotelian logic, self-contradiction is not allowable, a statement cannot be both itself and its opposite at the same time—both A and not A.

In life, however, this is not the case.

If my parents had not come to this country, they would both long ago have been killed, and I would never have been born. It was their effort that bought me my education, cleared for me my space. These are not easy sentences to write, knowing this, knowing their struggle. Things are not one, not simple, in motion. Driven, in fact, into motion by the very contradictions we hold within us, as people, as a society, as a nation. Subject always to the laws of change.

What drives us forward. What holds us in place.

But motion does not mean just a change in place. Contradiction is also the opposition of things at the *same* time, in the *same* space. Holding multiplicity in suspension. As I tried once to hold my mother, as she could no longer hold me.

As I finally turned away.

What moves a person, a people, a nation: In 1939, six weeks after I was born, Germany attacks Poland. On September 3rd, Britain and France declare war. I don't remember what happened those first years, I was too young. The real effects would come later for me—circled in warnings, cloaked in advice.

Watch your accent, how you speak. Watch your inflection, the emotion in your words, your hands. Your walk. Watch the way you walk. At their center, they will always hate you. In moments of intimacy, it will always be there. You are Jewish, a woman. Be invisible. What you do can turn back on your family, a whole people. Don't stand out. Don't draw attention to yourself. Hide. Hide. Hide. . .

Violence. And fear. It is 1945. My family is gathered around an old radio that takes up at least an eighth of the room. There is tremendous excitement. I am six years old. We hear a minute by minute report of the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Afterward I am sent to describe the event to my older sister who has the measles, with the double-purpose of also exposing myself to the disease. That was the way of it then—"getting rid of it while young." Both events take on equal importance.

They are treated the same.

For most of my early years I felt caught between two worlds: two mothers, two fathers, two religions. But perhaps that is a primary motivation to express oneself through art. The feeling, not of alienation, but of not fitting securely in any one position. Because our expectations become somehow different. The hardest things to get past—expectation, need. As we always pick up the threads of what supports our own theories, beliefs, options.

It was after my trip to Cuba in 1967, I think I began for the first time to recognize a real alternative, the tangible existence of other people, the possibility of lasting change. Not that I had not already begun to gather myself in, to find a different space, first in Berkeley and then in New York, but understanding that new place as preparation really for this discovery—what it meant to struggle together with other people, *with people different from myself*, to change, not only myself, the circumstance and people connected with my own life, but the world around me. To change it with and for other people. It is the necessity of that lesson that sinks in ever more deeply, that rises in flashes, brilliant and then gone. Changing but consistent. Providing continuity, understanding, depth.

So my search was not there, in my parents' house, no longer my home, in that room empty of everything except memories, but in my own being, the cells of my own body, my own mind. The threshold which takes real courage to cross—from oneself to the other. Not in retreat, barricaded, but going forward, recapturing meaning, wresting it from the violence that conceals it.

The outward appearance. The inner reality. Inside the body of a small child, inside the body of a nation, a seed had been planted and was waiting to be born.

Unlike Los Angeles, Berkeley was a place I approached with love, not fear. I looked forward, after seventeen years, to once again walking streets that had changed so much of my life, of revisiting places in which I had moved, had grown. I saw myself sitting in favorite cafes, movie theaters, one particular spot on the wide university lawns, a remembering surrounded by detail—sights, smells, sounds. A tangible reconstruction of the past.

And I remembered nothing. Recognized nothing. Was familiar with nothing. Was thrown into a strange, an alien place. The magic in my memory alone. The rest gone cold for me. The years gone cold.

If by some miracle I were to suddenly, mysteriously, confront myself seventeen years ago, walking down those streets, is it possible I would not have recognized, been familiar to myself? That I would be an absolute stranger to myself as I was then; in the same way that self might not recognize me as I am today.

And, if so, how can I write about what took place so many years ago? How can I paint an image of what *I* was, much less describe the people, the events that helped shape what I am today?

But fortunately people, events are not places—less solid, they are also more sure. That is why the necessity to write it out becomes even greater, in spite of the limitations of memory, the propensity of memory to bring everything up to date.

So I will start with Berkeley, the time that was most important to me. I will try to find that double, that “other,” which was also me, try to set her down, set it straight. Before it dissolves completely, vanishes completely, past even the reconstruction of my imagination. Before even the memory, the fullness that remembers is gone.

Two : Arrival

To discover that the world you have known all your life, you have known since childhood, is not the only world. To discover that the people who surrounded you, their values, their ethics, are not the only values and ethics, is probably the most important discovery in a person's life, because it is to discover the possibility of not one, but many alternatives, it is to discover the possibility of choice.

Berkeley, 1959. As if everything had been a prelude to that, as if that was the point from which, in the future, I would go both forward and backward in time. As I became aware of sound, smell, touch, my own form and the form of the world around me. As my life began to take on meaning, a consciousness, a physicality missing before. As I began to slowly separate things out. Identify them. Give them names. As I began to identify myself. Name myself. Separate myself out finally from the world around me. Assume a posture mine alone. It was the first time I knew there was a way of life I wanted to be part of. The way you know the first time you are in love and no matter what you might have once thought to the contrary, you have never been in love before.

And so, in a very real way, I was born in Berkeley, California, 2478 Telegraph Avenue, in 1959, in a rented room (shared bathroom, shared kitchen, shared living room—at night another bedroom). A magic place to my uninitiated eyes, and even now, decades later, the traces of that magic remain. As if every fantasy I had ever had, transformed into a shape I had never considered, was coming to life. (Fantasies being based on our present reality, never on what we cannot know.) And the other world, the world of childhood, of Los Angeles in the 40s and 50s, simultaneously receding into the background and coming into focus, was beginning also to assume a shape I could recognize and finally start to understand.

Each important place in a person's life always seems to relate to one special sense, has something unique you can identify and remember it by. In Berkeley it was smell: the smell of Eucalyptus after dark—a night scent carried by a night breeze. If you could, for a moment, imagine the aroma of a real Mexican flauta (chicken or cheese wrapped with tortilla, delicately fried, smeared with guacamole and sour cream, take out 40¢) eaten with a pint of beer for dinner while sitting in an old, but large, kitchen with a stove built in 1919—a brass plate attesting to its age on the oven door. If you could crunch your meal between your teeth—hiding it from Thornbranch, a cat so-named because as a kitten he was rescued from a paper bag a junkie had tied him in, swinging him round and round his head, so that for months whenever someone moved too close to him he jumped on them and clung like a thornbranch—kitten claws clutched into clothes, legs, whatever was exposed and close. If you could touch the hot burning streets in October—summer being mostly cool—or survive the months in winter when there was continual rain, the sky looking like an inverted gray bowl on the horizon. If you could do these things, then you might be able to sense the Berkeley of the late 50s and early 60s—even before the free speech movement—echoing to the brand new political organizing call of SLATE.

This was the Berkeley of poets, political activists, jazz musicians, students, and just hangers on. The Berkeley of revelation and division, of cheap wine and hamburgers and stolen food, of old movies (two shows a night and three on Sundays), of the House Un-American Activities Committee demonstrations, of bigotry and idealism, of violence always just beneath the surface, of first sex and first love—two very different events.

Of a history even then.

Across the bay in San Francisco, North Beach was crowded with people listening to the revival of an ancient tradition in poetry, spoken poetry, which had been left in the trail of the Beats and the “San Francisco Renaissance.” Because what Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso, what Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Robert Duncan had left behind them, what they had created around them was a world. A world you pressed against like a child presses against a candy store window, the way I had pressed my nose against the window of an old Cafe in Berkeley the year before and had wanted and been afraid to and then finally, tentatively, entered, to find I had entered a place of birth like the glass mirrors in a fun house, always leading forward, a series of windows really, a new kind of space.

Because poetry, because art, is a way of life opening into other ways of life, with its own rules, its own set of directions, its own set of traps.

A friend of mine told me at the time, when I was worried about my own poetry, trying to find a new style, a new way of speech, I could never change my poetry unless I changed myself. Skill must be learned, a knowledge of language, of words, of form must be reached, but form not only shapes the content the life of the artist gives it, it also grows out of the content—the life—of the artist. Because the whole search in the '50s and early '60s was a search for new forms, for new ways of seeing and feeling.

Even though she came to Berkeley in 1957, it was not until two years later things really began to change for her. She remembered her first impression of Berkeley the day she arrived. Everything seemed so small, as if she had been thrown back to her recognition at the age of ten of physically changing size. Coming home after a summer away and finding things mysteriously smaller: familiar things like a favorite book, a placemat, a milk bottle. But now it was different, it was houses and streets, cars and people that seemed to have shrunk in size. A second recognition, this time at 18—of growing at the expense of things outside.

"Stop for a minute will you, I want to get out of the car."

Suddenly she seemed suffocated, as if the buildings on each side of her were walls which would momentarily start closing in. She felt panicked. She didn't want to go home, had nowhere else to go, but if she didn't get out of the car—immediately—she felt she would burst.

"What's the matter with you? We're going to be late."

The voice coming from the front seat of the car seemed disembodied, urgent. It only magnified her sensation of dislocation, of needing to be outside, to stand outside, quietly, for a moment, to establish her space.

"Please, just for a minute."

The car slammed to a stop. The driver obviously afraid she was going to be sick.

She got out, looked around. There is nothing worse than a strange city, where you know no one, have no roadmarks to hang on to, no favorite street where you know each turn, which leads with total predictability in any direction you choose to go.

Berkeley. What had driven her here anyway? She couldn't get into Stanford. Everyone knew they had a quota on Jews and besides her parents would have never put up the tuition. Not for one of "the girls." Even though, as it turned out, she would be the only one of her family to finish college. So here she stood in this strange place—not too far, but just far enough away from home. Little knowing just how far away it would finally become. She wrinkled her nose absently, a bad habit she had when disturbed, and stood there, frozen.

"What is the matter with you anyway?" Concerned, but annoyed. "We'll be at the hotel in a few minutes. If you're not going to be sick, please get back into the car."

By 1959, the city had assumed normal proportions. She had fitted herself comfortably into her new surroundings—her now magical place—this old gray room with the gray wooden door and the big bay window where she set her bed, jamming it carefully against three large window panes overlooking the street, the very place which a decade later would become an anti-war center, first destroyed by a bomb and then later, and with much more finality, by a wrecking truck. To be turned into a parking lot, where, on Sundays, peddlers gather to sell beads and moccasins, pottery and tofu pies.

The building had a reputation. It was a place where artists lived. The de facto building managers, two painters from New York, lived down the hall. She could not understand until years later when she moved to New York herself why they had three locks on their door, which were carefully checked every time they left the house. Not only didn't she have locks on her own door, most of the time it was just left open.

2478 Telegraph Avenue—four "apartments" on the second floor, four on the third. The first floor was occupied by a grocery store. Her own room was in a two room complex bordering a larger kitchen which she, Diane Wakoski and LaMonte Young shared with the occupants—two of them—of a small room room in the front of the building. Max and his wife—whose name she never did know. They were very private, almost never left their room and were more like rumors than real people.

I try to recall her. This Susan of almost thirty years ago. Try to conjure up her face in my mind. I find myself as frozen as she was so long ago, looking around her at new streets, new people, smelling new smells, feeling a whole new kind of air striking at the surfaces of her skin. I look into my mirror, turning my own face from side to side, but it doesn't help, is a distraction really. Of course, she would resemble me, *being* me—at however young an age. But resemblance means nothing. A lesson I learned the hard way, returning to Berkeley after all those years to find it alien, even though outwardly it still looked pretty much the same.

I pick up a photograph of myself from that time. How conventionally we dressed, even as rebels, in relationship to the way we, all of us, dress today. I am wearing a skirt in the photo, have short brown hair, am sitting on a wide wooden table. My face looks so young to me, younger even than the twenty years it reflects. I reach toward it, touch it, as if to reach toward myself, as if to physically hold myself, those evenings—why is it always the evenings I remember best?

Poetry readings at night in a darkened apartment, a candle passed from poet to poet as we took our turns to read. Waiting in line for the one communal bathroom down the hall—that never seemed to bother me then, there was always another upstairs. A row of empty wine bottles, blue and white ceramic, converted into candlesticks, lining the borders of the walls. The dozens of men I slept with as part of the “sexual revolution.” Those nights rising from a strange man's bed, seeing a pair of strange shoes, underclothes, on the floor beside my own. Or sometimes at dawn, dressing and leaving quietly before they could wake up—most often I had never even been asleep. Walking the empty streets to my own bed. My own place. Feeling a loneliness I had never experienced before, have never experienced since.

I often think years are not cumulative, somehow they are passed one after the other, like steps: in order to advance to the next, it being necessary to leave the last behind. This is why it is crucial now, at forty-nine, for me to reach across the years, to somehow communicate with that young woman, that self, who was once me. To make that connection. Not that I would want to send her advice, or even warn her—if that would somehow miraculously be possible. What good would it do and what alternative could I even now recommend? But to provide a security she could sense, a private place in herself she could turn to. Or perhaps it is really I who am looking for something from her. Something I have forgotten only she can tell me, only she can make me understand.

Those years in Berkeley she often had the sense of having been dropped into another universe. The way you feel almost always traveling to a foreign place—never believing you are going, never believing you are there, and when you return never believing you had gone. Constantly and secretly staring at small treasures you picked up along the way just to convince yourself, yes, you really were there. The feeling of being slightly out of contact, slightly out of touch. Although she had sometimes felt that in Los Angeles, at least in the early years, it didn't seem an unusual way to feel about Berkeley, which was after all a trip to unfamiliar territory. A world where people talked about dragons and witches, read Tarot cards, and lived the unknown and the unseen. It felt okay for her to be an observer there, as natural as it had felt unnatural at home, a place where you were, after all, supposed to belong.

She had often felt—at least from the time she consciously could remember feeling anything, certainly from the age of five, when she left on that long journey across a continent to the West

Coast—she was an observer, secondary to the action taking place around her. It was the beginning of a realization which would come to her finally in New York: that being an artist often meant being literally two people—one constantly scrutinizing and commenting on the other. An almost schizophrenic state. The silent monologue. The constant observation of living detail, including yourself.

At its worst this feeling of disassociation would manifest itself in the inability to communicate, to connect. In sitting to one side. As she had trained herself to do as a child, hoping finally no one would notice her—she could stay outside the chaos, violence, which was her home. A helpful habit until it leapt out of control: the aversion to being touched, the inability to speak.

She felt this often those first few months in the new home she shared with Diane and LaMonte, people who were virtual strangers to her then, but would become pivotal to everything that happened to her from there on in. The silence came not from fear now, but from newness, from just wanting to see and learn. Not that she felt completely comfortable—she felt conventional, ashamed of her innocence, “square.”

It bothered her for anyone to know at twenty she had never slept with a man, the acceptable condition for a “nice girl” where she came from, but not here, where people laughed and made jokes about “virgins.” Being a virgin became the symbol of everything representing the world she had come from, so desperately wanted to leave and could only leave by becoming a part of this new world she had so recently discovered. The way you can sometimes eradicate the pain of a lost lover only by finding a new one.

Though often only a temporary solution, one that works.

So at an ordinary party on an ordinary night no more than two weeks after she had moved into Telegraph Avenue, no more than three months after her twentieth birthday, she decided to act. It was a warm night; everything seemed stuck together. Even the people at the party seemed somehow glued to each other, unable to come apart. She found this reassuring, it made her feel secure. She chose a teaching assistant in economics, a tall man, probably over six foot four. She liked tall men, although later she would joke that picking out one this big as her first lover was probably a mistake. She had a couple of drinks. Vodka. First with Ginger Ale and then straight. She decided before the night was out she would no longer be embarrassed by her inexperience, no longer unknowingly be the butt of jokes and snide remarks.

She walked over to him quietly, initiated a conversation; they began to dance. Before a half hour was out, they were kissing passionately on the couch, and she made her final decision to take him home. All she had was a cot, she hadn't had a chance yet to buy a bed; it would have to do. As they were going up the stairs to her room, she informed him she had never slept with a man before.

He stopped, looked a little startled. She was surprised how unemotional she felt. How removed. She had been far more nervous about far less important things.

“If you would prefer not to come up? Is it alright?”

“Oh, no, not at all. You just startled me.” He was obviously delighted. “Although you really should be more careful. You never know who you could run into at a party like that.”

“You're lucky it was me.”

They went into her room, undressed, and he proceeded to perform with all the skill of a fledgling academic, accompanying each step with a comprehensive lecture on how a condom was properly fitted (at least a half inch of empty space had to be left at the top), why it was essential for it to be used correctly, finally climbing on top of her with little effort and little grace. She had never seen a man naked before, not at home, where intimate moments of any

kind were unknown, and hardly had a chance to see one then. It all seemed to happen so fast. There was no fear, just a kind of bewilderment, and then a few moments of really intense pain.

"Am I hurting you? I'm sorry, just hold on. It will be over soon."

He got off her, switched her to her side, explained this was another "popular position," was sometimes more comfortable, and proceeded to go through the motions again. It hurt less this time, although she was beginning to feel quite sore, and when he left she was glad to see him go, grateful he "couldn't spend the night." She was tired and needed to be alone and think.

When she went to the bathroom, she realized she was bleeding. She would continue to spot blood on and off for the next two days. She felt older, not unlike the first day she had started her period. Like she had passed through a certain rite. A ritual of blood. She was disappointed, but hadn't expected much really. Had oddly had no romantic notions after all. This night was just something she felt she had to do. She also learned something that night about sex, about herself, something she was to learn again and again even under very different circumstances. Between her and him now, at least for her, there was some kind of tie. Enough even though she really had no desire ever to sleep with him again, she felt genuinely betrayed when she learned, bumping into him accidentally one day on the street, he was married, and "couldn't see her again."

Sex became something quite different for her now. Before she had gotten very aroused, had almost always come to orgasm, through close contact or being touched. Now sex suddenly became more personal and impersonal at the same time, less sexual and involved with many other things.

She also enjoyed finding herself attractive to men. Having three or four or more of them constantly around courting her. Up to that point she had really considered herself a wallflower, not the kind of woman who was popular with men. It wasn't looks, she just didn't have the kind of sexuality, the flirtatiousness that appealed to the boys in high school or in her first two years in college. She had had dates, had gone steady, had actually at one point almost considered marriage, but she was pronounced too serious, too smart and told it would never work, "good-bye." Now, it seemed she had found men who liked her spirit, her brains, and, she had to be honest about it, the fact she was available and would sleep with them. She hardly ever went out with them more than a couple of times. Some of the more sensitive ones obviously felt the same way she had, felt some kind of lingering bond: a sentiment she now rarely returned, which she found made her even more desirable, more attractive to them. Most of them treated her well—there was a surprising amount of impotence—although some experiences were disagreeable and came very close to rape.

She slept with all of them. Finding that easier finally than saying no.

She had a recurring dream during those years which would continue to haunt her. She dreamt she was paralyzed, rigid—awake but unable to move or speak. She was convinced when she closed her eyes she could see through her eyelids, could note every detail of the room around her. She woke up many nights in the middle of the night, sweating, forcing herself awake. Afraid to return to that state of unconsciousness, of helplessness. Sometimes a voice intruded, sometimes laughter. More often it was just her, alone, in the night. She wondered if that was what death was like. Why so many people fear being buried alive.

Fear. Fear builds over years. I don't remember then really being afraid except in sleep. At least not of new things. Things for which I had no reference. There was memory of early years of asthma and croup. Hours trapped over an inhalator with a towel circling my head, the fumes still lingering in my brain. And of one warm summer night swimming in a country pond with a half-dozen friends when

one of them jumped on my back as I was coming up for air. The sensation of my lungs bursting, as I was pushed further and further below the surface. Every muscle and cell in my body straining, pushing, fighting. The final breaking through to the surface. The accompanying horror at what I had experienced. Barely able to take it in. Silenced, not relieved.

And fear of my father, of being assaulted by my father. Sleeping for one whole year in my early teens with a baseball bat by my side. Making sure I was never alone in the house. And later never going home for vacation if I could help it.

Until finally I never went home at all.

I see these echoes most in situations that frighten me now. Anything that has to do with losing my equilibrium. Fear of elevators and subways. Of bicycles and roller skates. Fear of losing contact. Of getting high. Of that sensation of choking, of not being able to breathe. The first time a woman tried to make love to me, I pushed her away. Even though no more than six months later I would look at a woman myself and want to make love. Perhaps fear is an indication of how deep something can reach inside you. Of where you are truly vulnerable.

What touches you most. What makes you afraid.

But for the moment most of these events were in her past. Now something had just begun. She thought to herself that night in early September, sitting alone in her room, staring at a small spot of blood on an empty cot where minutes before two bodies had lain: "I am here," she thought. "Finally, I have arrived."

"Home," the first chapter of a longer work-in-progress, will be included in The Color of the Heart: Selected Essays, Short Prose & Poems to be published by Curbstone Press, Fall 1990.

KATHY ENGEL

CONVERSATIONS WITH JACKIE

For my sister Jacqueline Jackson 4/89

you said

living in this country
is like living
with a man who beats you

each day the light grabs you awake
and you look at him in the bed you share
with that stark pit of love
way down in your belly
and groin
and for a second you see him
the way you would will him to be
the way you know he could be
if only
and you hope
and pray
he won't do it again

but he does
and he isn't
and they do

slap it right in our faces
year after year
week after week

testing our reac
tions
to see how rote
we might become
like motors

or tired, disjointed
marionettes

and so we gear up
again
choose our words
like swords
claim our tongue
and home

protecting
the child we bore from this
strange union

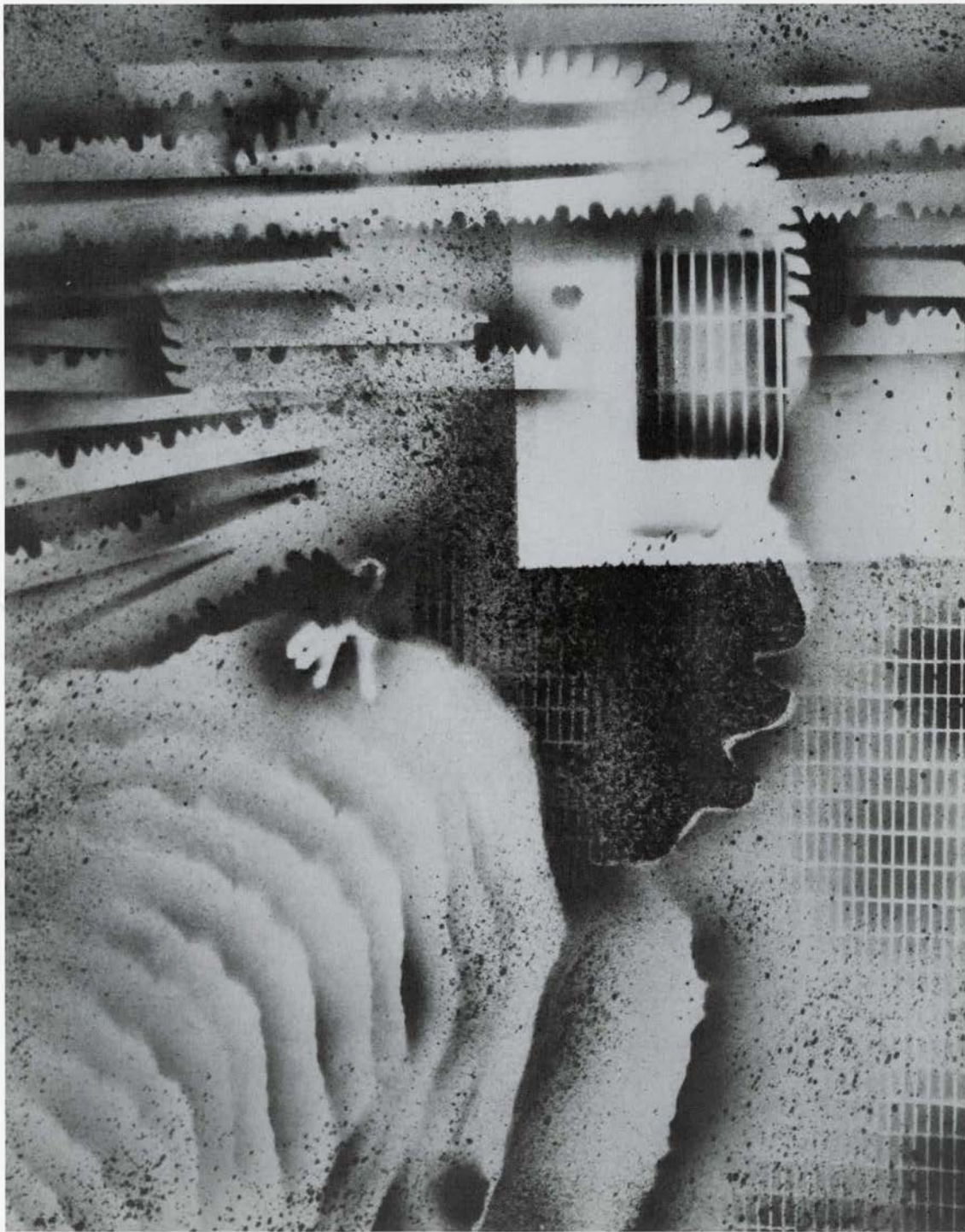
we cut the barbed wire
light the fire
lace our boots and smooth our stockings

and go out into the battlefield
to create
holding our tenderness
like a cloak.

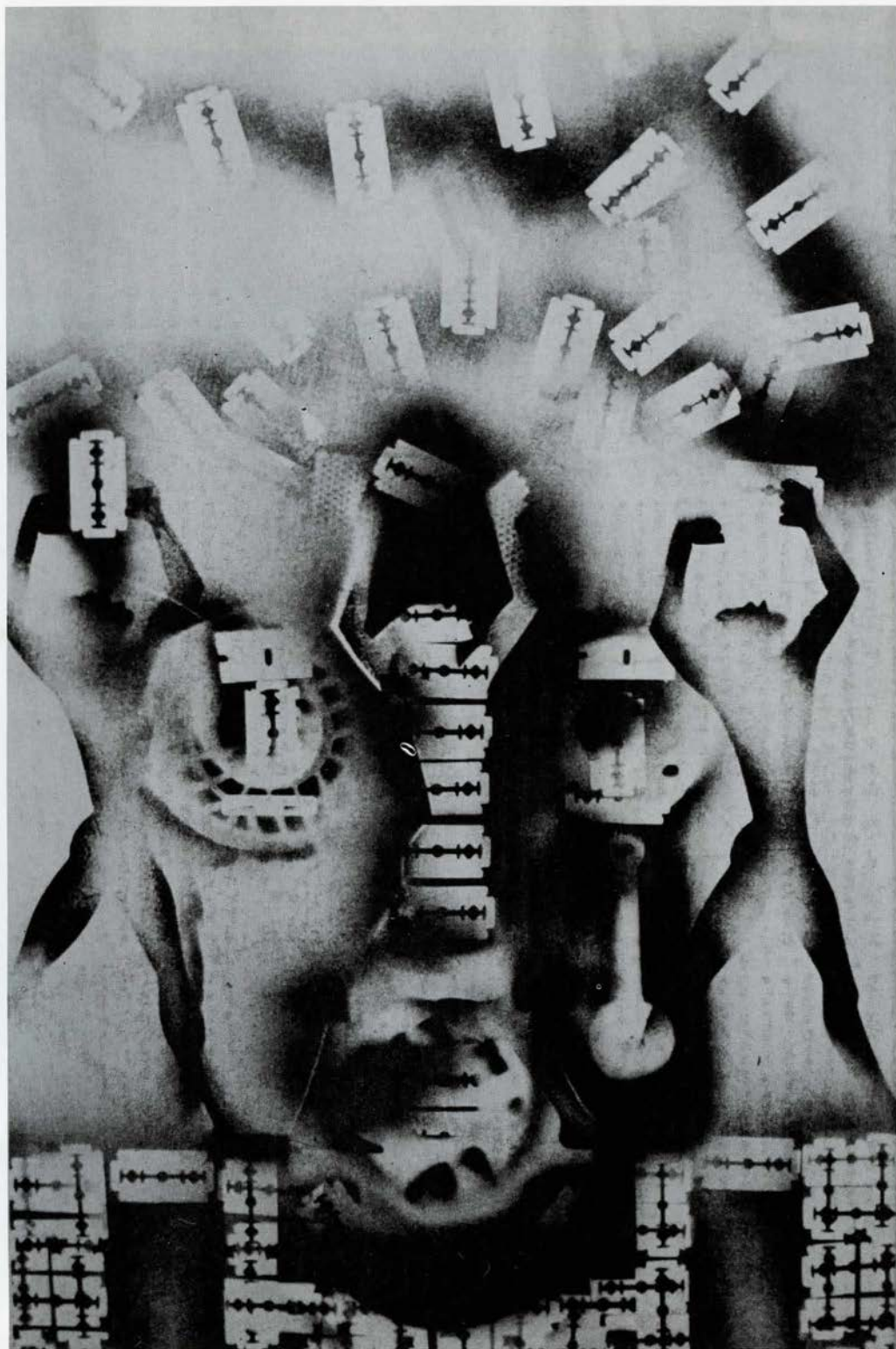
VALERIE MAYNARD

PAINTINGS

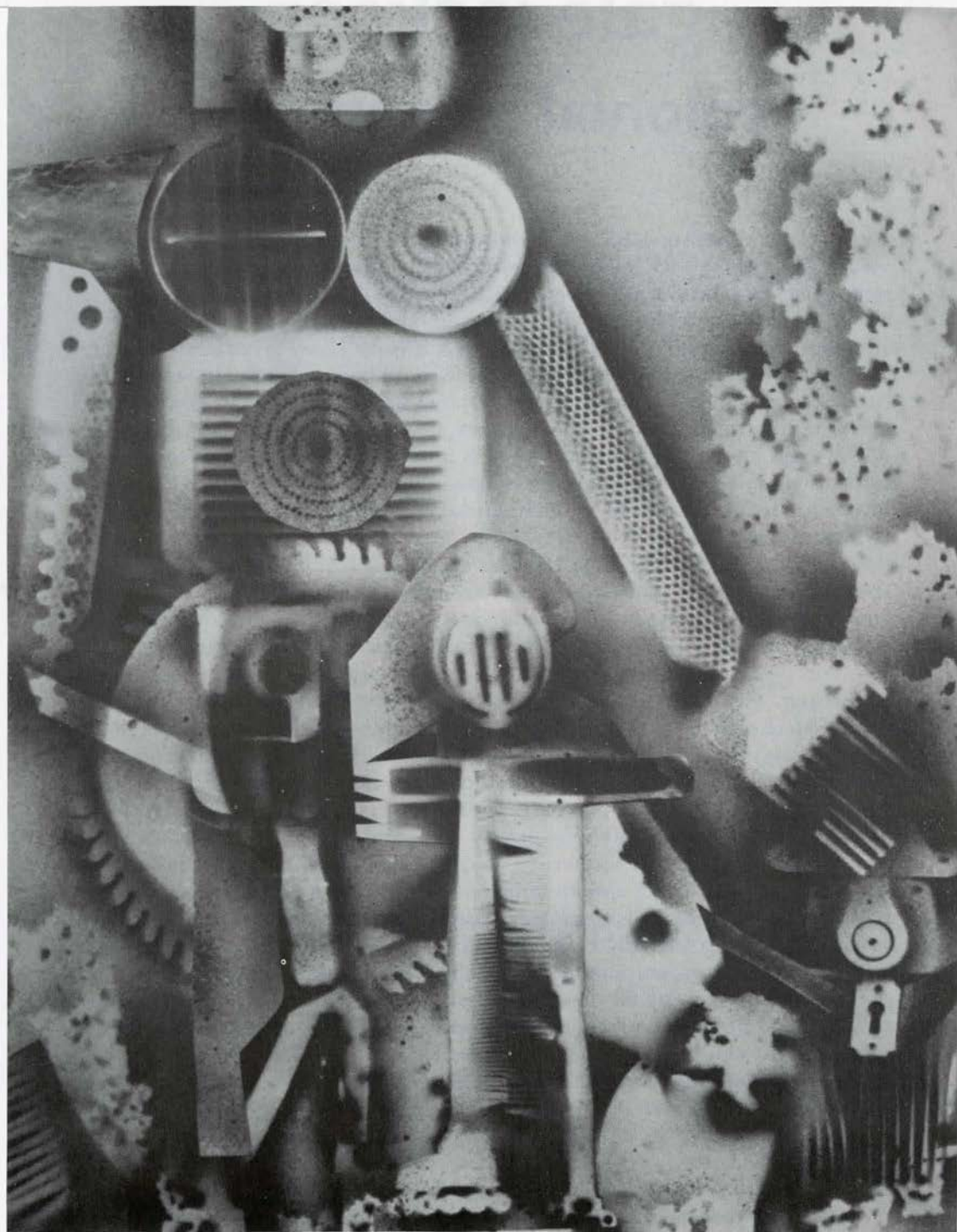
Throughout my career as an artist I have used my graphic works to voice my concern with injustices I have witnessed or become aware of. I started this series three years ago focusing on the conditions in South Africa. In the process I have realized the series concerns itself with tyranny, oppression, and apartheid wherever it exists on this planet.











gale jackson

colonial beginnings

1.

they said it was 1492 or 1493. one of those dates was the right answer. the teacher would point her stick, the hummingbirds would still, and you'd better remember. which one. there were endless dates. there were dates and time tables, time clocks, right, left, the names and reigns of kings and queens and the adventures of a bunch of children in lapland. it wasn't easy to remember. things learned by heart or by rote are the hardest to recall from a daydream. and i was a child occupied and daydreaming. a child among old women, strict young nuns, plastic covered chairs and wooden benches, maidenhair ferns and the droppings of wayward animals. grazing. and it was a childhood seen but unheard as we were taught to be then. a silence i was both fit and unfit for. all those words with no one to say them spilled in my child's head and left me daydreaming instead of recitation ready. "when?" she would ask, "was your country discovered?" and i'd daydream the dreams some ancestor seamstress had left in the air for me to spin. history was an exploded chest of calendars but someone had left out the hows and whys of things in a way names and numbers did not explain. for me the difference between left and right, for instance, seemed entirely arbitrary.

the days fell away there in the schoolyard in perfectly uniformed formations. the children in hundreds of straight lines restrained by the switch. the parish church at the center. the big school and the small tent school off to the right and beyond them a dormitory for orphans. in the back of the property a building where the sisters must, if they do, sleep. the day begins with their sure marching presence. but in comparison to the symmetrical march of days i am very small and quite simply engulfed by the omnipresent order that is not my own. deep blue. deep green. torrential flooding. black and white women swathed in the black black robes of a widow founder. part of me submitted to geography by remaining asleep there; landscaped in poinciana and impatiense flowers and awakened only occasionally by a teachers swift slaps. the slaps and straps that punctuate the day. across outstretched hands in the morning for bad manicure. in the head during the day for dim wittedness. on the afternoon's arms for folding them to sleep thru midday heat. across the mouth for being rude or speaking out of turn. i spoke well because i was from america and that speech was in colonial vogue. but i was lonely without the language of children. so i was quiet. so there was both refuge in silence then. over the river became an ocean. the woods a thick country bush. deep blue. deep green. torrential flooding. surrounded by hills. my grandmother's house was a yard of caged birds where i understood little of what was said. the schoolroom was just an extension of that place.

but some memories are full even without the words for them. on sundays we would return to the schoolyard for service. my grandmother would take my hand

and we'd walk over real earth towards the small squat church. the sun would warm. the smell of hibiscus was still wet with dew. crinoline itched around my legs, coins tied in a handkerchief were pinned to my blouse and i carried a small adult bible. a bible inscribed with my name in her hand. she holds my other hand. we walk over real earth towards the whitewashed walls made in the image of god's first man. windows cut into its sides. infinite long low pews inside where i yawn and stretch under the ceiling fans daydreaming at the wonder of the choir's one voice or the hummingbirds humming sweetly within the sound of my breath. the church is high and the church is deep and i watch breath and voice spiral thru its infinite crevices, out the window and into the sky; collecting themselves like dewdrops in treetops and mountainsides.

2.

i was a child and my mother was a young woman. she brought us back down to her mother's country and left us to make her fortune back up in america. she left promising to come back for us soon. these were not easy things. up and down. coming and going. i learned that then. when everyone who once was had picked up and gone. my father was walking up some endless street in america; his back growing smaller with the going. my mother brought us here and then was gone as well. and here, among the impatiense flowers and the old women; their backs stern and curved as the mountains, my grandfather was dying. in a room smelling faintly of antiseptics. ringing a bell at his bedside when he needed something. its chime among the poinciana and way beyond me. my father had gone up the street and was never returning. the bell ceased. my mother came and went again; so separate in her mourning. grieving, they left me on the stairs that morning. i could not go to the funeral because, they said, i had no shoes to wear and i was stunned to think that they had taken my shoes; in new york i had had so many shoes, to keep me from walking; up or down, away.

i walked in my sleep, following ghost paths, instead. kept, i longed for escape but did not know where to go. they say they never planned to leave me. they say i refused to be parted from my younger siblings. they said alot of things that which are probably less true technically then in spirit. the spirit is real. and my spirit walks. every dream i dream is a long sealined journey. my mother's dream. the soft stillness where fragrant breezes meet the dreamer on her way back home. where the dreamer sails off in a ship and then sails, triumphantly, back. the ghosts i see are, i imagine, the parts of people that will always be left.

because there are many kinds of journeys. and travelers who lose and find their way. they called that place home and the way they said it was so easy but home, i learned, requires a traveler's strength. it's a place you come to; both with and without what you've taken along the way. i brought my barbie doll from america, from the city. she was hatted and suited and carried in a pink plastic case. before long though it all came apart. first the shoes; mules and pumps and slippers too, then the tiny hangers which held her weeks of changes of clothes, the clothes, the combs and brushes one by one became gone. lost. taken. gone. and she was barbie and i was only a brown flesh and blood child in a pink and white checkered pinafore all alone in a sea of khaki green and catholic school blue uniform. like sara crew. or peter pan. many travels rolled into one.

3.

it was 1492 once and then it was 1493, i insisted but my grandmother wasn't having any ambivalence so i chose one and pretended to believe that. secretly i plotted. columbus was no indian's name, that much i knew so i asked the oldest black indian woman i knew when she had come here. she laughed and her parrot shrieked and i ran towards home and another punishment. what they wanted was smart by a rote in the heart and the consistent ability for recitation. that meant knowing bits and tricks (thirty days has september . . .) and having faith in the truth of them. only when you're grown do you understand the truth in the spirit of them. speak when you're spoken to. eat all the food you're given. keep your grades and panties up and mind whoever is kind enough to keep you until your mother comes (if she comes) to take you back to america.

would she or wouldn't she i asked the t.v. playing reruns of all the shows that in america i had already seen. the fugitive's long journey would, i knew then, end. his keepers like mine would be pious and mean. the white run world made them treat us so. their colonial gestures. slaps and straps and british discipline underneath such a hot sun. the teacher sweat hard under her habit and strangled on her own obedient heart. we children played and fought and lost our hats and were watched like fools and babies by a kinder kind of god. but we were in truth encircled by the hostile world that was adult.

the boy held his fists high against his chest and punched me. "lick 'im patti, lick 'im!" they urged me. they were excited. i was struck dumb. he raised his fists again; a miniature boxer, a fighting cock, and hit me once more. they punched me from behind. "lick 'im!" they cried. i could not believe that this was happening to me. no one ever hit me. i had been loved and protected not pushed. i usta love school. i cried and cried in frightened awe at this hostile and changed world and then, thinking it strange but sure that everything here was, i stuck out my tongue against my adversary.

4.

it was both 1492 and 1493 and another date for each and every plunder there were billions and trillions of secret dates before that that died with the people they killed then. the difference between "z" and "zed" was simply a play on historical memory. tourists have traded places with the pirates. the island is a sorceress made violent and angry and an adversary is, in truth, an enemy.

and home is someplace you can always return to. from the car window my mother remembers this neighborhood as better once. it has been thirty years since she came last and we left here together. the car winds up the mountain roads, thru the blue hills, to a place where my cousin will marry on strawberry hill. treacherous roads that the native drivers execute easily. and at the mountain top is the most peaceful garden you've ever seen. we sit at the long long tables draped in white crepe and i begin to daydream.

while the other boys observed the death throes of two partially bodied and caged lizards, he came thru the vines in pearls and white sequins. he had on lipstick. he was so beautiful. mindful of the fray he stood beside me watching.

where there had once been six only these two broken warriors were left standing having devoured and been wounded in turn by their opponents. like tiny dinosaurs they battled for room to roam until three fourths lizard snapped the head from one half lizard making the final kill. we squatted in amazement while the boys fashioned the quarter dead victor a crown of grass or thorns. andrew held a sweaty palm and we stayed so until nite closed over us thick and still and too beautiful for the eye. then, when we realized that it was nite, we ran each towards their own porch lite.

it was a trick. like poinciana. like naming a girl darling and leaving her to love too hard and suffer with an aching heart. what looks like down can be up here. the africans took one look at the shore and headed for the hills. poinciana. impatiense and hummingbirds. i'm grown up now and laughing in the wind. they'll fill your head with nonsense hoping you'll forget the important part of where you have been.

but it's ageless and in all directions and any star will lead you there if you dare to roam. at dusk and at dawn the shoreline bends into the mountain tops. gulls play against the sun. and i am the daughter of the mother traveler beside me on the mountain top. her promises and her brave traveler's heart. and i am the great granddaughter of a black woman, a school girl who once washed her clothes in the river, who caught a ship on this ocean and sailed away from her island home.

DIANE GLANCY

BROWN WOLF LEAVES THE RES

Brown Wolf leaves the reservation
every morning for school.
His round head seems to disappear
into his jacket. His cap sits
almost on his shoulders
as he waits for the ride
to school, no longer on the
reservation,
he goes to town. He is proud,
yet he seems to be all body and no
head like the large cat that
prowls Gramma Bolivar's yard.

We wake with solid eyes as
Brown Wolf runs for his ride.
He will be gone all day. We
stumble from our beds to the square
floor of the hogan.
I pump well-water for Bear,
who growls with animal sleep.

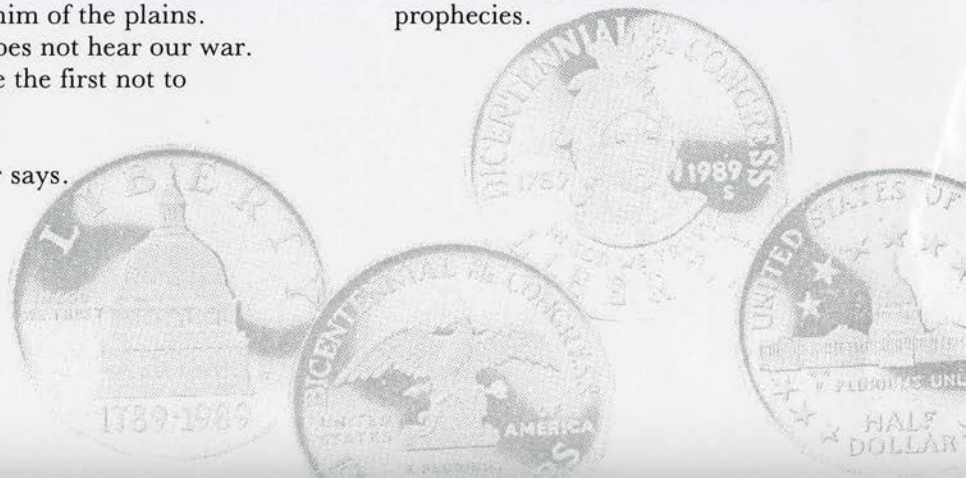
Brown Wolf does not know the transparent
animals of our day-break.
His head does not roar
with buffalo herds.
He does not see eyes raging with
lightning bolts.

When Bear is wild
Brown Wolf goes to Gramma Bolivar
and she talks to him of the plains.
He listens and does not hear our war.
Maybe he will be the first not to
hear:
"Our liberator,"
Gramma Bolivar says.

We do not have a round house with
roof-hole for smoke. Our
reservation hogan is square
with checkered curtains
from the mission store.
Bear leans his head on the table
where I put the fry bread to his mouth.
Saliva runs from a corner of his
lip. "Do not get sick," I say.
He tastes, eats,
already wants to return to Ghat's.

"Is Brown Wolf gone?" Bear asks.
"He is."
"I could not sleep for the pecking,"
Bear says. "Do you hear?"
I answer "Yes. I heard it first
in my mother's ear."
But Brown Wolf has not heard it yet.
Maybe he will be the one that
does not hear.
He has a far look in his eye.
He will be the one.

"Where did he come from?" They ask
and sometimes look at us.
But Brown Wolf is ours, the only one
born from the ancient longing
in our chest
and the string of Gramma Bolivar's
prophecies.



Bear hibernates in the morning light.
He rocks in the chair at the
corner of the hogan.
The space between us enlarges.
The child must not know.
"Your father is Bearchief." I tell
Brown Wolf.
All this so he will not hear the
animal war. When Brown Wolf is at school
Bear rocks in his corner,
sleeps when he can;
goes with migrant workers in the truck.

Undaunted.

He cannot drive because his license
is gone. The gravel of the
reservation road
sounds like woodpeckers anyway.
I must take him where he goes, or
Haman, the young Indian who likes to be
with Bear for the remnant of
his glory.

He wears the claw of the bear his
grandfather killed.
He remembers our days. But ki yee,
the woodpecker noise: already the
young man hears.
"Do not tell Brown Wolf." I say. "He will
know by his own ear or he will be the one
that does not hear."

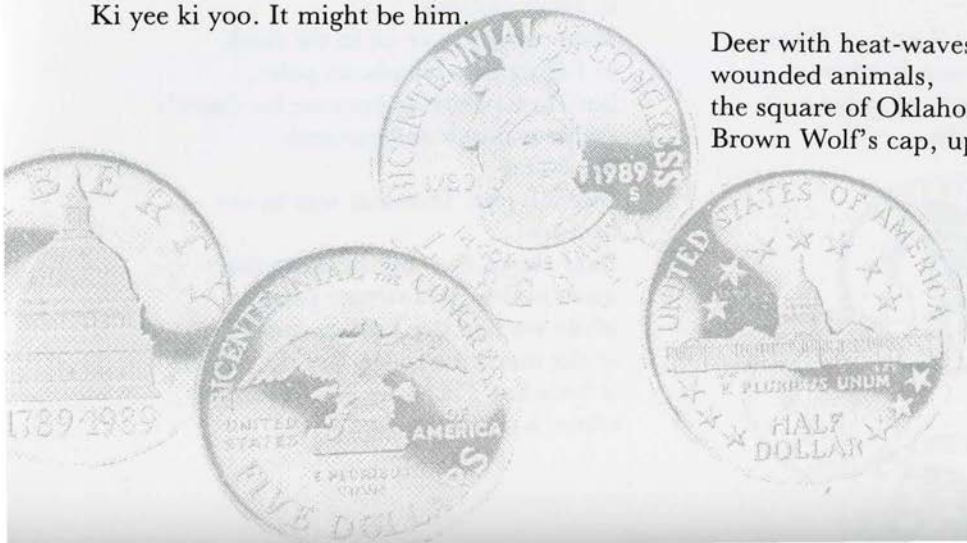
Ki yee ki yoo. It might be him.

I sweep the hogan and talk with
Gramma Bolivar. We make fry bread.
Her pickle-jars are water-glasses
and the kitchen smells like clove and
the grease of our cooking.
A black and white cat prowls the
overgrown yard, fights
brown pungent geranium leaves
she doesn't water
but waits for the water-witch, one
dry well of his already in her yard.

While Brown Wolf is at school
we drive the truck to the cemetery.
A one-mile arrow points
down the road
to a church passed by the highway.
Heavy smoke of field-grass fire,
small cemetery in an overgrown triangle
of land
where crossroads intersect.
I still have breath and cannot stop
where they did some time ago.
Undaunted.
I look for graves I cannot find.
We are scattered across the land,
only a part of people, but absolute.

Gunshot at the barn-back
where men shoot at wolves and crows.
Their noise cracks the sun.
Already they run to black-prairie
nights.

Deer with heat-waves for antlers
wounded animals,
the square of Oklahoma is like
Brown Wolf's cap, upside-down.



Bear is ready to leave when
Brown Wolf comes back from school.
He looks up at the men from his
shoulders.

"What is it?" He asks.

"Nothing, Brown Wolf. They shoot into
the air.

The water-witch yelps for a well
with his stick. It is nothing, Brown Wolf.
Go to Gramma Bolivar's. She has made
fry bread."

Already we hear black thunder from
as far north as Crazy Woman Creek.

Now in Oklahoma
Highway 33 Welch to Lenapah
full of immediate turns where someone
didn't want
the road going through his land the
highway west suddenly turns
south we pass a hill but usually we're
taller than anything
but telephone poles on the back-
prairie road.

We are taller than anything when we are
on the black and white floor at Ghat's.
Bigthan and Teresh at war in the
corner.

"Deer on fire with heat-wave antlers,"
they say.

We laugh and grace their table.

Come to us, Great Spirit, at Ghat's.
Hurry before the woodpeckers
leave holes in telephone poles and
we fall into the night.

Bless our water-glasses that are
not Gramma Boliver's pickle-jars
but another kind that makes
prairie wind
and herds of buffalo there are no wood-
peckers in your night and our
teepees
are round with smoke-holes,
campfires stroke the prairie,
hawks fly and the coyote howls, we hear
your breath, Great Spirit, and are one.

Haman drives us to our hogan when they
put us out of Ghat's
they say we tear up the place scare
people away.

"It is our Ghost Dance," Bearchief tells
them. "It is with the Great Spirit
we dance
and the large damp breath of buffalo
and he with the holes in his hands
dances with us
our feathers are straight and our ponies
neigh."

It is the Ghost Dance we ride
the fire tail at night the white deer
have heat-wave antlers
their breath sings
all breathing sings while Bearchief
hunts we have buffalo meat again.

The road is full of immediate turns
to catch Indians.

They would have us in the ditch
or falling into telephone poles,
but Haman drives because he doesn't
drink as much as Bear and
the others.

Bigthan and Teresh at war in the
backseat.

Bear sleeps they are hunting the
spirit realm for a winter camp
while women dry buffalo meat
at the medicine lodge and the prairie
is broad at Thermopolis, Wyoming
where a cousin moved.



Undaunted by woodpeckers into
telephone poles
we call our names to the night
with black hair like tornado funnels
we circle the blaze of our breath.
Yet we have always been,
though it doesn't mean we will always be.
Yet we are older
than I thought we'd ever get.

In the morning
lines of crows cross the early sun.
I wake with throbbing hands and
know it is Brown Wolf getting ready
for school.
There are waves of light coming into land
on wing-flight of crows.

Peck.

Brown Wolf holds his shirt-sleeve with
his hand but cannot get his fist through
the narrow sleeve of his jacket,
puts it on anyway
and reaches for the shirt sleeve
with cramped fingers.
"Does it do good to become drunk and
forget the prairie?" Brown Wolf asks.

"We do not forget the trail, but
remember, Brown Wolf.
When we drink the neon sun at Ghat's
it is like the one our ancestors
knew before the white and black man came
and made square floors
upon which we sweat salt waves."

"Grama Bolivar says the scepter
is held out for us."

The animals try to get to land and
crows on waves of marsh grass do not
cover the woodpecker noise.

Our car in the sluice makes a wet
monolith for our people.

"Where is Haman?" I ask Brown Wolf.
"Asleep on the front stoop by the
water-witch."
"Do you understand?"
"No."
"Maybe you will be the one that does not
understand," I tell Brown Wolf as his
cat-head falls into his shoulders.

The animal war,
passing telephone poles,
the black woodpecker nights.
His words are square as the letter
he sends to Thermopolis, Wyoming
with a stamp on the left side.
He eats figs, sour milk and fry bread.

Ki yip ki yee.
Haybales and bighorn sheep.
His letter square as Wyoming with
the geyser basin
like a stamp in the northwest corner.

"Do you hear it yet?"
"No."
"How can you not hear?"
"I do not hear," Brown Wolf gathers his
books.
"You must be the one that does not
hear."

I pump well-water for Bear
when he wakes from the woodpecker
noise.
What else is there to do as we break with
flying chairs for light?
Brown Wolf runs to his ride, shot-
crows screech and
the prowling cat runs in place
peck peck
undaunted by progress of woodpeckers
into poles
yet until then, we
the absolute.

MY MOTHER'S THIRD CALL ON A DAY OF SLEET AND DECEMBER FALLING

as if the whiteness was
gauze wrapped over the
mouth of someone dying
and she had to slash it
with a last word or
Monday was a blank
sheet of paper only my
words would cling to.
My mother, who lugged
suitcases with me in the
'78 blizzard when subways
broke in Brooklyn says
the wind crossing the
street wouldn't let
her breathe. I'm stand
ing with my hair dripping,
turning the quilt a darker
blue the water boiling
downstairs, thinking how
long it's been since I've
gone to visit her or
haven't told her I had
to rush but just let the
words between us wrap
us like the navy afghan
on the velvet couch with
the stain where the grey
cat peed and just drifted
in the closeness linked
as we once were as if
we always would be

DONNA

with rhinestones in the
drawer pointe shoes
wrapped in tissue paper
going from Gonzalez to
Jones marrying up,
working good pay in
the agency where poor
girls on the streets
come in, their skin a
map of tracks. On Wed
nesday her sister's
suddenly one of them
and the pap test is
weird, so with that
and the bleeding
they want to scrape
and punch and slice
and stain. She goes
to dance class, wishes
her neck was longer,
wants to turn and bend
so hard she won't hear
her heart thumping
as moon licks the
pillow

THE 85 YEAR OLD MOTHER GOING BACK TO RUSSIA

says goodbye to
the bridge players
on the 3rd floor
to the woman who
taught poetry in
the center. She
won't need the
raffle ticket
for a microwave
she packs as few
dresses writes
a cousin in Kansas
"Isaac, I'd like
to see you one
more time but I'm
eager for a little
while with my
daughter and tho
I know those poorly
lit rooms, their
knocks in blackness
I choose this, to
leave these rooms
I longed for
thought I'd
die in, my heart
burns like feet
barefoot in the
snow outside
Leningrad"

ANNA

with her chicken necks
and gizzards never
the right ones
since she moved up
from Queens voice
raspy as an old
screen belting it
out about Reagan
tough as the hens
were in the country
shovels snow deep
as her belly with
gulls crackles
and doves swarming
Anna with a pension
"The air in Berne,
you can't believe it"
wanted land so many
years after shaking
in hovels in Poland
when the Nazis swept
thru and then the
tenements in the city
slumps into tomatoes
she carried from the
garden before
she could see the
carnations she
mulched in blood
wind of maples

The Tinkling of High Loose Notes

CAROLINA MANCUSO

Ellie lifted the cast iron lid with both hands and jumped back as the steam rushed at her face. The soup gurgled thickly, the sides of the pot plastered with chartreuse splotches, peas splitting like atoms, on and on without end—the way the measles had blotched her childhood skin. She leaned forward, praying the aroma to relieve her doubt, and yes, it was perfect. Not like the stew, not like the blackened pot still glaring from the sink. Not like last night, not another one. She turned down the gas, snatched up the worn wooden spoon and stirred in water from the heavy glass cup. Then she inhaled once again, sucked in the soothing vapors like elixir, heaved a deep sigh and stopped dead still.

Steam rose upward to coat her glasses and for a brief moment, time dangled overhead. She lingered until the cut-off was complete. When the heat spurred her to move, she turned her face away and waited in stillness as the lenses slowly cleared. The remaining mist she wiped with a paper towel, then replaced the heavy lid upon the soup.

The hot pads were stained and flimsy. Pot holders, her mother had called them. Square metal looms and primary-tint elastic loops leaped out of the dark and frozen past. *Look what I made, mama, look. Do what I say. No kisses, no presents. If you love me, show me.* Ellie had made these too, quilted patchworks of pieces too small to use in other sewing, left from curtains, placemats, summer skirts. She wasted nothing. To be sure, the next ones would have an added layer of artificial fleece, though flimsiness, she knew, was not the culprit here. Twice already this week, she had simply forgotten to use them, removing pans from the oven with the pads, and then a moment later, touching the same pans, without. On one finger she wore a bandage where the blister broke, and on the other, a raw red patch still throbbed. Remembering now, she opened the fridge for the piece of aloe vera she had broken off the plant. She squeezed the open end of the dragon-ridged stalk upon the burn, savoring the cool leaking fluid. This was the burn she got last night, just as he unlocked the door. She had had to bite her tongue not to yell out. He would just get so mad if he knew she burned herself again, especially just as he got home from work, that was the worst time to disturb him. But biting her tongue did not ward off the demon. The stew never made it to the table, poisoned by the venom in the air.

What's the matter with you now? Mama, I shut my finger in the drawer, I bit my tongue. Hah, you thought it was mine! What does that mean, mama? What does it mean? Words like needles shocked the pain away, left confusion and numbness. But now she was older and shock no longer erased the pain.

Ellie opened the crisper and exchanged the aloe vera stalk for a tomato and two carrots. She balanced the carrot straight up on the counter with one hand and scraped the peelings off in ribbons the full length. She had done her hand once that way when Ben's family came for dinner. She had fussed with cloth napkins and candles, with garnishes of radish rosebuds and sprigs of parsley. Then she had gone and overcooked the roast. At the table, Ben snapped for a

sharp knife. Ellie returned from the kitchen, laying their sharpest knife down gently near the platter. Before she could get her hand away, he lunged a little as he picked it up. Not so anyone else could notice, but she knew she barely got her hand away in time. She pulled it into her lap, stroking where, earlier, she had scraped the skin along with the potatoes. Meanwhile, he was hissing.

"This beef is well done," he spat out. She leaned forward to see, nodding inanely at the sad gray lump upon the platter, flanked by tiny green noseays. He poked at it viciously, as if he might skewer it and hurl it against the wall. But she knew he wouldn't: they were not alone.

"It's well done," he said again, staring at her as she nodded dumbly to show that she agreed. "What's wrong with you? Can't you cook a piece of meat without ruining it?" For that, Ellie did not have an answer. She watched the knife glisten at eye level, and as he took to hacking, she mumbled an apology which he did not hear. She saw her fingers close upon the handle, the blade a straight arrow to his throat, a vision so overpowering that she turned at once toward his parents and apologized to them too. Ben's mother was studying her plate, his father the football game on TV. Each whack of the knife Ellie felt like the slab on the plate. She couldn't touch a speck of meat that day; Ben accused her of planning to spoil it for everyone else. *Why do you want to spoil it now for everybody else? You can't go to the circus the movies the store for a candy bar. You always want to have your way.*

Ellie scraped another carrot, lay them both upon the cutting board and sliced deftly on the angle. She picked up the board and, with a swift stroke of the blade, swept the slices into the bowl. Then she reached into the bin under the cupboard and felt around for the right size onion. At the sink she peeled to the root end to keep her eyes from stinging, passed the onion under running water, and returned to the chopping board. She was moving at top speed again, but even so, she kept glancing at the clock. *Will you stop looking at the clock and pay attention to what you're doing. You wanted piano lessons, now practice.*

In the living room, the chime sounded five o'clock. The soup would take another forty minutes. She lifted the lid again and dumped the vegetables in. Like some monstrous pulsating creature, the split peas swallowed the orange and white chunks whole. Ellie stared without moving, knowing the viscous mass would dominate and win. The carrots would keep their color and shape, lose only their turgor, but of the onions, only faded limp strips would remain, unrecognizable, like she was in the mirror this morning and felt herself now—at the edge, teetering on the rim of the soup pot, unsure which way to fall. Swallowed whole was what Rosemary had said about her. "You'd better do something fast, Ellie. He's going to help himself to the rest of your life, what little you got left."

As usual, she had begged for time. There had been so much promise. And she, nurtured like a will-o'-the-wisp, always on time and promise. Like a plant waiting patiently, docilely, for water. All but the aloe vera, smug cat of the plant kingdom, ho-humming and self-satisfied to the bitter end, yet always ready to heal. "But he's changing, Rosemary, I know it. He needed to work some things out." She hesitated, unsure how much to say. "He brought me flowers last night."

Rosemary scoffed. Would the whole New York Botanical Garden take away the pain? It was getting worse—she nearly shrieked—not better. Ellie was silent. She could say nothing to make Rosemary understand her love for Ben, his love

for her, the pressure he was under, the childlike fear that made him lose control. Only she seemed to understand him, though even she at times pushed him, too much, too far.

Before she could find words, Rosemary was gone from her life. Moved west on a moment's notice, leaving Ellie to marvel at the tide of loss. But Ellie knew the move merely provided a simple end. And Ellie couldn't blame her. There had been no one else; Rosemary had seen her through the worst. At first she was sympathetic, if shocked; then she became outraged, urging Ellie to do things she couldn't bring herself to do. Ellie's eyes filled with tears, and she spun around to ward them off, rinsing her hands briskly at the sink. It was different now, there was no use mourning Rosemary. Ellie had taken steps, not what Rosemary meant but what Ellie needed, steps to fit her scheme of things. It was going to be all right now. This is what they needed to make it work. She passed a grateful hand over her flat belly. Besides, there had been peace for almost a year already, so Rosemary had been wrong, after all, and she right. She rinsed the tomato and watched the water drip into the soaking charred pan. What happened last night was just a simple mistake, an accident, a momentary regression. From now on, the future, that's what would count. When he heard the news, he would be so happy. He would need time to adjust, sure, time she had already had. She would be careful during that time.

I told you to watch your step! (Flying across the room, a dull thud, and the ringing in her ears when she landed, and the dull thud, and then confusion because she started out in one place and ended up somewhere else, not knowing how she got there, and she didn't exactly know what hurt.) Hah, you thought it was mine!

Ellie spun around, whirling away from where the thoughts hung upon the wall she was facing, came eye to eye with the brown smudges that hadn't wiped off, the gravy-river stripe from shelf to floorboard. No! He had changed. It was a year since that last episode, he was so much calmer. Even his mother saw how mature he was now, how settled, how grown up, a man. Last night was an aberration.

She could speed up her plans to tell him. She could do it tonight. She had wanted to do the test once more, but in her heart she knew for sure. Her mother had said you always knew, a woman always knew, and she was right. *What was it like, mama? I was sick all the time. See this spot, near my ribs. You never stopped kicking. Not once in all those months.* Her mother had worshipped Ben, like the son she never had, but Ben had despised her. Over and over she said how lucky Ellie was to have a man like Ben, how did she manage to find him, and if she displeased him, she deserved whatever she got. Ben merely smirked. "Wrapped around my pinkie, eh?" Ellie forgave him those moments, she never knew why. He couldn't help himself, that's what she imagined.

After her mother's death, she tried even harder to appreciate him, to appease him, to instill new life into their marriage. Yet, despite all that, things worsened. He hated his job, but even when he got hired at the supermarket, things were no better at first. He lost patience with her grief. In the name of fun, he took to practical joking, but only with her. One day when Ellie went to meet him, he whooped out of the big swinging door from the cutting room, the front of him streaked with blood, the huge cleaver in his hand, chortling like Dracula. His co-workers laughed; the bloodstained apron turned up in Ellie's dreams.

(There is the stain on the bathroom floor that I can't get out. When I landed against the

toilet and my face fell against the plaster where the tile had chipped and the rough part is stained but it's brown now like the gravy on the kitchen wall, all I knew was a foot was somewhere it didn't belong, a foot was the propellor that got me there, a foot had dug itself into my side.)

It was ten past five. She'd been standing there daydreaming, when there was no time to lose. She didn't want to keep him waiting tonight, just in case. He was upset last night, that was all. It was all about his job last night. But she shouldn't keep him waiting. She spun around to open the bag on the counter, and took out a loaf of Italian bread. Damn, she should have bought rye, that's what he liked with split pea soup, how could she not have remembered. It was bad enough there was no meat tonight. And there was no time to run out now.

During this past year, this year of peace, she might have called him at work to bring bread home. Last week she called once, and he was in a snit all evening. Couldn't she get a meal together on her own? She was getting lazier and lazier, supper should be done when he walked in the door. She said how hard it was to start cooking as soon as she got home, how exhausted she was from the kids—even though she loved her work, she added quickly. It did no good. She feared he would force her, not to stop working, but to change her job, for it was exactly her job that saved her. Again, she counted off the months until July. Perfect, just as she'd planned. There would be plenty of time to get used to their new life, then she could start school in September, without a break in pay. That's what would bother him most, if she had to stop working to make this happen. That's one reason the year had been better, that she had started working, pulling her own weight. And maybe she'd still be at the school in five years, why not? She'd be a teacher's aide with her own little one in class. *I love you, mama. Don't tell me, show me, do what I say. Please, I love you, mama. Don't, mama. I'll be good. Don't, mama, please.*

In her classroom at school, that sweet little face appeared banged up over and over again, and no one knew what to do. Ellie didn't know what to do. But she blamed herself, she should have done something, she might have been the only one who could tell. There was nothing wrong, nothing, everyone pretended, until the child stopped coming to school at all. That was four weeks ago, when Ellie bought the kit and hid it in the drawer. Four weeks ago, when Ellie was down to the wire if July was the target. (*Words like a foot in her ribs. She was being hurled across the room, she was flying. No, this was his foot, his words. How could it be happening again?*) Then the child was found. Only yesterday she had heard. The child dead, and blood on the piano. In the living room, on the piano, blood. The scene played over and over in Ellie's head. A child's body thudding against the hardwood. Vibrating keys inside the box. The tinkling of one or two high loose notes.

Ellie bent over the spectre of another child not yet appeared and grasped the counter to steady herself as she watched the future unfold. The soup would burn and join the gallery of charred pots first dented against the wall, the bread would crumble to the floor, gritty beneath her feet when she fell to it, and blood, unseen and unclaimed, poured from inside, to stain the tile, even as random notes chimed the alarm that no one would hear. She was panting, a flush had spread over her, she broke into a sweat. The clock said five-twenty.

She raced from the kitchen, grabbing her coat from the rack. In the bedroom she threw open the drawers and stuffed bits and pieces of her life into a canvas totebag. There was nothing more she could bear to take. She had what she wanted from him. That was all.

Behold The Cat

BARBARA MAHONEY

Whiskers, a plain black and white country cat, was named Whiskers because of her white whiskers on her black face, but Marlene, as in Dietrich, would also have sufficed. She was born in this silly tuxedo, a diamond-white streak down her black breast, with the sleeves too long in front, where little white toes curl over from under her black legs, and the pant legs are too short in back. Consider two bare white legs sticking out from under the tail of the jacket. Consider the Dietrich of "Desire," with a few scenes from "Morocco." Throw in a chorus of "Sam, You Made The Pants Too Long." This is why she was named Whiskers.

So Whiskers, named for her whiskers by my mother who had a knack for naming animals, remained Whiskers, a once city-bred cat, declawed for that purpose, but now exiled to the country during The Divorce. My mother went to Chicago, my father and us kids got the apartment, and the cat got the country.

In the beginning of her expatriation, I had only weekend visitation privileges; only when we went out to the country could I pet her, watch her lord over the property, her property now, only when we went out to the country could I hold her paw, missing one pink little pad where the declawing process had left no mark, no pad, no finger; the vet, though he never said so, had wrapped the bandage too tight and it didn't fall off as it was supposed to. Thus the finger fell when she had to go back to lose more of herself than the furniture could have ever lost.

But she survived, and lived, lived happily, in the country; she had friends for awhile, two fields over, but, after a time, she got unfriendly to other animals. Perhaps it happened after three of her four kittens were taken away; perhaps it was after the ritual scraping out of her insides; but I think it happened after her last child crawled under the station wagon to die from poison. It might have had something to do with the advent of the new wife, but that is neither here nor there yet.

Her whiskers still had free roam of the house, but that her whiskers wanted most was her food. When she ate, she let no one touch her, be it tuna or mouse upon which she munched. Nor did she munch; very quietly, carefully she bit, not a bone cracked in her little teeth—the bones dissolved as she chewed. She always watched, carefully, not to make some noise that would attract neighboring claws to snatch her earned catch from her paws. The delicacy finished, no drop of blood save cleaned intestines left on the cement steps, she wandered the house, as if to make sure nothing had changed, found her regular chair, took a bath and stretched out to sleep.

She never sat in anyone's lap, not even mine; I'd have to force myself upon her, and take her, unwillingly, into my arms and up to my bedroom. Sometimes she fought, most times she did not, but with a bland fixed look of sarcastic compliance stayed in my arms up the stairs.

There I would place her on my bed, where she continued doing what I interrupted, which was cleaning her paws with no claws, and her face with her paws, then her stomach with her tongue, and then she'd curl herself down to smooth her back and her tail, her tummy. Her silly pseudo-Dietrich tuxedo laundered again, she'd lie in the center of the bed, where my torso should lie. I lay on my side beside her, and finally, she'd curl to me, her back to me, her face from me; she'd look out the window.

I'd pet her, and she'd lick her flattened coat, as though my hand had ruined her toilette. She'd inch herself away, an inch with each caress, either in bitterness or to prolong the enjoyment. I couldn't tell which, but I'd continue, gently, making my way up to her neck, her head, her snout, her chin, and then it was as if all resentment, like a lover's spat, was forgotten, and she'd allow me to stroke her and lie in one place, almost smiling, purring, quivering to her purr. For a brief moment, the space of a night, she shed the Mousehunter and was an independent lapcat, rather, a bedcat; for this brief moment, she was what I wanted her to be and needed her to be—by my side, listening to me, purring to me. She didn't need these nights like I did, but I prized that in her—to my rebellious teenage nature, I admired her independence.

In the mornings she'd wake me by walking on my head; I'd open my eyes into her yellow eyes, generally lose myself in them, usually close mine again, and not just to make her wait. She walks over my face, and I open my eyes to her body, black fur in motion, one good paw after bad, over my neck, to the other side of my head; she turns, and good paw, bad paw over my face again. She'd sit so close to my face that the pillow vibrated with her purring, and the point was made. The old caretaker had been there hours ago with her breakfast, and she was ready, now.

Thus the day begins again, everyday, both then and now; I go off to do the mundane things one does before they have a drivers license during those long summers between school years, or go back to the city, and she wanders out the door to survey her land, her territory, her property. It is a rather large tract of land—ten acres of shaven lawns and rhododendrons and maples and hedge. A fence surrounds her property; where there were once three gates now there is but one, and though one other is protected by cattle bars, this last one, hounded through, is obsequiously secured by two stone eagles standing sentry atop brick posts that edge the cattle bars. There used to be a simple swinging gate in place of these fowl of prey, but Whiskers who was named Whiskers because of her whiskers does not remember that. If she remembers, she remembers that *that* is where the pebble white driveway ends or begins, and that the pebble white driveways begins or ends at the stone grey house, the stone grey house once a barn and cattle trough and now a house or home. When my mother died and the new wife sent the workmen with their dogs and noisy machines to slit the house open, as if with a seam ripper, when Whiskers could slip into the house, and pad about on the limestone troughs and waterbins, pad across gullies of now-dried broken waters and gelding blood. Her paws remember, but she does not.

What Whiskers remembers is that the field is behind the stone grey house

with white trims where the pebble white driveway either begins or ends or curves around the back to the front; this field, which Whiskers might remember, was once just a field of horse grass and black-eyed Susans and chives and a greened-tin skeet blind. Now, it is cut, another decision of the second wife; it is low, no protection for the hunter, and yellow tennis balls like the yellow eyes of Whiskers bounce on the grass where Whiskers once hid, stalking a pheasant or a rat or a rabbit or a grey little field mouse. Now she brings these half-dead presents to me; even though I used to be the little tyrant playing gravedigger with her goodies, she now brings them back to me, on the cement grey back step or into the kitchen, for me to laud and for her to privilege me with the honor of watching her swallow. What I don't see, but find later, in the driver's seat of the cars I wash, is the undigestibles of a rabbit or mouse, or crow.

So off she meanders, perhaps to the field, or over to the stone grey shed by the mint patch where foxes live, or perhaps to the clearing, near her needless stone eagles, the eagles made needless because of her, to the clearing where pheasant sometimes act like peacocks, where she is smarter than they.

This is the way things went until the workmen came again, this time to renovate out the barnness of the main house. The plans called for my room to be part of a new bathroom and guestroom; Whiskers and I were banished to the rooms over the garage. I didn't mind so much; I was now a driver, was off to college, and even though the garage was already de-barned, it was ok. It was ours, Whiskers and mine, and occasionally the new stepchildren, but it was ok.

It was harder on Whiskers. She had to live through the construction, with more workmen and more dogs and more noisy machines, she had to watch the garbagemen take away her old floors, old paneling and antique fenestration and watch, from the outside, Thermasash windows and Formica and tiled floors go in. She was not allowed in the main house any more, they said. She had accidents, they said.

But I let her in with me, those days when the workmen were there. They didn't touch the room with the piano, where I spent evenings bundled up against the cold, playing the piano by candlelight. There was no electricity or heat in this part of the house, just the candles, Beethoven and Whiskers, once she'd finished inspecting the construction.

Maybe she was having accidents by then. She was now ten and she didn't see so well. One eye was lost to a grey infection from a fight with one of the workmen's dogs, and the caretaker's great-grandchildren used to ask, "Where is Whiskers with the eye?"

On those cold nights that she sat next to me on the piano bench, I noticed that she pushed her face into the ashtray or the scented candles; it took her more than a few shortened whiskers to recognize what they were. But this didn't affect her mousing.

Now that the workmen are gone, years gone, she's not so sure of things anymore. She's certain of the hoods of cars that she sleeps on during the day, but when I sneak her into the house at night, she pads about the house with a forlorn meow, looking for corners that used to be hers, corners that don't exist anymore. But Whiskers who was named Whiskers because of her whiskers remembers these

corners; her whiskers remember them but her eye can't find them. So she looks again, sniffs again, but the smell is different. She doesn't meow in the livingroom or in our rooms over the garage; she sits with me at the piano, and she waits, sleeps and waits till I'm done.

When I'm done, she becomes kitten-like, rubbing all up and down me til I get up to go back to the garage. And then, she follows me, rather, runs ahead of me, knowing where we are going, together; she stops on the steps, waits for me to catch up with her, then she scatters as well as her back will allow her again to the bottom, in a wild anticipation of what's next. She's not above toying with me; she runs out to my door and waits for me to open it and keep it open until she's decided that it's proper to come in.

When she does finally decide to come in, she goes to the stairs first and stops me at every other step, as though she still doesn't trust that we are going to spend the evening together. Perhaps it is pain that stops her. Or maybe, like the old days, she is holding us back so that the anticipation grows.

How like a woman.

While I undress, she, too, prepares herself, cleaning the last bits of day dirt from her tux, and is ready when I pull down the covers. Now she circles me, caressing the length of her fur against my naked back and legs. She hides her nose in the crux of my knee and I scrub her head. She gets up and makes like an inchworm against my side; I hold her passing body close to me.

The dance continues; now she dances in a horizontal position. Now she turns on her spine, now she curls up. I pass my hand alongside her, she stretches, she rolls over; I do the same on the other side. She stops in the middle of a turn; my hand is on her belly. She catches my hand with a white back paw, as if to say, not yet. No, not yet.

How like a woman.

Now she rubs the top of her head against the bed, allows me to stroke her chin. But no further, for she puts up her front paws, like dukes, keeping me away from her belly. She presses, holds my hand tight to her breast. The purr begins to rise, tingling my fingers. Her tail flips back and forth, one, two, three, four, she gets up again and rolls down, flipping her tail, one, two, three, four.

Maybe she gets up and licks my elbow, maybe I lie down on my side, curling her into me, whichever comes first, we are ready.

On her back, she is ready.

With her front paws, then her back paws, she guides my hand up and down the front of her tux, tousling up the buttons, the collar, the waist. While I am at her waist, she kneads the air, one paw reaches slowly after the other, slowly, slow, just like how I stroke her fleshy belly.

How like a woman.

Sometimes when we wake, the lights are still on. As usual, she walks across my face, but she's slower now. She still stops me down the steps, to rub against me, but she's slow. The cortisone the caretaker gives her for leukemia helps her arthritic back a little, but she has trouble going down the steps. As we walk to the garage, a mother sparrow protecting the nest dive-bombs Whiskers, but Whiskers who was named Whiskers because of her whiskers does not notice.

Walk, she walks with me to her morning tuna, and another day on the hood of a car.

Days come, nights go. Eventually this series stops, from time to time. One day Whiskers didn't move when I opened the car door; her day stopped, a bit like her son's, on top of a Volvo.

The sparrows stopped dive-bombing her; they knew. I didn't start the car; I knew. She was curled up like a crescent, lazy legs comfortably stiffening out straight from her head to tail, her tail close to her hind legs, the tip of her tail draped ever so slightly, stopped in a mini-swish, so lightly over a back foot. She looked as cozy as always; I didn't want to disturb her; I petted her lightly on her head, like she always liked, then down her body, like I liked; I thought I could smooth down the tufts of hair that stuck up, but maybe there was too much static.

She used to hate me when I picked her up in my arms; now she didn't mind. She was cool on that hot afternoon, still a little damp actually, but it didn't make a difference now. I still picked her up, looked at her half-opened eyes and little bit of tongue sticking out of her mouth; I would have told her how indecorous she looked, but she was too cold.

I held her like a baby, supporting her head in the crux of my arm. I rubbed her bony face. She seemed so small, still soft, but so cold. Her toothy smile never left her face; her whiskers never moved.

I wasn't ready to make her into ashes; we stood, and I started to sway to some rhythm I didn't hear. I couldn't hear any birds or trees rustling, though I'm sure some were sounding off somewhere. Just this pounding in my ears, in my head, behind my eyeballs, and I swayed, side to side, then one leg slid to the side, slowly, and back again, then the other. Then front to back, not quite the waltzer's square, but a cross. X marked the spot in the pebble white gravel.

Whiskers had not caught all the mice; now there was one crawling around in my mouth. The lump came up in my throat in the quiet afternoon, but still I couldn't cry. We just waltzed this quiet two-step till she was too heavy to hold, and I put her down on the front seat, where she would go in style.

“COLOR”

MICHELLE HOVET

“Now a tongue can’t do what a man can do,” said my psychology teacher Mr. Sorin when he explained lesbianism to me. He stuck his tongue out of his mouth to demonstrate his point.

It was eleventh grade and I felt like I was watching a game show which always made me feel sorry for the contestants, the host, the audience, and myself. Sorin was the host and I couldn’t turn the channel.

“Now,” said Sorin walking up to my desk, “a finger can’t do what a man can do.” He held up his index finger.

“Two fingers can’t do what a man can do.”

Sorin saw I was confused so he held up two fingers. I was frightened.

“If you think this is difficult material,” said Sorin, “just wait till we get to Freud.” With that he gave a nod and walked back to the blackboard.

He was wearing brown corduroys, a brown sweater, and brown boots with two-inch heels. Sorin wore the boots because he felt bad about being 5’3”, and because he never made varsity on his high school basketball team. He would tell the class this, laugh, and say it was alright to feel insecure.

“You know what it’s like,” said Sorin, “to be standing next to a beautiful woman and be looking into her neck?”

We had studied Sorin’s mother. We had studied his wife and children. We had studied Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Charles Manson, and the Texas sniper. Because there wasn’t enough time in the semester we hadn’t studied his first love—the one named Tamma May who had married an insurance agent and was now living in Indiana. Now we were going to do Freud and I just wished everything would end.

The classroom was in the basement of a suburban cinder block high school built in the 1950s. Sorin was the teacher kids could relate to and I sat in his class in 1984. He let kids paint graffiti on the walls and had personal conferences when anyone needed them. He took some on tours of downtown Denver in the patrol cars of his high school friends who had grown up to be policemen. On these tours Sorin would show the kids where all the topless bars were.

“I never want to see any of you down here,” Sorin would say.

During the Elvis Presley unit, Sorin showed a slide show complete with soundtrack. We saw Elvis young, beautiful, rich, famous, and marrying the child-bride Priscilla. “Mind you,” said Sorin, “she wasn’t much older than any of you girls.” We saw Elvis get fat, ugly, more rich and famous. He bought all his friends big white Cadillacs. But the King still wasn’t happy. Then the soundtrack came to “Suspicious Minds” and I tried to imagine Sorin and his wife having sex to the song. After “Suspicious Minds” came “In the Ghetto.” “This song reflects the King’s social conscience,” said Sorin.

During the Marilyn slide show, we saw a picture of her cuddling with Arthur Miller. Arthur was wearing a crumpled shirt and horn rimmed glasses. Marilyn's hair was messy and she looked very happy.

"Now this is what did her in," said Sorin. "Miller was a Jewish intellectual and he wanted her to be somebody she wasn't." I had never met a Jewish person so I stared closely to see what they were supposed to look like.

Marilyn was so beautiful I worried I was a lesbian. I was worried that if I was a lesbian my mother wouldn't love me anymore. I saw a black and white picture of Marilyn. The picture was tinted pink, she was pouring a trickle of Chanel between her breasts, her mouth was wide open. I felt she was pouring out of herself. I said something to my friend Casey, who had dropped out of school and was working in some cafe downtown, and he said, "Claudia, don't you know lesbianism is the ultimate narcissism." I made a mental note to look up narcissism.

Sorin told us about his wife's miscarried baby. About busting down the door while she stood doubled over in the bathroom holding her hands between her legs while Sorin caught the dripping blood. Then he told our class of thirty, "I don't want to hear this going out of the classroom."

My mother sent a note to the classroom that day, telling Sorin it was an emergency and that I needed to meet her as soon as possible in the school parking lot. I left the class while the other students were still trying to absorb the story about Mrs. Sorin gushing blood and baby between her legs. In the parking lot my mother said she wanted my opinion of a couch on sale at Sears. We had been shopping for a couch for three years, ever since I started taking weekly sick days from school.

Once Sorin held up a *Ladies Home Journal* with a picture of Tom Selleck on the cover.

"There isn't a girl in this class who doesn't find this man attractive. Isn't that true?" said Sorin.

I raised my hand. "I don't find him attractive. That man's older than my father."

Sorin looked annoyed.

He stood next to the blackboard in a blue sweater and black boots with two-inch heels. He pointed his finger at me. "That my friends," he said, "is a case of denial. We read about it tonight, pages 170-180."

One day, I thought, this may actually end. Then I'm going to Paris to sit in cafes with my lover. I will wear red lipstick and have my hair in a sleek ponytail, like the pictures in *Vogue*. I will be an intense writer and my lover will be an intense something. As we sit in cafes, we will hold hands and stare into one another's eyes, all the while drinking *cafe au lait*. The *cafe au lait* will never taste like coffee.

In class one day we were discussing teen suicide. I was in the front desk of the first row. The fluorescent lights were whirring and pouring yellow into my skin, and I knew Sorin was glancing at me from the corner of his eye.

He was explaining to us what it was like to love yourself. He said deep in his heart, even when he did bad things he knew he was a pretty good guy. He said even when he felt short he knew he was a pretty good guy.

"So this word 'self-esteem,' what does it mean?" said Sorin standing by the

blackboard, wearing black boots with two-inch heels.

I decided the best part of the entire psychology class was page 247 of the textbook. It had a picture of a room painted by a schizophrenic. The room had layers and layers of flowers and animals painted on the floor, walls, and ceiling. The flowers were faded orange, the animals painted pastel. The colors reminded me of a cold softness on a hot day. It reminded me of swimming under dark green lake water on a hot July day. "Often," said the caption underneath the picture, "mentally ill people are very talented." I wanted to paint, to be able to sleep in the middle of what I saw in my head.

Sorin wrote LOVE on the blackboard. "This is what it's all about. Loving yourself, and, of course, giving love." He then told us about how he made his children practice a fire drill once a month when they were young. He made them crawl out of their windows using the rope ladders he kept in their rooms. Sorin said he was terrified of the house burning down and his children dying.

"You see these kids who kill themselves," said Sorin, "they ignore the people around them. Parents, friends, teachers like me, could help these kids."

Sorin stood by the blackboard and sighed.

"Because these kids ignore the people around them suicide is a pathetic selfish way to get attention," said Sorin as the underlined SELFISH on the blackboard.

I felt like I could taste those fluorescent lights. Sorin was still glancing at me from the corner of his eye, and I opened my notebook to the Asshole List.

I kept a list of every asshole in my life. It was time to put Sorin on it again. That day I was on asshole #45.

The list included John Wayne, who every cowboy in the school, including my big brother, was trying to copy. The doctor who told my mother I was too unstable for birth control was on the list. And my best friends who I hated. And the psychiatrist who said I was precocious for saying if the medicine made me confused and depressed, I'd rather go back to just being depressed. Ronald Reagan was on the list everyday, as he seemed John Wayne incarnate, only with presidential powers. And some kid in kindergarten who made fun of Joey Romero for crying when his "show and tell" pumpkin broke.

"Now," said Sorin, "let me tell you about my personal encounters with suicide."

I thought about Joey Romero. He brought that pumpkin to kindergarten one day and carried it with him all day. The teacher told him to put the pumpkin away on the "show and tell" shelf and he started saying no way was he going to put his pumpkin away. Next thing I knew Joey and I were sitting across from one another at the "cut and paste" table with a pumpkin between us. The pumpkin was as big as Joey's head and I wished it could at least talk to me, because Joey never did.

I looked up from my Asshole List and watched the faces of the other students. They were tail-wagging puppy-excited to hear Sorin's story.

The story went that a student had called Sorin, confessing over the phone that he had swallowed a bottle of aspirin and was at Lakeside Shopping Mall. Sorin, who at one time had caught his wife's miscarried baby in his hands as she bled all over the floor, went searching for the suicidal student. Sorin found the

student in the Sears Hardware department. The kid turned around, opened his mouth to speak, and projectile vomited right into Sorin's eyes.

"Now," said Sorin, "I'm not a hero." He was pointing at his eyes. "But have you ever had vomit in your eyes?" he said.

I thought about not crying. I thought about Joey Romero never talking to anyone. I thought about Sorin choking and dying with vomit in his eyes, and the aspirin I also had taken six months before.

The ambulance medic had shoved an I.V. into my arm and asked if it had been a bad day.

"Not really," I said.

"How much did you take?" he said holding an empty bottle of generic aspirin.

"300," I said. As they took me out the door I said, "Tell my mom I'm sorry."

In the emergency room they gave me a paper cup of liquid syrup to swallow. The vomit came out my nose, out my mouth. It was burning, blinding my eyes. The nurses were handing me towels, it kept coming out my nose. I was saying thank you, I was saying sorry for the mess. I was saying I'm on my period, and the menstrual blood was smeared on my thighs, calves. I was trying to cover it up, I was saying Dad I really do want to be happy as he cried in the corner. I was asking for my mother, and they were saying she's on her way.

The nurses wheeled me into a room with a forty-three year old woman dying of cancer. In slow motion I watched myself being wheeled closer and closer to her family as they turned their heads to look at me. The orderly maneuvered the wheelchair around I.V. bottles and lifted me up. As he put me into the bed he turned to her family, thinking I was asleep, and whispered, "Suicide attempt. She's 16." The family closed the white curtain dividing the beds.

The next day people started to visit. Kids I barely knew made pilgrimages to my bedside and cried. I assured them it wasn't their fault. My seventh-grade science partner, Steve Johnson, came to visit. I hadn't talked to him since the class. While Steve was visiting, my roommate, who was dying of cancer, turned on the television. It was *Police Woman*. Angie Dickinson was up on the tv screen, living forever as cop *extrordinaire* in the vibrant orange of the early '70s film. I started to cry.

"Please Steve, make them turn off the tv."

He was getting nervous, I was crying more.

"Please, Steve." He went over to the family, tripping over the dinner cart, and whispered to them. In slow motion the roommate's family turned and looked at me.

"Television makes me depressed," I said. I was embarrassed for myself. Everybody in the room looked embarrassed for themselves, except for my roommate.

Steve walked back to my bed, awkwardly sat down in the chair. His eyes were moving back and forth, like he didn't know what to look at. He looked like he didn't know what to do. I felt sorry for him. Then I felt sorry for myself for feeling sorry for him.

"Gosh, Claudia, I love tv," he said. "I couldn't live without it."

"I can't live with it," I said.

The nurses gave me a sedative and moved me to a room with a woman who looked like she was dying of a nose bleed. A dried mound of blood sat on her face. That night I dreamt I sliced off my lips. Steve Johnson went back to school and told people I went crazy because of tv.

"Now," said Sorin, standing by the blackboard, "does anybody here have personal experiences with suicide?" My skin was blotchy under the fluorescent lights. I knew Sorin knew, because when the school principal Mr. Wells found out he sent memos to all my teachers.

I still had the textbook opened to page 247 and was looking at the room painted by the schizophrenic. I wanted to live in the middle of a painting. I wanted to live in a Rothko. I wanted to be the dark teal base in a room full of layered blues.

"My sister knew somebody at college that swallowed a bottle of Liquid Plumber," said Julie Griffith, who sat two rows to my left.

I thought about Joey Romero. It was 'show and tell' and it was his turn to talk about his pumpkin. He stood in front of the class and said, this is my pumpkin, as it slipped out of his hand and broke on the tile floor. It was bad enough the pumpkin broke, what made it worse were the kids who got to watch Joey cry.

Sorin was standing by the blackboard. Julie Griffith was sitting two rows to my left.

I told myself about Joey Romero. I told myself not to cry. I said it over and over inside myself. I looked at Julie Griffith, I looked at the other students in the class, and added all thirty of them to my Asshole List.

I added Todd Miller to the List. He had won the county's writing contest for his short story about foxes. For the contest I wrote a Petrarchan sonnet about having an orgasm in the backseat of a '72 Charger. Todd won the prize, and Mr. Anderson, my English teacher, touched me a lot when he explained the verb "to lie."

I decided to put Mr. Anderson on the list. I decided to put Todd Miller on the list because everyday he came trotting after me like one of the foxes he wrote about and would stick his face in my face and shout SMILE! That day Sorin was telling the class about his personal encounters with suicide and Julie Griffith was telling us Liquid Plumber tragedies, that day Todd Miller came up to me before class and said, "We all know Claudia isn't feeling too good about herself." I didn't know if Todd wanted me to answer in the first or third person.

Sorin stood next to the blackboard. "Now this class is about trust, and suicide is the leading cause of death for people your age. This is an environment where we can all share our experiences with one another."

Steve Johnson, my seventh grade science partner who visited me in the hospital, was sitting in the back of the classroom. I wondered if he was going to raise his hand and share his experience of watching me go crazy because of tv.

I turned around and looked at Steve Johnson. He blushed, I blushed. I felt like the class of thirty was staring at me. I felt like I was watching the breaking of Joey Romero's pumpkin live on national tv. It was a talk show and the audience members were making comments as Joey cried on stage.

"We've got to open up if we're going to get rid of our problems," said Sorin.

He was staring at me, the class was staring at me, and I was staring at the picture perfect room on page 247 painted by the textbook example of a schizophrenic freak.

I heard somebody in the back mention my name.

"Now," said Sorin as he wrote HUMANIST THERAPY on the blackboard, "what do you think this means?" He pointed his finger at Julie Griffith.

Julie fidgeted in her seat. "Does it have something to do with love?" she said.

"Julie, good psychology," said Sorin, "has a lot to do with love."

I want to die, I thought. Except if I did die Sorin would probably do a slide show about my life and show it in his psychology courses for the next twenty years.

I could just see him showing a picture of me and my family. In the picture I'm four years old and smiling so hard my eyes are slits: I'm wearing purple shorts, the watermelon juice is dribbled down my tank top. We're in the mountains, the Colorado River is turquoise, my parents are laughing and sitting on a rock. My brother is six. He has his arm around me and he's flashing a peace sign. My brother doesn't look like Nixon or a cowboy or any of the boys that press up against me too hard and too long in the back of their pick-up trucks. Sorin would flash this slide and be playing "Here Comes the Sun" by the Beatles.

He would say, "I tried to reach out to her, but she didn't trust anyone."

He would say, "Man, with a smile like that, it looks like at one point she could have loved the whole world."

He would use the word "man" because ten years later, ten years after my death, he would still be the teacher kids could relate to.

I walked into the therapist's office carrying my notebook.

"Sometimes I don't feel like dying, sometimes I just want everybody else to. I'm keeping a list." I held up the notebook.

"Claudia, before you start can you sit down?" She's getting sick of me, I thought.

"Well I've been thinking of Joey Romero."

"Claudia," said my therapist, "can you explain this to me?"

"I don't know."

She shifted position in her chair, crossed and recrossed her legs.

"Okay, Joey Romero was this kid in kindergarten who brought his pumpkin to "show and tell," and it broke while he was showing it. He dropped it on the ground, it splattered in front of the class, and Joey started to cry. Then some kid in the back started to laugh."

"How did this make you feel?"

The afternoon sun was coming into the room, and I was watching dust particles float in the air.

"Well," I said, "nobody laughed at Joey till the kid in the back started to laugh."

"Claudia, why are you crying?"

"That kid who laughed at Joey, he's on my list."

I kept looking at the dust particles float through the air.

"Hey," I said, "did you ever notice these little particles floating through the

air?" I was still crying.

"Claudia," my therapist said, "what makes you feel good?"

"There's a picture of a room in my psychology textbook, painted in colors I can feel."

"I don't understand," she said.

I know you don't understand, I thought. I thought of the picture on page 247 of my psychology textbook. The faded orange flowers, the pink and peach animals. I thought about those colors making me feel like I was swimming under green lake water. I remembered I used to watch the sun set behind the Rocky Mountains. I used to watch the sun turn the sky into the soft orange of September pumpkins.

"Claudia, I still don't understand why that picture in your textbook means so much to you?"

I noticed she had ten more minutes to understand before the appointment was up.

"Maybe," I said, "I should just start keeping a list of those colors."

That night, like every night since I came home from the hospital, I sat on the couch with my mother. We had finally bought it a week after I got out of the hospital. I laid my head on her lap and breathed her body in. Our miniature schnauzer lay on the couch. Sometimes at night I would over hear my mother crying to the miniature schnauzer about my sadness.

As I lay with my head in her lap, I could feel my mother's breasts against the side of my face, and her body was smaller than mine. She watched tv in the dark while I stared at the wood-paneled walls as the dog pawed himself into the sadness of my body. I cried through *Dynasty* while Blake bought out a third world country; I cried through *Fantasy Island* while a guest realized she didn't want to be perfectly beautiful. The ten o'clock news had reports of a serial murderer who was killing women by smashing them over the head with a hammer. By that time I was dry heaving sobs, stripping layer after layer inside me till I was gasping for air through the gray. I cried till my throat burned, till my body felt beaten. After two hours my mother said, "Get your list."

We sat at the kitchen table under the brown '50s light fixture. I watched her face as it listened for my dad to walk in from work. Her face had aged, and was puffy, and her lips were beautiful. I got out my list and explained the name of every asshole. I told her about Sorin. I told her about him saying I was selfish. I told her about him saying I had to be attracted to Tom Selleck and had to share my problems with the class. Her hand was on my hand as I turned the page. She had a look that said nothing matters except what I know is in the core of me.

"Keep writing everything down," she said.

I was looking at her face, her eyes were teal. I was thinking, write the teal down.

"And Claudia, I promise you," she said, "someday it will go away."

FOR ELLEN

Remember

how we were the first two Jewish Indians
Swift Arrow and Running Deer
faces painted we stalked Sioux and Apache
in the mountains of East New York
blood brothers
we sang the warriors song

In winter amidst empty clotheslines
we built igloos in the arctic parking lot

Remember

how your father made you cut your hair
because you used to chew it
at the dinner table
your long straight sun coloured hair
outraged I urged rebellion
but you accepted with the resignation
of a Zen Monk
I never understood

Remember

how you adopted me
the Deli-man's daughter
week-end orphan
took me to family circle meetings
in Canarsie
sharing barbeques and cousins

Remember

the Wizard of Oz at P.S. 64
Ellen, gangling skinny scarecrow
Arleen, the wicked witch of the west
both bitten by the same acting bug

Years later we met at an audition
you had outgrown awkward adolescence
long limbed and slim
with the long silken hair of childhood

We could not really talk
I met Andrew your husband
smoked Hashish from a water pipe
in your village apartment

Thinking of you my friend
sharer of my
Indian-haunted soul
I remember how I never knew loneliness
during our Brotherhood

HERE WE ARE WAITING FOR DADDY TO TAKE
OUR PICTURE IN FRONT OF GRANDMA'S
BACK PORCH. IT

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G. T. SLIGH 1987

WHEN JUNIOR CAME HOME ON LEAVE FROM
 THE NAVY HE SAID, "YOU DON'T KNOW IT BUT
 YOU'RE SITTING ON A GOLD MINE." JOIN
 THE NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD. JUNIOR
 CAME HOME ON LEAVE. JOIN THE NAVY
 AND SEE THE WORLD. YOU DON'T KNOW IT.
 JOIN THE NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD. BUT
 YOU'RE SITTING ON A GOLD MINE. JOIN THE
 NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD. JUNIOR CAME
 HOME ON LEAVE. JOIN THE NAVY AND
 SEE THE WORLD. YOU DON'T KNOW IT.
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 SITTING ON A GOLD
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 CAME HOME ON
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 SITTING ON A GOLD
 MINE. JOIN THE
 NAVY AND SEE THE
 WORLD. YOU DON'T
 KNOW IT. YOU'RE
 SITTING ON A GOLD
 MINE.



DIANA DAVENPORT

SNOW

(Marshall Islands)

Of my family.

These are the survivors: Father. Mother. Brothers Tomi, Freddi. Sister Api.

These are the dead: Sisters Lijon, Sari, Mata. Brothers Wili, Kunio, Paul, Apolo.

This is our history: Blindness. Thyroid tumors. Miscarriages. Jellyfish babies. Mental retardation. Sterility. Lung cancer. Kidney cancer. Liver cancer. Sarcoma. Lymphoma. Leukemia.

I do not weep for my lost babies. Two stillbirths. Three jellyfish—glassy, pulsing discoids that made the nurses sick.

I no longer weep for the dead. The dead do not care.

We are the peoples of the Marshall Islands. We are your experiment.

My father remembers the day. 1946. An officer of the United States Navy came to tell our people that bomb-testing would soon begin in the waters surrounding us. The people of Bikini Atoll, our neighbors one hundred miles to the west, had been evacuated to other islands out of harm's way, but we of Rongelap Atoll were safe, he said. Bikini was needed for a project that would benefit mankind, he said. All of the peoples of the Marshall Islands would become famous because our islands, our ocean, would contribute to eternal peace. He said.

The day my father saw the dull splash of khaki through the leaves, the uniform of the Naval officer stepping into our lives, was the beginning of our extermination.

Look closely.

From the beginning we were bound to the earth, responsible for its care. We of Rongelap were expert sailors, guiding our outrigger canoes across hundreds of miles of ocean to visit other islands, navigating by stick charts and shells that marked wind directions and wave patterns. Like amphibians, we embraced the ocean and the land, fishing, gathering turtle eggs, planting taro, tending coconut palms. Our children were healthy. We worshipped the tides and the moon. Your greed collided with our lives. Now we have this fear of normal things. Fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, fish, flowers, even rain. Aside from dying, our major condition is despair.

Listen.

I was five years old when they dropped the bomb on Bikini in 1954. They called it "Bravo," the largest nuclear explosion ever detonated by the United

States, a thousand times greater than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Watching it from a hundred miles away, my father said it was like the devil's version of the sun, as if all the evil of the world had come together in the madness of atoms gone totally berserk.

The shock of the blast stood ocean waves on end. Seething, filthy clouds rose tens of thousand of feet in the air. Waves of heat and sound and motion broke across our atolls, blowing tin roofs off our huts. Electricity crackled through my father's body, and during the flash my mother saw all her bones, her arms and legs, and hips, glowing through her skin. Windows shattered, animals bled through their eyes. Bikini Atoll became debris.

Twenty years later radiation experts made their findings public: *"Cancer is the future of all people who were less than fifteen years old on Rongelap during the Bravo test in 1954."*

I remember looking up.

Six hours after the "Bravo" blast, something rioted down on us, on our water and food. Like starflakes, or shavings of the moon. We danced in it, we played with it. It didn't go away.

Bikini Atoll had been chosen for nuclear tests because winds in those atolls blew in predictable directions, controlling the drift of radioactive clouds. But during "Bravo," nature asserted itself, shifting the winds the wrong way, showing radioactive coral dust over 50,000 square miles of the Pacific. We were caught in the fallout that scientists named "Bikini Snow."

Within twenty-four hours all of my people of Rongelap showed signs of radiation sickness—vomiting, bleeding burns, loss of hair. U.S. Naval ships evacuated over three hundred of us and people from neighboring atolls, to Kwajalein Atoll to the south. Men in thick gloves examined us with Geiger counters. Medical teams flew in from Washington. They gave us special soap.

Bathed by my father in a lagoon, I saw my mother whose great mass of black hair had hung down her back, hair I could swing from. She was standing in her wet sarong and now she was bald. My brother's hands and arms were black. My sister's eyes were bandaged.

On the main island of Kwaj we lived in tent cities, exiled from other natives, roped off and guarded by U.S. Marines. Among other Marshall Islanders, we became the untouchables. One night a young Marine guard stood talking to my father, then walked away in tears. My father beat the ground and howled.

The guard had told him "Bravo" had been detonated even though nuclear-test officials knew six hours before the test that winds had changed and were heading in an easterly direction from Bikini toward Rongelap. Thirty years later, those military records were made public.

In 1947 the United Nations had made the United States Administrator of Micronesia as a "strategic trust." Micronesia is a vast portion of the Western Pacific Ocean, broader than the United States mainland. South of Japan, and north of Australia, it encompasses more than 2,000 islands, including the Marshall Islands, which is made up of 34 atolls and single islands, and many people of many traditions. In the "strategic trust" agreement, the United States was

authorized to use our islands for military purposes, and to protect us from invaders. In return it pledged to *"protect the people against loss of land, to develop the economy and education, to protect the health of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory of the Marshall Islands."* See the price we paid for your protection.

After three years in exile from our island, in 1957 we were told Rongelap Atoll was "clean" and we returned. But during those three years the horror had begun. Miscarriages. Retardation. Infants born who leaked through one's fingers like breathing bags of jelly. Others with long, twisted pincers like crabs. Childbirth became a metaphor.

Despite our petitions to the United Nations, the mushroom clouds over the Marshall Islands lasted until 1958 when the U.S. military took the bombs underground. By then sixty-six nuclear bombs had been exploded. Radioactive iodine from fallout accumulated in our thyroids as we ate and drank contaminated food and water the United States assured us was safe.

Of eleven children in my family, by 1963, six of us had developed thyroid tumors, removed free of charge by government medical-teams. In another nine years, four of my brothers and sisters would be dead of radiation-induced leukemia. A bright student, I was sent by our church to the University of the South Pacific at Suva, Fiji, to become a teacher. Within a year, my vision deteriorated, and in my second year of university I came home to Rongelap, too weak to concentrate. My mother no longer cried.

We are your handout-society, your nuclear nomads, your radioactive trust. Our teenagers are addicted to welfare, to unemployment, and finally to suicide, swimming themselves into comas of absolution. At times we have demonstrated for better food. Better jobs. Better education. For a new sewage system that would not spew human waste into our kitchen sinks. Your discipline was subtle. Our mail was "lost." Supply planes with food and medicine delayed. The plumbing died. There were no toilets.

More than 50% of our deaths each year are our children under five. Small styrofoam caskets sell steadily at our general store. Among my people the birth of a normal child is rare.

Yet, in our language, there is no word for "enemy."

In 1968, the president of the United States said Bikini was "safe," that all radioactive material had been absorbed, and the people could go home. For twenty-two years the Bikinians had been nomads, embodying the human tragedy of forcible relocation of Pacific Peoples from ancestral atolls and islands.

They and their neighbors of Enewetak Atoll, unwelcome in other island communities, had been relocated from place to place. Now their thoughts turned toward home. Radiation experts around the world warned it was too soon to return to Bikini. The press took up the shout: the Marshall Islands had become an oceanic bull's eye; soon all of Micronesia would be radioactive.

"There are only 90,000 people out there," Henry Kissinger said. "Who gives a damn?"

In 1971, the people of Bikini returned to their atoll. By 1978, sick and dying, they were evacuated to an island 500 miles away. Cesium 137, a radioactive sub-

stance in the soil of Bikini, was strong enough to contaminate their food crops and groundwater for another ninety years. Parts of Enewetak Atoll west of Bikini were declared off-limits for human habitation forever.

In that same year, an aerial radiation-survey showed high levels of residual radiation on our atoll of Rongelap, some places with higher levels than Bikini. Doses of radiation we had received from "Bravo" had proven to be one thousand times more potent than estimated.

After the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we were the most severely contaminated people by radioactive fallout than any other since the dawn of the nuclear age.

In 1979, twenty-two years after the U.S. government had pronounced all of Rongelap "safe," radiation levels registered so high we were advised by independent researchers to abandon our atoll.

For five years, appeals for help to the U.S. government went unheeded. They said our fears were groundless, our atoll was safe. Yet we grew weaker, our children continued to die. In 1985, the Greenpeace ship, RAINBOW WARRIOR, on a Pacific Peace voyage campaigning against further nuclear testing, came to our aid, moving us to a safer island. For many of us it was too late. Women like me had lost their lunar cycle. Now we bleed through our nipples. But we chose to leave Rongelap forever for our children, for those left who are normal.

And so our final journey began, and during the course of twelve days and many round-trip voyages on a twenty-hour trip, over three hundred Rongelapese, and food, animals, fifteen tons of building materials, dismantled structures, corrugated roofing, lumber, school and medical supplies, five outrigger canoes, and three generations were evacuated from our home to the island of Mejato in the north-west corner of Kwajalein Atoll, one hundred and ten miles south of Rongelap.

When we left, my husband remained with the graves of our five children. Like others who would soon die, he chose to stay behind. Half-crazed, I was tied to the railing of the ship, watching our ancestral land recede, rows of new headstones glowing in the sun. Our infants. Your nuclear debris.

Listen.

After 1958, atmospheric nuclear blasts were no longer detonated. But a year later the lagoon of the Kwajalein Atoll—with ninety islands, the largest atoll in the world—became part of the Kwaj Missile Range, serving as a receiving end, an "impact area," for the U.S. Western Missile Test Range.

All incoming offensive missiles launched from Vandenburg Air Force Base in California, 5,000 miles away, are intercepted by antiballistic missiles, searing the sky in massive fiery explosions whose debris slams into Kwaj Lagoon. It is the primary testing range for every missile from Minuteman to the MX. At the heart of Star Wars lies thirty years of tests in Kwajalein.

In this atoll, our new home, blindness spreads. Cataracts caused by microwave radiation from missile-tracking radar. Deep in Kwaj Lagoon lie Star Wars missiles containing radioactive uranium. Amongst them, like poisoned whales, huge sunken ships repose, towed back from atmospheric tests where they were subjected to close-range blast-exposure and radioactive fallout.

On the main island of Kwajalein, 3,000 Americans live in luxury. Mostly civilians employed by private contractors to the U.S. Army Strategic Defense Command, they shop at huge, segregated supermarkets where all their food is imported and wrapped in cellophane. They drink bottled water.

But look closely.

They breathe the air. Their children play in sand and swim in waters washed by Kwaj Lagoon. A child stops eating, a woman begins to lose her hair. The family is quietly transferred back to the United States.

When we left Rongelap on RAINBOW WARRIOR, one of the deckhands, a thin blonde American with pale eyes, spoke to my younger sister, Api, and on the 20-hour voyage to Mejato, he fell in love with her. She is a widow, thirty, her face still lovely. He said he would come back for her, to marry her. He would even settle here with her.

She showed him her X-rays, deterioration of bone. She showed him the medicine she takes for thyroid, and how the skin brushes off her back like dust. She is not strong enough to carry a child, or even to love a man. His reaction was vivid and hushed.

Now Api and I sit on the sand at the end of each day, on this island of Mejato, hearing our pigs and chickens cough, watching bloated fish surface in droves. In the distance, rockets stream across lavender skies, exploding into a watery, irradiated grave in Kwaj Lagoon.

Nevertheless, we have begun to bathe again in the sea, and eat the fish we catch. We have stopped the dumb, brute chant of prayer. There will be no miracles. Our islands are scorched, our waters poisoned. Even the sunset seems a painful ordeal. There is no place to hide from radiation in the Marshalls.

Deformed children now outnumber our normal children, and seem almost colorful and innovative in their variations, their anomalies, as if they are about to bark and fly. Huge ocean mammals die on our beaches, making sounds like screaming monkeys. They don't understand what is happening. This is what sets us apart.

As wards of the U.S. Government, we are fed and housed. There is a school and new church. But I see shades of premonition in the eyes of medical teams who come to study us. We no longer have to worry about jobs, education, plumbing. All we have to do is suffer. Death is less prompt than one supposes.

We have been told that the peak period for eruption of radiation-related horrors is forty years after exposure. My lungs are tired. Long sentences exhaust me. But we have not yet come of age. Not until the mid-1990s will our irradiation be in full-bloom. Api leans back on the sand, her words dragging in the groove of her thoughts, wondering which of us will last. I hold her hand, as I held it that day we danced together in the snows. And we watch the missiles slam home.

Look closely.

Listen.

resettlement: *soil of his father's land*

Grandfather stood there,
fingering the So tho* words
in his head

before the Bureau clerk

His bound arms and
arthritic legs
disrupted as she flicks the
tattling pen

His deliberate hands,
moving in ceremony,
spread the papers;
unaccustomed to the bright stare
of such a room

Jaundiced light from his eyes
shimmers like fresh blood
and all that is left of God
except nakedness
overturns.

Like birds
staggering in the wind, her voice
flew at him, returning the order;
the clack
and bang of her cabinet drawer
driving long tracks in the soil
of his father's land,
for the truck to follow

Spilling out soldiers
with clean pink knuckles, wrinkling his arm
in their grip

They dragged him down the road
where he sold eggs as a boy,
to carry him from this breathing,
green place where his blood is stored;
the earth, full of seeds and rain,
clinging to his shoes

*So tho: A South African language

Warsaw, 1983: *Umschlagplatz*

"In Treblinka bin ikh nit geven."—H. Leivik

No horrors this time.
It's 1983. June. Summer
Warsaw is tense but over *Solidarnosc*
over amnesty.

A small white brick wall.
Two plaques in Polish and Yiddish
to the effect that from here
zaynen zey geforn kayn Treblinka.
Two stubby candles on either side
neither burning. The guide
lights one with a lighter.
The wind blows it out.

A gas station pumping gas
right behind. A building on
one side. Perhaps from that time
efsher an eydes. Maybe it saw.
And there are tracks
I think.

I do not cry. What's to cry
about? An ordinary street.
People going about
their business forty years later
tense about amnesty.

This street might have been my home.
This street might have been the beginning
of my journey to death.
I must remember:
it was neither.

I live on another continent.
It is 1983. I am now a visitor.
History stops for no one.

umschlagplatz (German)—place from which Jews were deported to death camps

zaynen zey geforn kayn treblinka (Yiddish)—They left for Treblinka.

efsher an eydes (Yiddish)—perhaps a witness

The epigraph (I was never in Treblinka) is from the title poem of a collection by the Yiddish poet H. Leivik.

IRENA KLEPFISZ

In 1987 in East Jerusalem, a group of Jewish women writers (American and Israeli) met with Palestinian women to express feelings and responses to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. I was very moved by this meeting, particularly affected by the anger of one of the Palestinian women — but found I was unable to write about this experience until after the intifada began.

East Jerusalem, 1987: *Bet Shalom* (House of Peace)

To a Palestinian woman who I am afraid to name

Whether we like it or not
we must sit here. What we feel
does not matter. We are the heirs
our legacy is in the air we breathe
the ground we stand on.

One of us lives in the neighborhood
you were raised in
where you took your first steps
and met the world.
Then everyone left.
Your uncles and aunts
carried their belongings
and left. It was '48.

You ask us:

*Do you understand can you imagine
what it must feel like to me?
to all of us?
I do not go back to those neighborhoods.
I just don't feel right.
Do you understand
what it means to all of us?*

We understand we remember history
and understand it all:
the need for safety a safety
no one else can take away.
The need for control
not waiting on line to get attention
or for the consciences of others to awaken.
We understand what it means to have children
who die children who live and learn to be proud
of who they are.

Doubts break through.
This is in air the reluctance
to have understanding be enough.
We ask: didn't you omit
part of the picture
didn't you leave out a piece along the border
a piece of sky the very peak of a mountain
the bus bombed the children in the schoolhouse
peaceful farmers ploughing fields—
you left out part of the picture.

Understanding wraps us again tightly
towards each other.
We remember the camps: during and after.
During: there was murder and resistance
more murder *and after:* there was determination
sneaking in at night no lights burning
the small boats the landings on the beach
when everyone else had said: don't go there
or there or there or who wants them anyway
they've always been trouble *and again after:*
bombings massacres
we understand the actions of a desperate people.

Doubts break us apart
we can barely breathe. We ask:
why are you our problem too? we can hardly hold
our own. Why can't you just blend in
with your own kind?

Whether we like it or not
we must sit here and this is in the air.
You say to us:

*You must understand
how it is for me.
You are writers
Write about it.*

You mean: Our voices carry.
Yours alone does not.

All of us part. You move off in a separate
direction. The rest of us return
to the other Jerusalem. It is night.
I still hear your voice. It is in the air
now with everything else except sharper
clearer. I think of your relatives
your uncles and aunts I see the familiar
battered suitcases cartons with strings
stuffed pillowcases
children sitting on people's shoulders
children running to keep up

Always there is migration
on this restless planet everywhere
there is displacement somewhere
someone is always telling someone else
to move on to go elsewhere.

Night. Jerusalem. *Yerushelayim*.
Jerusalem. If I forget thee
Oh Jerusalem Jerusalem Hebron
Ramallah Nablus Qattana if I
forget thee oh Jerusalem
Oh Hebron may I forget
my own past my pain
the depth of my sorrows.



TOVE DITLEVSEN (1918–1976) grew up in a working class district of Copenhagen. She published her first volume of poems in 1939 and went on to publish a large number of short story collections and books of poems and novels which reached a wide public in Denmark. Her novel/memoir Gift (which means in Danish both “marriage” and “poison”) was highly controversial and swept the country. She took her own life in 1976.

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Oranges

Greengrocer Jonassen had received twenty-five oranges in the market square that morning. As he rode home them behind large trucks with "Fruits and Vegetables" written on their backs, he angrily flicked his whip on the neck of his old, swaybacked nag to get it moving quickly through the market throng. He was convinced that the trucks got more oranges than the horsedrawn wagons. He himself had seen a fat, redheaded idiot lug a whole crate of oranges onto the back of his truck. Now, in the cold winter sun, he watched the gold and orange lights play in all directions over carrots and frozen brussel sprouts and stiff, wooden leeks.

As of yesterday, the newspapers had carried the news that the oranges were being "distributed among the city's greengrocers." And how "fair" that distribution had been! It was high time for the government to step in. The whole society was rotten and corrupt through and through. All day yesterday a rush of people at his wagon had glared at him as though they saw oranges tumbling out of his buttonholes. For the sake of appearances, and since they'd come out in the street anyway, they bought a few soup vegetables. And "would you just cut the celery for me here, Jonassen, so I can see if it's black inside," and "you'll promise me a couple of oranges when you get them tomorrow, won't you, Jonassen?"

They never called him by name normally.

When he came back from the market square, he sent his wife home because he knew she wouldn't be fit to distribute the twenty-five oranges fairly; in other words, one each to customers who bought all their produce from his wagon and didn't sneak across the square to his competitor every other day. If it were up to her, she would heave all the oranges without further ado into the arms of the first person who came along. She wasn't able to lie to customers, and she couldn't resist a pleasant come-on. He would sometimes insist that she was ruining the business for him. She looked much too happy when anyone approached the wagon and much too dejected when they simply walked on by. People can't stand that. You should look as though you couldn't care less whether you sold anything or not, as though you were standing there for the fun of it. That was how he acted.

Sitting on an upside down potato crate, his nose bright red, rags lining his mittens around his frost-bitten hands, he imagined how the shop they'd never managed to get would look: a large stove, white counter, and light green, sized walls. Maybe even a delivery boy and a meter-tall sign over the window:

J. JONASSEN
Fruits and Vegetables

"Can I help you, ma'am?"

"I'd like three pounds of potatoes, please."

"Certainly, ma'am."

"Isn't it awful standing out here in the cold, Jonassen?"

To this question he usually replied that he was far too busy ever to get cold, but that wouldn't work with the tenants of the apartment building across the street. They were able to follow the course of the day's business very closely from their windows.

"Oh," he said as he weighed the potatoes with his back to the customer, "I'm young and healthy, I'll manage."

He smiled broadly as he handed the bag to Mrs. Klingspuhr. What damned business was it of hers whether he was cold or not? Could she maybe show him some other way to earn his daily bread? Only once had he caught her walking past him with a tuft of chervil from the grocer on the other side of the square sticking out of her bag. She'd looked frightened when she met his gaze, and, since then, she had never walked by his wagon without buying something, unlike so many others, who preferred to patronize a warm shop in winter.

Even so, she got no orange.

He didn't like her. Her pale face was tucked as snugly in her fur collar as a flower in a buttonhole. From his cold stand, he could see her sitting in her bay window drinking coffee with her women friends in the afternoon. She must have plenty of time on her hands, a married woman like her without children. His wife always talked a lot with her. She had a way, his wife, of rubbing her frozen hands together and looking miserable when she spoke to customers. She did the same thing in the summer, but then it was the heat that bothered her!

He beat his arms together to generate a little warmth as he watched Mrs. Klingspuhr go. She should only know that he had twenty-five oranges lined up behind the cash register. By the time the other customers got around to telling her about them he'd say they were, unfortunately, sold out and, just think! he'd completely forgotten them this morning. He was not yet a complete fool. That would be the last straw, to have Mrs. Klingspuhr and her friends munching his oranges.

It wasn't because Mrs. Klingspuhr was Jewish that Jonassen disliked her. He was just as shocked as everyone else when the Germans started to hound the Jews. Before that, no one had ever given a thought to whether a person was a Jew or not. Although they were, of course, easy to pick out. You could see it in their faces — that certainly couldn't be denied. Just like Eskimos or Chinese people, who were nevertheless as good as you or me. But the difference was easy to see if you had eyes in your head and were able to size up people. And, as a businessman, you were simply forced to keep your eyes open. The whole secret lay in being able to see through your customers and knowing what they were going to say before they even opened their mouths. Now this Mrs. Klingspuhr, who had obviously been left in peace because she was married to a gentile, she, for instance, always asked what everything cost before she made a purchase. Even if it was only a bunch of parsley. "It's the little things people do that gives them away," he said to his wife, "Mrs. Klingspuhr is tight-fisted, like all Jews." His wife had protested mildly — always an occasion for him to give full rein to his ill-defined bitterness — and, just to contradict her, he hissed: "They're a foreign element in our midst, and if we don't keep them down, they'll bleed us to death."

Jonassen didn't know where those words came from, but that's how it often was. You heard so much in the course of a day, and some of it was bound to make an impression on you. Besides, it made you feel better to say things like that. Damned if he knew why. You felt in touch with the currents of the times. You weren't born yesterday, and it wasn't *your* fault that you never got that shop. Secret forces were eating away at the root of society. You were being drawn down by something, like water draining from a sink. Relentlessly. You were being bled to death. The Germans were a gang of thieves and cut-throats, but sometimes they saw things more clearly than others.

As the days pass, something is bound to make its impression on you. You have to talk about a bit of everything with your customers, and a few words might turn up that, perhaps, had a quite different meaning originally, perhaps not. They come from out of nowhere. They just appear. You make them your own. You start to use them. And, ultimately, they make life a little easier to bear and you take them to heart and never let them go again. Gently, they squirm into place in the gray mosaic of your mind and assume the color of the other tiles there, and one day you're sitting on your upside down potato crate and you see Mrs. Klingspuhr walking across the square and you feel that, under certain circumstances, you would be prepared to defend those twenty-five oranges to the death.

The greengrocer clenched his abused fists down in his pockets in unaccountable, trembling rage. There was something about that woman he couldn't stand. Rigidly, he watched her go and thought about how they treated Jews in Germany. He'd like to throw every one of those twenty-five blood oranges right at her head — and she'd be getting off lightly at that. What the hell business was it of hers if he was cold or not?

Mrs. Nielson walked up holding up two of her children by the hand. All she wanted was a bunch of carrots. The rush of customers asking for oranges was about to begin.

"Certainly, ma'am."

Jonassen looked benevolently at the two scrubbed, fair-haired children, and, in a sudden fit of generosity, reached around the back of the cash register and brought out two oranges which he put into their hands. "Those are for you, but don't tell anyone where you got them."

"Oh, that's really too much — for the children — and they've never tasted an orange in their lives — hard to believe, isn't it?"

The greengrocer shook his head as he wrapped half a newspaper around the carrots. "Ah," he said, "these are hard times, but we should do what we can for each other."

Unconsciously, he rubbed his hands the way his wife always did, grew angry with himself when he realized this, and stuck them in his pockets again.

He closed Mrs. Nielsen's hand over the change he had given her and said in a low, conspiratorial tone:

"Mrs. Klingspuhr didn't get an orange."

Then he tore a bag from its nail and took the oranges from the gaping children, put them into the bag and handed to Mrs. Nielsen:

"You had better take charge of the distribution," he said, and, despite Mrs.

Nielsen's protests, he wouldn't accept any payment for the oranges.

"Consider them a gift," he said, smiling warmly and openly, "I've gotten into the habit of doing a good deed daily, just like the boy scouts. Ha ha."

He looked as though some secret pact had been forged between them.

"Ugh," Mrs. Nielsen said to her husband, "there's something about that greengrocer I just can't stand. He gave me two oranges today — just think, *gave* them to me outright — and then he told me spitefully that Mrs. Klingspuhr hadn't gotten any. And, as far as I know, she buys everything from him. And she's always so sweet and friendly."

Her husband yawned behind his newspaper: "Oh well," he said indifferently, "he probably doesn't like Jews."

"It can't be very easy for her," Mrs. Nielsen said thoughtfully. "to be here, not knowing when they'll come to take her away. It's odd she doesn't flee like the others."

"Oh, she'll manage, I'm sure. Jews always do." Nielsen turned a page in the paper.

Mrs. Nielsen didn't answer. She stood looking out the window. There was still a little sun on the other side of the street. Because of the Klingspuhrs' bay-window overhead, the sun never reached farther into the Nielsen family's apartment than the outer edge of the windowsill.

She said: "It was so aggravating that we didn't get Schempinsky's apartment when they left. Imagine, people had been signed up for it from the day the Germans arrived. Isn't that disgusting? Actually to anticipate other people's misfortunes?"

Finally, Nielsen lowered the paper.

"What damned nonsense," he said sharply. "That list didn't force him to leave a single day before he absolutely had to, and *someone* has to live in the apartment until he comes back, don't they? One has to look at these things realistically."

"Yes, of course," Mrs. Nielsen said rather absentmindedly, "but just the same . . ."

She looked up at the bottom of the huge, overhanging bay that robbed them of sunlight and remembered that the Klingspuhrs had one room more than they did, despite the fact that the Klingspuhrs hadn't any children. That certainly didn't seem right. It would be wonderful to have a separate room for the children.

She said hesitantly: "Do you think — do you think that people have signed up for the Klingspuhrs' apartment as well?"

"Of course they have," said Nielsen, "but that doesn't mean you can't try. Go see our lawyer tomorrow; better late than never."

"Should I really?"

Mrs. Nielsen's kindly blue eyes filled with wonder. Then she caught sight of Mrs. Klingspuhr returning home with a full shopping net. She stopped and got in line at the fruit and vegetable wagon. When it was her turn, Jonassen spread his arms in a gesture of regret and said something that made the other customers laugh.

As Mrs. Klingspuhr crossed the street, she looked up and saw Mrs. Nielsen

in the window and gave her a friendly nod. Mrs. Nielsen returned her nod a little stiffly, quickly closed the curtain and stood a while, indecisive, her back to the window.

Of course, in a way, her husband was right. It wouldn't hurt Mrs. Klingspuhr the least little bit to sign up for the apartment. And it was surely only a matter of time before they started on the rest of the Jews. Those monsters.

The children's room could be done in white and light blue, with genuine nursery wallpaper and little chairs and a rocking horse — and, perhaps, in the not so distant future, a little light blue cradle.

Mrs. Nielsen smiled at the thought as she went out to the kitchen and peeled the two oranges and picked apart the sections, distributing them judiciously into four equal portions.

A Young Girl Becomes a Grandmother

She sat in the beauty parlor having a permanent. Ivar and the children wouldn't recognize her if they saw her now. The steam from the baking rollers condensed and ran in drops down her forehead which was red and blotchy from the heat and nervousness. Without the redeeming frame of soft, well-groomed hair her features dissolved, surrendered to exhaustion; the corners of her mouth hung down and the furrows at the base of the nose stood out like nasty thoughts. The strained eyes stared into the pale pink mirror at a face that recalled the torture of witches in the Middle Ages: the face of a woman of fifty, a terribly naked, frightened face, held up by an appalling octopus of a machine whose long arms each held a small wad of darkly-colored hair rolled in its claw.

In the middle of this torment she thought: Dorte's right, when I become a grandmother I'll have to stop this. And she tried to imagine what it would be like to "stop this," how she would look then, how she would affect her surroundings. But she couldn't. There was a large void in her consciousness and her imagination couldn't fill it in. She lacked a model. Seen through a child's eyes, Grandma had remained young till the day she died. With other women Grandma's age, who resolutely wore matronly dresses and resignedly let their gray hair grow out, it had been something altogether different in a way that wasn't clear.

She gasped and wrinkled her forehead: "Miss," she cried, "I'm burning, hurry!"

A white smock came running and blew cold air on her red-hot scalp. Ah, what relief! The machine gave her a headache, and, as a rule, ruined the rest of the day for her. Each time she went she swore it would be the last time that she would subject herself to such torture — but when the dyed hair again began to

bristle in all directions and refused to be set in a wave, when Ivar said: "Say, don't you think you should have something done with your hair?" and Dorte hopped onto the arm of the chair and took out her pocket-comb: "Hold still a minute, Mom, you're a little scraggly in back—" then, with a sigh, she went to the phone and made an appointment. There was nothing else to do. But this couldn't go on forever. She was very sure of that, especially after Dorte's comment the other day.

Dorte was lovely in her pregnancy, appealing and natural. There was something so secure and expectant about the heavily swaying figure. And everything she said was so witty and affectionate at the same time, and was never intended to give offense, absolutely not. But perhaps there was a slight undertone of weariness—in that condition one so easily gets irritated: "Listen, Mom, when you become a grandmother you're really going to have to stop being a young girl!" And neither Preben's good-natured laughter: "Dorte's jealous, Mother-in-law, she's afraid people will think you're the baby's mother," nor Ivar's quick pat on the cheek could stop the icy, lonely feeling that took hold of her and seemed all at once to tear her away from all those she cared for. Her hands grew clammy and fear grew in her like a white cloud being borne before the storm: a young girl. "You look like a child," Ivar had told her the first time he saw her, and: "You look almost like a child yourself," he said in wonder, moved, as she lay in the clinic with Dorte in her arms—later it became an affectionate shake of the head: "You'll never be more than twenty." Later still, only a single comment, friendly and with slightly quizzical admiration: "You have incredible vitality; other women your age have begun to slow down a little."

Later, no one mentioned the subject at all, but there was a tension in the air that made her feel insecure in her own home. And lonely. First there was Dorte. She began to go out with her friends instead of her mother, a quick kiss in the hallway: "Bye, Mom." She had to stand on her toes to kiss her tall, slender daughter, and, after the door closed, she stood looking at it in confusion, a hint of perfume about her and just a touch of bitterness in her heart: "Good-bye, Dorte." Then there were Michael's friends from high school who became so quiet and polite when she appeared. She patted Michael on the shoulder, straightened his tie, and walked over to the piano with an assuredness that came of being conscious of well-formed legs and fine shoes—and then: a sudden loneliness settled around her in the middle of the Schubert piece, an empty feeling, like after a door is closed, and an uncertain glance over her shoulder at a group of yawning, quietly whispering boys—Michael in the corner with a book.—

Since then, something unseen had collapsed around her. She was often aware of this languor around her. It turned into depression, irritation, and whispers about consideration and the change of life. It turned into Ivar's pre-occupation and Dorte's comment, which this atmosphere had produced the way steam turned into hot drops of water on her forehead.

The timer rang and the woman in the white smock turned off the power and blew cold air on the metal coils again before she carefully removed them and ran the small, steaming, snake-like curls of hair through her fingers. She smiled at the woman in the mirror and thought: she must have been very attractive at one time, but if I were her, I'd dress more my age.

Wash and set and an hour in the drier. She was too tired to read the magazines that were stuck into her hands and she hated to keep staring at herself in the mirror. She closed her eyes and thought of Dorte. It could happen any time now. But the pleasure that usually filled her at the thought of the little, new life turned instead into a strange, dark fear emerging in the shadows of Dorte's comment: "Now that you'll soon be a grandmother . . ."

Yes, then what, she thought, what will I do then? And isn't it really too late now? A sweet, new thought appeared from out of nowhere: just think, to be able to relax for once! To submit to the fatigue that lay like a throbbing pain over her eyes, the fatigue natural to her years — to be little sick, a little weak, sleep late in the morning and have breakfast brought up to her, retire early from Michael's graduation parties and Ivar's business luncheons, fight against pressure that always forced her to live a little beyond her energies. Unwind, as they said at the beauty parlor, unwind completely. Then what? How would they take it? How would it make her look? Would she talk and laugh a little less? Stop using nail polish and enjoying Michael's peculiar jokes? In every way just "stop." Stop along her way, like a railroad car shunted onto a siding. Give rise to something all by herself, find out just exactly who she was deep inside, who she had always been, independent of age and circumstance. Sit home in the evening and let her knitting slip through her fingers, take off her glasses and wipe her running eyes, nod a little, doze a bit. — No, that was wrong. She didn't have running eyes, and she didn't even use glasses. That would happen when she grew really old. Yes, she was well aware of how it would all be when she turned 70, but that was so far away anyway. — She felt puzzled and frightened. She had never felt this way before. She had always known what was expected of her, or Ivar had known, and, before him, others had told her or had made her sense what was expected of her.

She was a young girl then and no one had ever told her when to stop being one or what it would be like once you had stopped. Everyone took it for granted that she was a young girl, and so did she. Only in recent years had she begun to feel this weariness with her surroundings, and she didn't want to know whether the feeling started or ended with her. It was just there.

Before becoming a young girl she had run around her grandmother's hotel, being spoiled by businessmen and childless couples on vacation. She had always done whatever she chose to do. Grandma busied herself with her book-keeping, spoiled her like all the others when she had the time, and, otherwise, neglected her in an affectionate way. Grandma was sweet but she didn't behave like an older woman should. It's true that Grandma had been what you might call youthful, strongly-scented and rustling of silk. Around her memory arose the smell of peppermint liqueur, like the fragrance of wildflowers at a gravesite. Once in a while, she would accompany the child to the train and warn her to be nice to the lady who was waiting for her at the station in Copenhagen, and who was easily recognizable because of her red hair and her tall husband. The lady was her mother, but she didn't find that out until after she was grown. And Grandma wasn't her grandmother, but someone who had simply taken her in because, to the great surprise of everyone, she was born at the hotel during the only night her mother had spent there. Her mother was an actress, but "you

couldn't tell by the look of her." Not that she was an actress, because that was obvious enough, but that she was going to have a baby. What commotion there must have been that night: A mid-wife was summoned in a hurry and a doctor, who, luckily, at the hotel, had rolled up his pyjama sleeves and washed the child in the washstand while Grandma had rushed in and out with water and shredded sheets to tie the umbilical cord with. And her red-headed, faithless mother in the tall, white bed with the heavy down covers! A cheerful eighteen-year-old who, with both curiosity and disgust, regarded the screaming, wrinkled creature that was placed in her arms by a forbidding Grandma, bosom bristling, in her tight, black lasting dress: "You should be ashamed of yourself, you really should be! At a hotel!" Eight days later the young mother delightedly took her leave and went on tour in the provinces. She left behind the father's address as her only legacy to the bawling baby girl, who now closed her tiny mouth around one of the sugar-straw pacifiers Grandma had herself carefully chewed for her, instead of the maternal breast which had shirked its duty.

Whenever she went to Copenhagen the red-headed lady dragged her into Tivoli, Valencia, and toy stores, where she received whatever she pointed to, and that wasn't so little because Grandma knew nothing about such things, and, besides, there was entertainment enough without toys at the big, provincial hotel.

She was lovely, the red-headed lady. Her scent wasn't as strong as Grandma's but better. Her scent was easier to remember than her face. The tall man who had made her so easy to find at first turned into a smaller man after a while, and the smaller man turned into an older man with a beard. He was the nicest of them all and wasn't, like the other, obsessed with the lady. After her mother's death, she wondered whether one of the men had been her father. If so, it had probably been the older, bearded man because he would lift her onto the carousel horse at Tivoli and kiss her on the mouth when she had once again been put on the train and told to say hello to Grandma and come back again soon.

The red-headed lady died suddenly of tuberculosis and it was only some years later that she learned the truth about her. She missed her a little, the way one misses a kitten that has run away. The trips to Copenhagen stopped and the nice man silently took his place in her memory and kept his mouth closed about his secret, just like Grandma, who, despite all pleas or questions, wouldn't reveal her father's name. "He's done his duty," she would say. Possibly she meant financially, possibly just duty itself. No one ever learned.

She straightened herself in the chair and sighed. It was definitely a sign of age to think of old times. She never did that normally. If the subject came up, she would say; "I've had a wonderful childhood," without going into detail. Actually, it was Ivar who had forbidden her to talk about it. At parties, whenever she betrayed her familiarity with hotel life, brands of wine, and the cost of dinner at the turn of the century, he would explain: "My wife is a hotel daughter," and was sufficiently misunderstood that he didn't have to lie outright. He had no desire to approach too closely his wife's highly illegitimate, if romantic, arrival in this world.

Ivar! From the first time he danced with her among the blue and red lights of the hotel garden till today . . . Pot-bellied and easy-going, in a secure and

relatively comfortable position in life, he treated her in the same affectionate yet distant way that Grandma had and that the children did. He was the one around whom her life turned or, rather, the one who made it possible for her to exist. "A young girl should get married," Grandma had said. She herself had been a serving girl at the hotel before she married the owner, which made her a rich widow ten years after the wedding. Grandma would also say: "You have to keep young," even though she limited her own efforts in this direction to heavy, indiscriminate use of cosmetics, ornate brassieres and corsets, along with strikingly short dresses, pulled over her fat, ponderous body like a shiny, black sheath. Poor, dear Grandma.

She realized that her ears were burning and wondered if the attendant had forgotten her. Her hair must be dry by now. She crept out of the roaring dryer and bent toward the mirror. Her face suddenly looked strange, as though she hadn't seen it for many years, and people seldom grow handsomer with the years. Maybe it was the fault of the dress. She looked down at the bright floral print material and suddenly wished that she was wearing something dark and sedate, with a bit of white at the neck. She had been very fond of the floral print but now it was altogether too brilliant a contrast to the tired, worried face in the mirror. She knew at once that she would never wear it again. Not for anything in the world. She thought of Grandma's black lasting dress and her short hair. But Grandma had never become a grandmother.

She began to remove the hairpins. Outside the curtain she heard voices and a heavy tread on the linoleum floor. The insipid smell of Brilliantine lingering behind the dusty net curtain made her suddenly feel ill. Her lips turned blue and she breathed deeply to suppress the violent nausea she felt. The face in the mirror blurred as she grew faint. She clasped her breast hard. Slowly, the attack wore off, her blood again began to flow regularly, and her face returned bit by bit to its normal dull yellowish color.

She heard the phone ring and the jingling sound of the curtain rings as the curtain was pulled to one side. Then the white smock was standing beside her and it turned out to have a kindly, round, twenty-year-old face: "There's a phone call for you, ma'am, it seems urgent. I think it's your husband."

Oh God, it must be Dorte, then it's happened. Just so long as it all went well. Agitated and trembling as though she had been in an accident, and feeling as though it were ten years since she had left home, she lifted the receiver to her ear: "Is that you, Ivar? What? A boy? How is everything now?"

She was on the verge of tears as she hung up. Mainly because she felt no pleasure, absolutely none. What was wrong with her? She felt lost. She heard Ivar's overjoyed voice: "Congratulations, Grandma!", and she envisioned Dorte lying in a fine, white bed with flowers on the table and Preben bending over her. A little, new face lay silent and closed in the ruffle-draped cradle. And she felt old and terribly superfluous. She went back to the chair behind the curtain and let young girl remove the rest of the hairpins and comb out her hair. "I hope it wasn't anything serious," the girl said politely.

She paid her bill and slowly walked down the street. Walked as though she were in a vacuum, as though she were still a little deaf from the drier. She had become a grandmother. As she was sitting there getting a permanent wave it had

happened. Luckily, it had gone well, and it was a boy—she had to force her thoughts to focus on these facts because, left to their own devices, they wanted to go elsewhere, like runaway horses. They led her back, ever so gently, as though they were searching for something she had lost along the way, something that had to be returned to her so that she might be herself again and enjoy the things that were close to her.

As a child, everyone had found her lovely and witty, and she had felt it important to be lovely and witty, and she would repeat her jokes the way all children do when adults laugh at them. Then she was confirmed and embraced by a tearful Grandma in purple silk, as a change from black. And all the guests and Grandma's many friends, who ordinarily received extra-special things in the little, velvet-upholstered parlor behind the office, told her how lovely she looked. Even back then she felt how she would grow lovelier just hearing these things said, and she was very happy. She never learned to do anything practical because Grandma had pretensions and wanted to raise her in idleness and luxury with marriage the only object.

Ivar had such an elegant walk. Springy, with his trunk swaying slightly. He had come into her life through Grandma's parlor, and later he confided to her that the only reason he had sought out that gathering place of the business world elite was because he had seen her portrait hanging half-life-size in the studio of the town photographer, and he had fallen in love with her immediately. He thought it delightful that she was so impractical and so undomestic: "Klara was born to make life brighter for the rest of us," Grandma had once told him, and Klara smiled and brightened the parlor and was like a ray of sunshine wherever she went. "Be careful," Grandma had said to her, "a young girl's virtue is worth a lot of money to the right man." But she hadn't needed any warning. Ivar never dreamt of anticipating the traditional pace of courtship, and she herself had no dark or uncontrollable urges to fight against. "You're as fresh and cool as a lily," Ivar had said in the first days of his infatuation, when the joy he felt had made him utterly lyrical. And she loved him and clung to him. For her, he became identical with all the heroes she read about in the movie novels that she broadened her horizons with at night in the double bed in the large, bright corner room, into which she moved every year after the vacation season, when the annual two-week guests had disappeared with their creaking, new suitcases, their displays of every piece of clothing they owned, their poor tips and their boring conversation at the round table in the sitting room. She married him and was very happy and needed Grandma a little less than before.

When the children arrived Ivar would laugh at her because she held them so very awkwardly and was afraid they might break in her hands. And he laughed, too, when fifteen-year-old Dorte had grown taller than she, so that people thought they were sisters. Everything was so good, so safe and just so right, and seemed so immutable. "Mom just *can't* figure anything out," Michael would say affectionately as she sat fumbling with some yarn that refused to submit to her will, and: "You really haven't any conception of money," Ivar would say with a friendly smile as she stood there amazed at having no more housekeeping money in the middle of the month. And she recognized this tone of indulgent tenderness and yielded to it and came to love it.

She was holding on to a strap in the streetcar with her snakeskin purse under her arm, and she started as a young girl touched her on the shoulder: "Wouldn't you like to sit down?" She sat down with a pale smile. How she must look! It took a lot to get anyone in a streetcar to give up his seat. It suddenly struck her that it had been a long time since she last rode in streetcar with Ivar or, in fact, since she had gone out with him at all. He had been so busy lately! Never an evening at the theater or a visit with anyone. Only a single business luncheon when he had delivered the usual toasts occasioned by the beauty of the ladies present, and by her in particular. He was sweating around the collar of his dress-shirt that evening and his double chin had hidden the top of the collar. Two large cowlicks gleamed in the electric light. He looked tired. She had tried to catch his eye but hadn't succeeded, and a sudden fear had gripped her, a gloom, a terrible feeling of not being needed. And later she had gone into his room in her lace nightgown—because it had been a long time since he had come to her room—and awakened him and asked if there was anything that he was unhappy about, whether business wasn't as good as it had been—shyly and feeling as though she were treading bottomless depths. That, too, had failed completely. He had grunted something crossly into his pillow and turned onto his other side. He dismissed her as though she were an annoying child. The problem was, she no longer could stand being treated like a child. It made her feel empty inside, and, for the first time in her life, she had felt completely alone, as though, gradually, she had been deprived of her right to participate in others' thoughts and worries, through no fault of her own and without having noticed a thing before it was too late.

And it was the same with the children. If she asked Michael about his school work he would laugh loudly and say: "Oh, come on, Mom, are we going to have a conversation now?" And she could see nothing funny in that. She felt hurt and terribly afraid. And she became convinced that no one would miss her if she died. And she couldn't understand what she had done wrong with herself and with her life that no one would miss her if she died.

She could, of course, one way or another, try to do some good in society. It was a thought that really had crossed her mind lately. Take on some task and leave her family with the memory of a responsible woman—like Aunt Agnes, who was in the Women's Voluntary Army Corps and had once stood next to the crown-princess—wear a uniform (the cap really wouldn't look very good on her) and take a first-aid course. Just mean something to someone, feel as though she were needed somewhere in the world.

She had completely forgotten Dorte, and it was only after she had gotten off the streetcar and begun to walk down the street that she remembered her promise to Ivar to go to the clinic right away. It's awful how I'm just running around in circles today, she thought. You would think I'd lost my mind. She felt incredibly tired as she waved down a taxi and climbed into it.

Yes, I'll have to buy a black dress, she thought, or maybe a dark blue one, with just a little white frill at the neck, flats and practical stockings. And she would move slowly and with dignity, and eat fattening things to gain a little weight so her face would more closely correspond to the image. She was a grandmother, and she was certain that she was expected to enter into the role.

She took out her compact and looked into the mirror, straightened the fashionable, little hat and ran the powder puff over her nose and forehead. But she didn't put on any lipstick because, once again, she saw Grandma before her with those poppy-colored lips against the sallow skin.

When she reached the clinic and heard the feeble, dissonant crying of infants and glimpsed the cradles behind the cream-colored doors she grew faint and nervous, like a debutante before the curtain rises. She straightened up and said to a nurse: "Yes it's my daughter, I'd like you to know . . ."

Like a stranger, she knocked on the door and opened it — saw Dorte in bed in light blue crepe satin, Preben bending over the cradle, and Ivar, who got up and came over and kissed her, his eyes wet with emotion. With dignity, the way she had imagined, she walked over to the bed and with a large, stiff, grandmotherly smile bent over the light blue figure and kissed her on the forehead: "Congratulations, little Dorte," she said, and her heart began to pound wildly in her anxiety. She felt — as though she hadn't dressed properly for a party. Dorte turned away in confusion and Ivar said in a worried voice: "I think it's taken a lot out of you, Klara, you don't look at all well," and Preben pulled a chair out for her: "sit down, Mother-in-law, and get your bearings."

She tried to laugh but was completely at a loss as to how a grandmother was supposed to laugh: "What nonsense, I'm alright — but I have to see the baby." Stiffly, she walked over to the cradle and bent over it. My grandchild, she thought, and, at the same time, had an uncomfortable feeling of perspective, as though she were seeing herself mirrored in infinite series. "Isn't he sweet," she said, and could tell that she had said it because it was just something one said under the circumstances. In panic, she continued to address the downy, sleeping head: "How about a little smile for Grandma, honey."

The embarrassed silence behind her grew. She felt them exchange worried, questioning looks, and her thoughts grew chaotic. She didn't know what they expected her to do or what she had done wrong. She wanted to take the child in her arms and bawl, and she would have given a million to be wearing a longer dress and shoes that were less chic — and, at the same time, she wildly longed for everything to be the way it was before and wished someone would save her from being carried away by this scalding wave of loneliness.

Then Ivar cleared his throat and said: "Don't you see how much he looks like you?" She turned around in confusion and looked at the child again curiously, with loving interest, because, now that Ivar mentioned it, she could see the resemblance. And slowly her face took on the expression that the atmosphere in the room demanded of it. She felt that she was once again functioning the way she was expected to, like a wheel settling into a rut, settling into place with a scraping sound, offering only slightly pathetic resistance.

And she turned to them and said in her high, clear, young girl's voice: "I can't believe I'm really a grandmother," and they all laughed with relief because she said it so strangely, with the old, happy-childish voice, which often might have gotten on their nerves in the past, but which was, in any case, identical with her, just as she was identical with it. And Ivar said in a relieved voice: "Well, now you're yourself again, I guess it took a while to get over the shock — Grandma, ha! ha! Who would believe it to look at you . . ."



ASTORIA, NEW YORK 1988

My father rummages in the basement:
He heaves cardboard, Christmas
paper, crushed metal toys,
and the torn past
into black plastic bags.
He works late into the night.

This is not his home;
he is only the visiting son,
never the returning son,
and I am *his* daughter.
I follow him downstairs
as he digs through the years:
dusty turn of the century books,
old Italian letters,
the furs, the sequins dresses,
the tools his father made
from iron and wood.

My father buries and digs,
wraps this hot summer evening
deep among rags.
He raises his voice
and something broken
falls down the stairs:
the dead father, the dead sister,
the mother who claims him,
wants him and cries, the mother
he makes cry.
Though my father does not cry
his voice is an animal sobbing.

He cleans the cellar where he says
there are no rats,
only a few spiders and decades of dirt
from the beginning of this house,
from the lost teeth of his boyhood.
He shrinks in the hollow room
and grows tall again. He becomes
not my father. He shouts
at the garbage, calls it names.

My father is lost in the basement
of his childhood. I watch him.
Upstairs his mother rolls over his head
in her wheel chair.
This does not hurt him. But it does.

PATRICE VECCHIONE



KIMIKO HAHN

After-Birth

Waiting for my room in the Recovery Room
I spotted some dried fnesia blossoms
among brown paper towels on the floor
and wondered,
What did the after-birth look like?
You smile, *like a heart.*

Removing a Diaphragm

in the shower
I finally notice how different
the folds of my sex have healed and contracted
these past four months.
Well a whole body pushed its way through
you remind me.
And when I look over at her
trying so hard to keep her head up
I faintly remember that moment,
thighs wide, knees and heels pulled up,
your hands open.

The Older Child

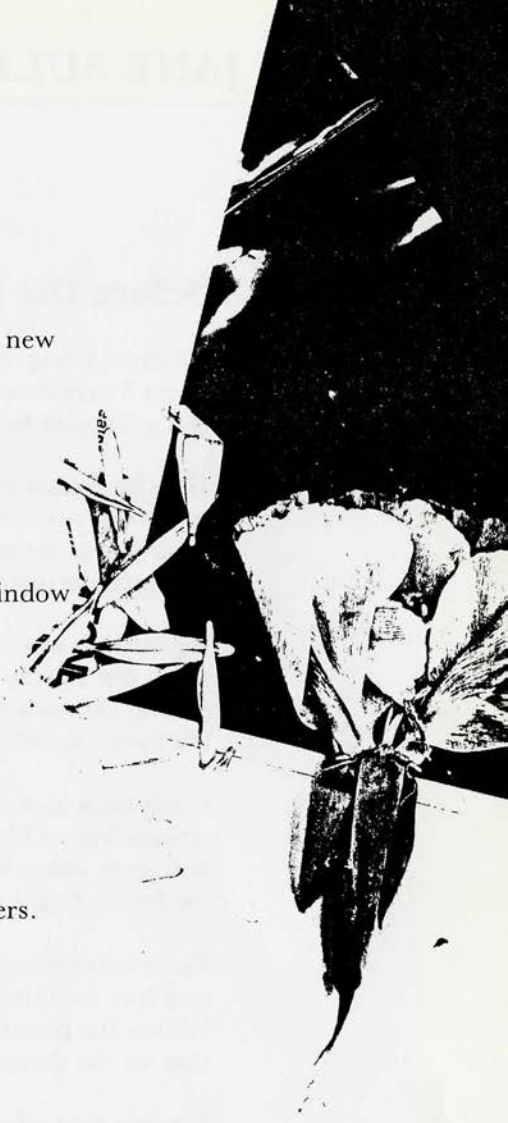
What will become her first recollection—
the sperm whale battling the giant squid
in the dark exhibition at the museum?
looking up at 3 am
to see her sister pressed against two white breasts?
or maybe her yellow room
filled with the noise of boys in the vacant lot:
bang, boom-boom, fuckyoufuckyoufuck you.

Something

Resting her on my chest like a sleeping cat
I cannot recall my older daughter so small and new
and fear the memory of this
complete, absolute *something*
will grow away as she does
and fear the hand will never remember
stroking her head as she nursed
or fear I'll forget her soft cry
when I look up from sleep and see you lift her,
4 am, the curtains blowing in and out of the window
as the whole house breathes.

Fist

When I see Rei explore her fist
with her fingers,
I see a botanist examining a flower with tweezers.
It is a mundane flower
from an extraordinary climate
where the sunlight overwhelms the altitude,
multiple colors persist in the pink light,
and the fragrance
attracts the goats for miles
to clamber up crags
for a taste of what the sky must taste like
in a pure region
before the ozone layer degenerated
from our hairspray cans.
The leaves curl, slender and dark,
into a stem so stubborn
I can only think of my own childhood in the suburbs
and cry because I love her
like a mangy pleased goat.



Before the Point

We drive along the eastern ridge of the Sierras
where I once found solace in the abandoned gut
of a gold mine facing the Pacific.

How far we are from our beginnings, two women
trained in years of thought. You say: "Human
souls repeat the activity of who they are
in a manner unique to themselves.

We butt up against molded highway steel
along the Truckee River, whiplashes of snow
pulling the car sideways. This is a small danger.
We have just left your husband.

I look back and see you in a southern hollow,
sounds from a bluegrass sonnet on a hammered
dulcimer; cameras click as gold circles
the fourth finger of prediction.

But it is not enough to sacrifice every other need
and love for this life of marriage and separation.
We see the pattern, the search for passion, the fear
that we cut down everything that gets in the way.

We stop and rehook the snow chains. See each other
in the blinding night. The city is a distant thought.

Artifacts

This beautiful cruel land escaped
the artifice of cabled lights.
I came here with a lover who returned
east for manly romance. As she went
I let go; followed the unwritten
directions of the ridge.

Was this world new where death
was heroic and destruction divine,
or was this the native lands where
unknown gods couldn't protect us
from air, water and the rising mountain.

I was vigilant. Alone. This beautiful
cruel land pushed me out from long hours
by the woodstove. Undisguised sierra spines
rubbed against a blue chill, where splintered
footpaths of the penitentes

Braced a language of blood and their uninitiated
sons rumbled like sawblades through these
sunbleached highlands clutching artifacts
of a strange mestizo past. I tracked the winter
grass in dying light. She went. I let go.

She was memory. I was the disciple of the ridge
where air cradled gravity's afterburn
in crackling sunset.

“Listen to me . . .”

Listen to me
My message is simple . . .
put down
breathe out quiet
stretch your body on the firmest bed
let me lay beside you
talk to me until the mood turns into fire
reach for me & don't miss
feel me wanting to make myself gift
unto the risk that causes me loss
treasure me with words that sound
simple/let me cry when i am
fluidless listen with me
to the door slams & patient signals
caress my breathing
I AM NO PERSON!/i am god's
woman-flame come to warm you

the earth is a cold place
to be/& be alone.

BLUES IN A SILVER CHORD

for Tabala — My Son/My Sun

And even though
i say
my son this
my son that
I wonder who you
are now/during
the voice change
the stretching
the mind seepage toward
mystery & power

What makes your toes tingle
what makes you laugh
which women look beautiful
what stream of consciousness
over-flows

are you courageous
can you give
do you lack salt
have you broken any bones
do you ever shout
sit alone/like
parked at a window
and frightened by your
own strangeness stay
out

are you pretty
have you kissed with your tongue
made any enemies
do you remember me —
Tabala's Mama
the hard-walk woman
with the striking tongue
can you still say my
name glad that you know
me as mother

My son . . . O . . . My Sun!

IN ADDITION TO TERRORISM

I fear thief-laden subways
the creepish smell of hallway
urine/hopeless hunger
homeless destinies
murderous injustice
shameless poverty
lopsided quagmires forcing
acceptance of rich man's law
or lawlessness

I fear the insensitivity
of the young who age
10x's their weight when
a gun shoots on TV
or in the street

I fear the bureaucratic
tangle enslaving dreams
taxing labor
stealing freedom from
the disenfranchised

I fear:
dim vision & impotent politicians
wealthy health care
indifferent medical men
poor whites as poor as
poor blacks
inarticulate Hispanics with
the punch-power of bulls
illiterate pushers
drugged-out intellectuals
well-groomed criminals
heartless gun-slingers
dead-eye knife throwers
self-taught Ninja
steel-handed knuckles —
those who've vowed to never
cry . . .

I fear Nature at the
end of a rope/abused
indignant/forced into
a posture of revenge
I fear the world as it quakes
wind as it shatters
rain as it roars
fire contained in nuclear packets

I fear the insanity coupling
with Power/Nancy & Ronnie
illusion/delusion
the salivating greed
in the hollow breast of
corporate men/I fear
the bomb's aim
the intention of destroyers
the rituals of War
those who imitate Hitler
those who imitate God

I fear the Sun is about
to forsake us
I fear the ocean will freeze
I fear gas in the air
I fear chemicalized soil
I fear the Godless —
the devil's disciples living
in White Houses/I fear the
spiritless & soulless
inhabitants of human
bodies/I fear the
eventuality that will be
World War III.

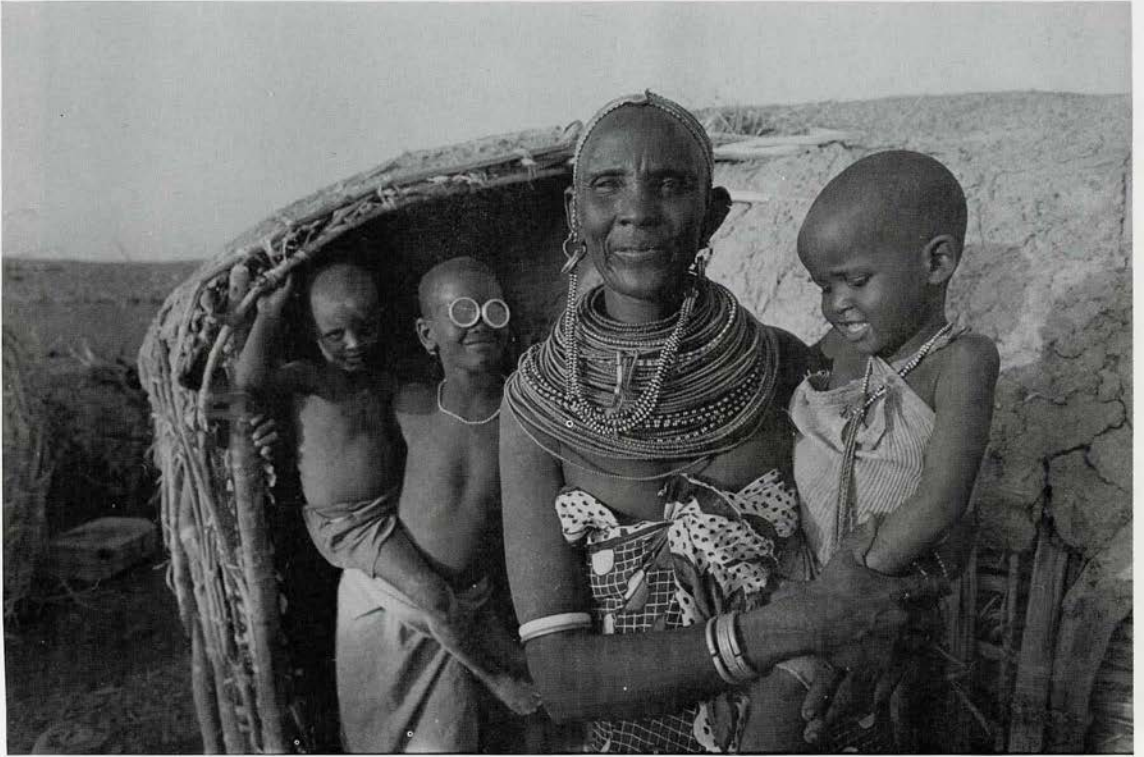
LOIYANGALANI: PLACE OF CONTRASTS, “PLACE OF TREES”

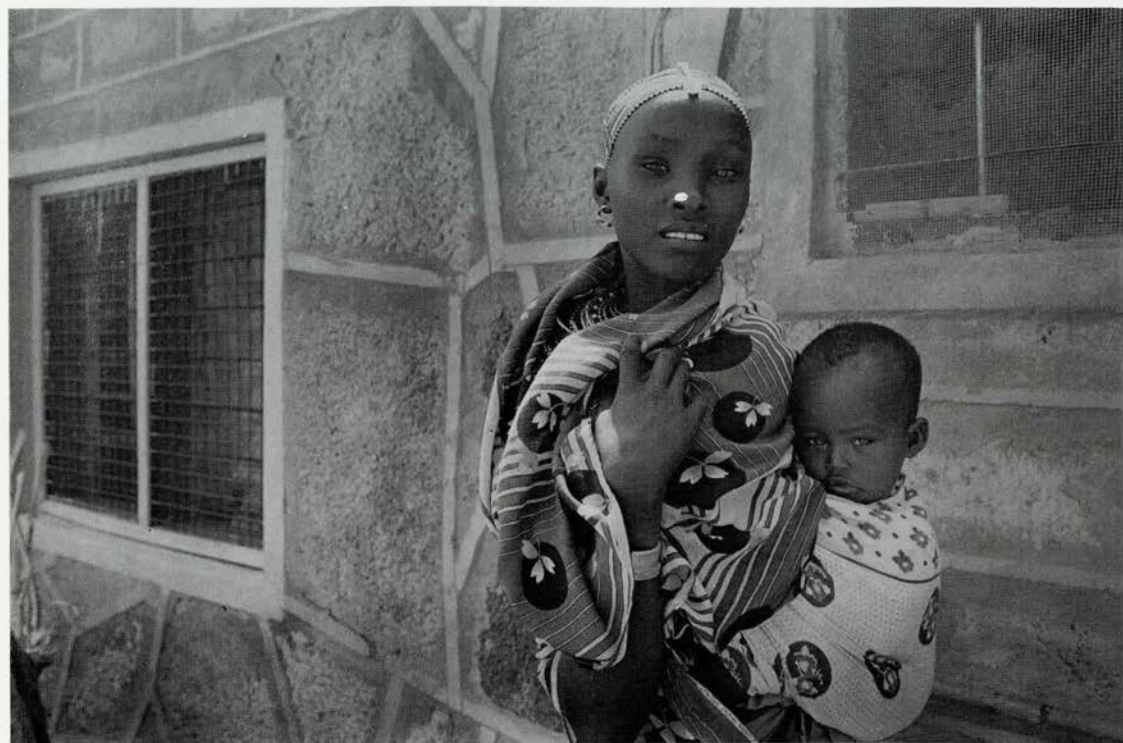
AMY ZUCKERMAN

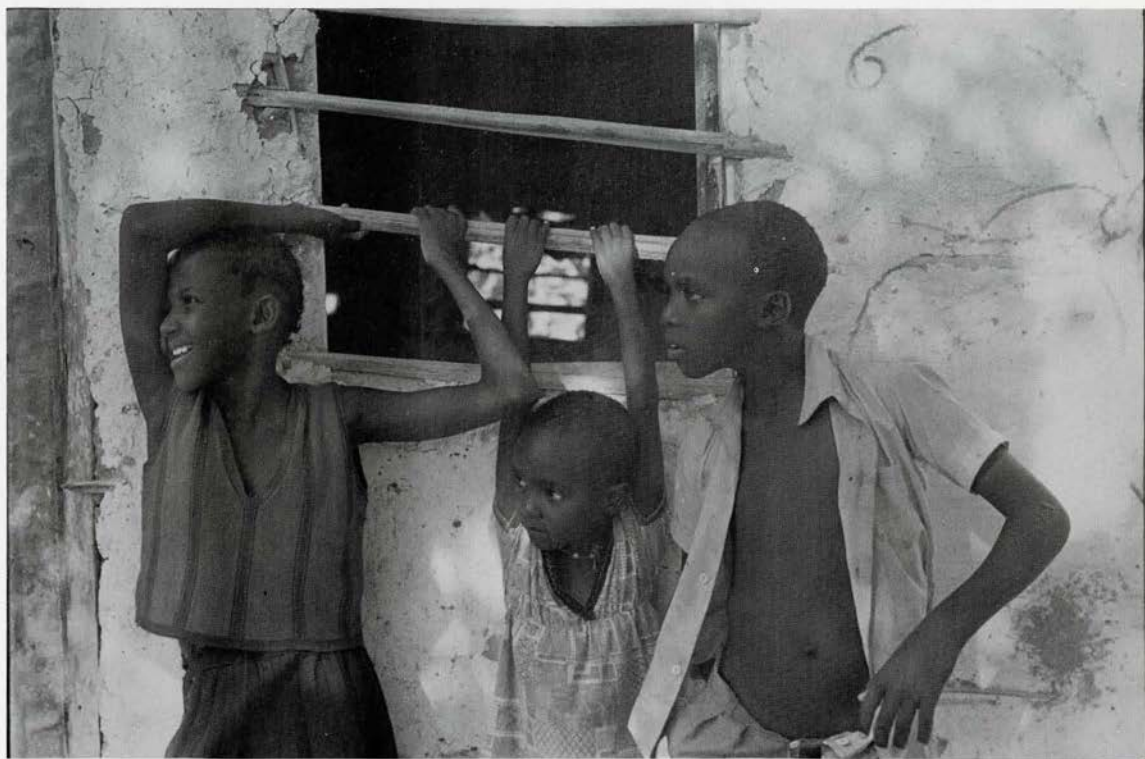
Loiyangalani, a Maa word meaning “a place of trees,” is a small town/village resting on the southeastern shore of Lake Turkana, Kenya. Known as one of the last “frontiers” on the tourist circuit, encircled by desert and littered with stumble-sure lava fields, Loiyangalani is an oasis sandwiched between Mt. Kulal, the source of the fresh hot springs, and Lake Turkana, the largest alkaline lake in Africa (120 miles long and 30 miles wide). The temperatures reach an easy 110 degrees in the shade. One can see heat waves rising from the desert floor by mid-morning and as the sun sets turbulent winds begin ferociously stirring up dust and distorting sounds.

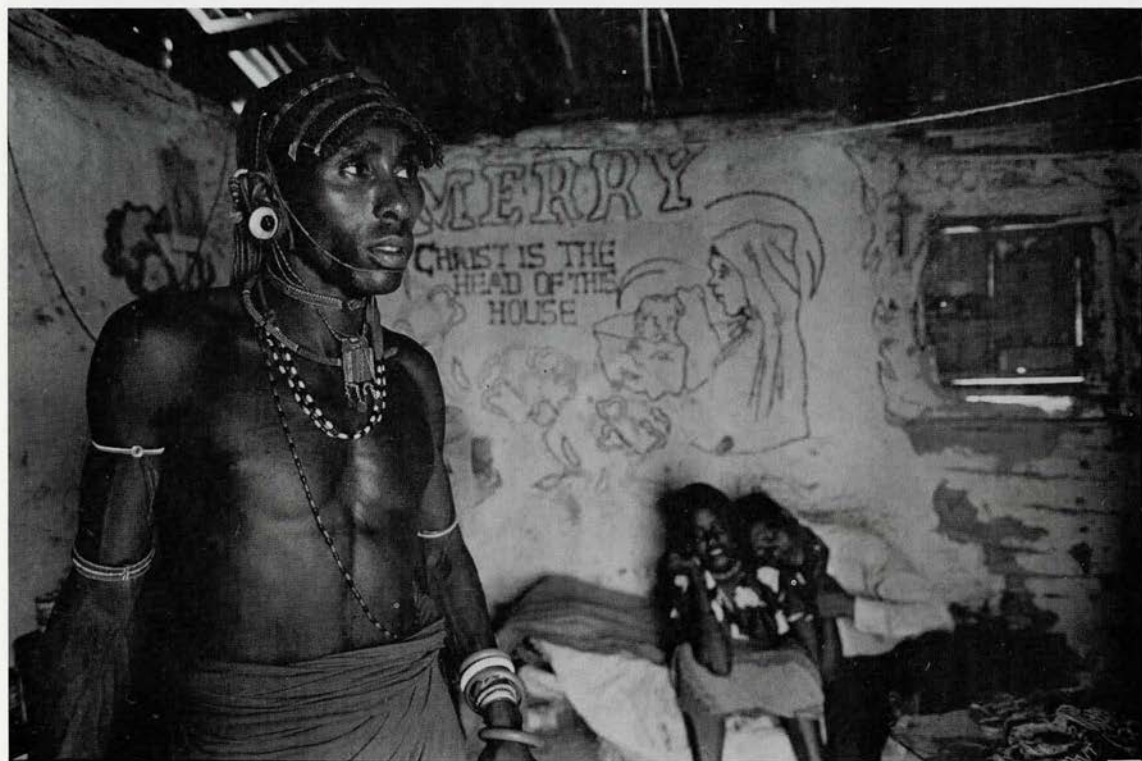
There is a desolate feeling about this place to an outsider like myself. A dusty main road runs through the center of town flanked by five dukkas (stores), four butcheries, and numerous hotels which are the local versions of tea houses. This was my backdrop for the four months I stayed in Loiyangalani in 1987 during my third visit over the course of the last five years. This time I had decided to rent a small hut for thirty cents a day rather than burden my surrogate mother Mama Rebecca. My home, constructed of an intricate network of palm fronds, twigs, palm logs, mud and a scrap metal door with a nebulous twisted wire and a tiny intimidating lock, gave me shelter, a place to cook and permitted me some privacy and security for my few possessions.

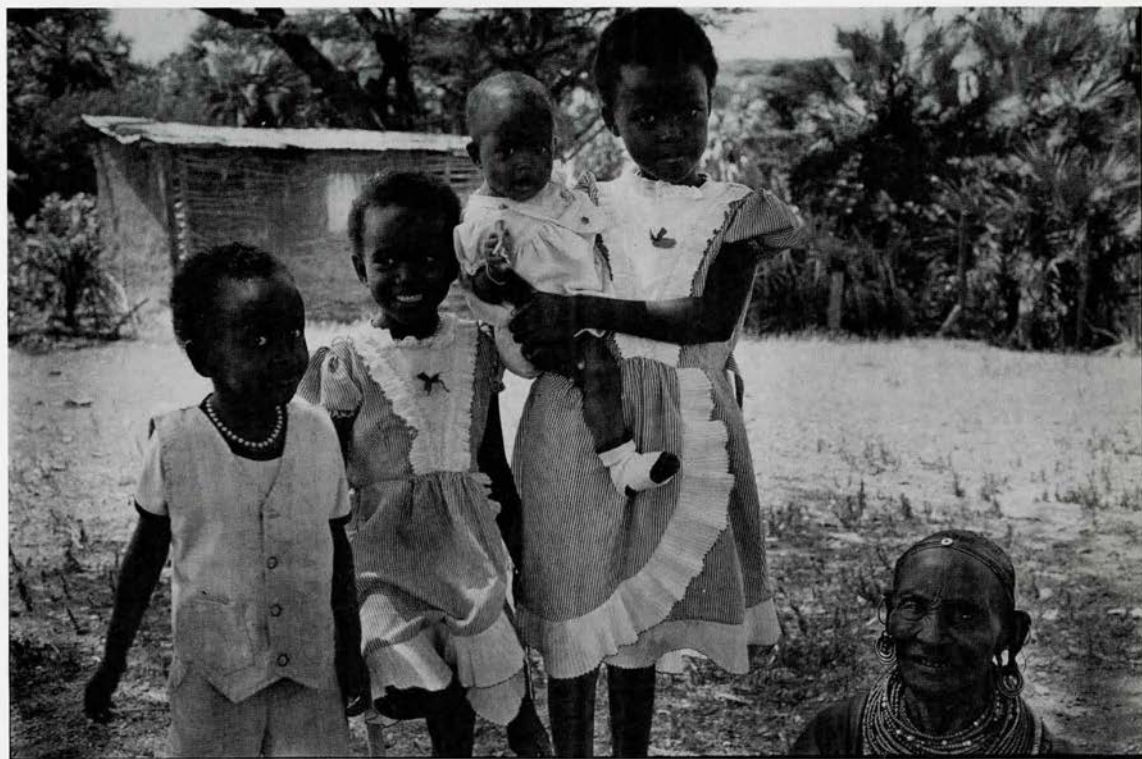
Loiyangalani traditionally hosts pastoral nomads who predominantly come to “the place of trees” to water their cattle, camels and goats. The Rendille, Samburu, Turkana, El Molo and most recently the Luo were the indigenous people of the area until the Italian Catholic Mission and German Lodge rolled into the area approximately thirty years ago. It was when the Mission and Lodge business came that the process of change truly began. Home now to about 3000 people, the growing settlement is a microcosm in which tribal and nomadic traditions constantly confront the imperatives of modernity.











Beginning the Trek

'Allo? 'Allo?

Mother cow licks baby cow in the street
and they say
another earthquake will come
the skies are clear
at the bus stop

I went to the shrine
in the marketplace, and the fortune teller's
parrot picked a card for me
the card was Shiva
it said you didn't love me, there was
another woman, it said
everything was destroyed

here comes the beggar playing violin
and the vendors push their early morning
wagons to the market
the beggar has *tika* on his forehead
red mark of reverence
he's been up early
to visit the shrine

the shrine of Shiva
God of Destruction
his eyes are alert, I give him
a nickel, I can still hear
your voice on the phone this morning
the song is a Sherpa song
I love you.

Kathmandu, Nepal, August 23, 88.



Coming into Berethanti

The trek
is more than covering distance

Who needs you, for instance?
Who speaks for the light inside?
What landscape strikes the heart
and feels like home?

Coming down steps and terraces
looking out over the valley
golden rice waves
ready to harvest, the same rice
stood up green spears in the water
when you began

rice buckwheat millet hay
waves of grain in the sun
grown into food

two small girls
with pink wildflowers
come up from the river
singing.

Berethanti, Nepal, September 30, 88.

• ई • सुँर • य •

Before the Earthquake

ਦੇ • ਗੁਰ • ਗਾਧਰ • ਧਰੇ •

I watch the windows of the night
close down
hear the shutters click
and think of your photograph
pulling it out
is like picking at an old sore
and watching it bleed



I called you tonight
no answer
I'm reminded of terra firma
how I can't solidly fix my feet and say,
here's the isthmus
between one continent and the next,
there's no time to wait for the Ice Age
to walk across

I consider
all the places you might be
when you came back, unhappy
with yourself, unhappy with me
more like dreams than terra firma
tortured dreams
I saw a town today on the map
called Turturé
O don't let me go there! I said
to the air in the street

the windows of the night close
in the bazaar
bats screech up the alley
and the rickshaws have all gone
home to sleep
I take it seriously
my need for a view
neat as a bicycle bell over cobblestones
serious, the ear I have pressed
to the earth, to find my way.

Kathmandu, Nepal, August 20, 88.

ਬਦੇ • ਗਾਧਰ • ਧਰੇ • . ੨੦ . ੮੮ . ੨੦ . ੮੮

JANINE POMMY VEGA ᠵᠡᠨᠠᠨᠢᠨ ᠫᠣᠮᠮᠤ ᠠᠨᠢᠨ ᠠᠨᠢᠨ

Homesick

Why am I crying?

Heap the hills up
one on another
and infinitely capable
I scale them every one

and so what?

Where do I go?
Surrounded by village blend
of voices,
voices, cries and laughter
I close the door

As high as they live
and precariously as they walk
they are a nestling
tribal people
heights only if inhabited
where they go

And me?
Also.

Ghara, Nepal, September 28, 88.



Short Tales in the Rain

Nepal
land of dragonflies
patroons of them over bright rice paddies
red blue green black iridescence
and tadpoles
leaping from puddles
as we pass

the one cicada
in this field
reminds me of August
there
and the sounds I will not have heard
with you
somewhere nearby.

Paundi, Nepal, August 30, 88.

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BARBARA VAN NOORD

Marinda's Reflection

It's a foxy hour. Rough tails
have brushed the sunset,
sly streaks paint the street.
Anything could jump out of the bush
behind the woodlot. Marinda sits
on the step, a glass in hand,
a day's work done, almost.
Not many neighbors pass,
not many say hello.
A son gone bad and a girl
gone wild and a husband lost
last year to the road
don't entice direct talk.
What's there to talk about?
Sometimes she rubs her hands
which are red and caked
as the knots in a fox's tail.
She imagines things, stories
and pictures she holds up
to the mirrors in her mind,
billboards that block out
gossip, the feeling of grey
in the air as the sun sets.
One of them is of the seventh
child with her straight black hair
and bunched little pink mouth
who died of fever six years ago
the night the doctor said
what's one less, you've got
too many already. Marinda
on the porch stoop trims
the memory down, night after night.
First she washes away the feverish fog
which includes everything
she should have done or thought
to do. Then she stabs the doctor
with the scalpal of his voice
and cuts him out of the picture.
She hushes the wailing children
until all is still, their father
isn't too drunk to drive,

the hour is not too late.
She burns the flattened pile
of regrets and guilts
in a little bonfire where the sun
sinks and buries the ashes
like bones in the back of her mind.
Wildness then begins to lurk
at the edge of the woodlot.
Shadows range free, and to save herself
when the red sun has really gone down
she holds close just the baby
so perfect, so new, waxy
and warm still as an angel.

Changes

When rain came
to the heron pond,
the first few drops,
I let go the found treasures:
stone, bark, nut.
The smooth pooled world
reflecting water colors
did not change
utterly. It fell
to pieces, segmented,
branch, trunk, sky,
a wobbling disabled dance
all parts, partial, disconnected:
the moment a love is lost,
divorce or damage comes,
death catches a last breath.
All familiar forms remain,
rearranged.

RACHEL GUIDO DeVRIES

The Moocher

Billy Weems was eleven years old, and he was a moocher. He mooched everywhere, from everyone. He lived right by my house, and he was always mooching from me. "Hey, Theresa," he'd say, "be a pal and loan me a nickel for an ice cream." He'd slide french fries off my plate at the Eastside Diner, he begged sodas or Kool-Aid from my mother. At school he'd sniff around the other kids at lunch-time, hoping to grub a cookie or a piece of Bit-o-Honey. Even in the classroom he'd mooch, borrowing a sheet of loose-leaf paper, or a pencil. He became almost a joke, but he got on some people's nerves, and one day a couple of the sixth grade boys, the ones we called Newarkies because they acted like city guys, like hoods, played a mean trick on him, meaner than Billy's mooching ever was.

Billy was skinny and tall and had pop-out, pale blue eyes. His father was the town's fire chief; he always had his name in the paper. He was Dutch Reformed religion, which, to the kids at school meant that Billy couldn't do what the rest of us could, though we all knew he wanted to. He couldn't watch TV, he couldn't play or even work at stuff on Sundays, and when the school dances started, he wasn't allowed to go. He should have been going to New Jersey Christian, a school just a few blocks from P.S. #1, but his father didn't want to spend the money. So poor Billy was stuck and always the outsider. Since most of the rest of us at school were all screwed up and looking for someone worse off, we picked on Billy. Even me, and I shouldn't have, because Billy was my friend. His mother and my mother were friends, too, and I knew that even though Billy was the worst moocher going, he was still sort of fun to hang around with, and he was never mean. I can't remember ever seeing Billy be mean to anybody.

Billy Weems and his family lived right over our back yard fence. His mother and my mother would call each other up and if it was nice weather, one would tell the other to meet her at the fence. They'd stand there telling each other stories they didn't want us to hear. Billy and I would mess around on our own sides of the fence, tossing rocks back and forth and trying to listen. It gave us a bond, listening to our mothers talk, like we were sharing their secrets, though we never talked about what they said. Sometimes our mothers sat in one of their kitchens and beefed about our fathers—their husbands—who, actually, were around very little, and who seemed apart somehow from the families Billy and I knew—our mothers, and our sisters and brothers. Our fathers' purpose was to scare us into their notion of how we should behave, and no matter what we did, we never could quite get it right. Both Pop and Mr. Weems, in my memory of them, show up like dark gray balloons, hovering over the supper table or the sunny back yard, threatening as rain clouds.

Pop was a wino, just like Grandpop, Mama always said. He was mean as thunder when he was drinking. Mr. Weems didn't drink, because it was against his religion, but he was mean, maybe even meaner than Pop, because Mr.

Weems was always mean, not just when he was drinking. In those days, Pop still had a laugh or two in him, but I don't remember ever seeing Mr. Weems smile. He was tall and skinny and bug-eyed just like Billy, but Mr. Weems's skinny body was strong. The spring Billy and I were in the sixth grade, I saw him get so mad at Billy he picked him up and heaved him over the fence right into our lilac tree. The lilac tree was the only pretty thing in our yard. When Billy landed in it, a branch broke off, and I cried hard, a crying fit that wouldn't quit. Hours later my sobs gave way to hiccups that lasted all night. Then, I just thought I was crying for the lost beauty of the scrawny lilac tree and for the purple flowers blooming each spring that I could press my face into, pretending I was rich. But, years later, it is Billy I remember, sprawled and hurt in the tree, his pale blue, popped-out eyes glinting like ice, filled with hatred and staring over the broken-down fence at the retreating, stiff back of his father. Lilac sprigs were all around him, like he was laid out.

Still, when Lenny Sloat and Rico Perez decided to play their joke on Billy Weems, I went along with it. I could have warned Billy. I owed him, because he'd warned me a couple of times that Pop was on a rampage before I reached my back door, and because he never talked to anybody at school about our lives at home. Billy and I had sneaked down to his cellar more than once, listening to Pop howling over the fence, hearing the sound of our dog as he kicked her, hearing Mama crying if it was summer and the windows were open.

When Billy was in for trouble, though, I snickered behind my hands and waited. Something real mean lived in me then, something full of hatred. I felt powerful knowing Billy was going to be tricked, and that power made me let something bad happen to one of the only people I knew who wasn't mean himself.

Rico and Lenny took a Three Musketeer's bar, broke it in half, scooped out the insides, and refilled it with hot red pepper. Then they melted it just enough to put it back together and brought it to school the next day, all wrapped up and looking new. Billy was, as usual, hanging around in the school yard during lunch, looking for something to scrounge, and Rico and Lenny were waiting for him. Billy sidled up to them. Rico and Lenny were good looking, big for their age. Every kid in our class wanted to be liked by them. They were wise, the guys who played strip poker in the playground at night. They smoked cigarettes, wore black, pointy shoes, and had slicked down, manly hair. Billy was wild for them. He wanted so much for them to like him, so when they offered him the candy bar, his eyes lit up with pride. I was watching. The whole sixth grade was; in one of those indescribable ways grammar school kids communicate, we all knew what was going to happen to Billy. He stuffed the candy bar into his mouth all at once, and was chewing away for about fifteen seconds before his face changed from joy to confusion and then to a look of horror. Rico and Lenny were cracking up. Billy's eyes started streaming with tears. He just stood there, though, with his mouth stuffed with hot pepper, tears streaming down his face. Then he leaned over, spit the mess onto the asphalt playground, and walked away, his retreating back held stiff, the way his father's had been the day he threw Billy into the lilac tree. He wasn't in the classroom after lunch, and I walked home from school that afternoon full of an impending sense of doom. The power I had felt earlier was all

twisted up now inside of me. I felt ashamed, and I knew there was nothing I could do to change the way I had betrayed Billy.

He was standing in his yard when I came around my house.

"Hi," I said.

"Oh, hi," he said. His voice sounded funny to me, deeper, a little stern, the way his father's sounded.

"You weren't in school this afternoon," I said.

"Nope."

"Want the homework?"

"I guess."

I told him what it was.

"Well," I said, "Guess I'll see you tomorrow."

"Yup. Guess so."

"You coming to school tomorrow then?"

"I guess so."

"Your throat hurt?"

"A little," he said.

"I'm sorry, Billy," I said.

"It's okay," he said.

I went inside. Things were never the same again. Our mothers still met at the fence, and once in a while I tried to catch Billy's eye to get the old feeling of sharing a secret to come back. Billy never returned my look. Pop went on getting drunk, but I never hid from him in Billy's cellar again. Mr. Weems stayed as mean as ever. The lilac tree has bloomed every year, in spite of the broken branch from when Billy crashed into it. Every April the scent of lilac fills the yard, and at first I get a feeling of excitement. Right behind that feeling comes a memory of shame, and I look across the weathered fence and think about my old friend Billy Weems, the kid everybody thought was the moocher.

After for P.E. McGrath

*she ate dried apricots. third suicide
era. after a certain point all the colors
are muddy.*

Diane di Prima, *The Calculus of Variation*

Lost friend, lover, wing of a bird:
you float downstream, a paper boat,
white, snow all winter and alone
the fire burned, the base you
created/destroyed like all the dollars
that could have brought you
fluttering

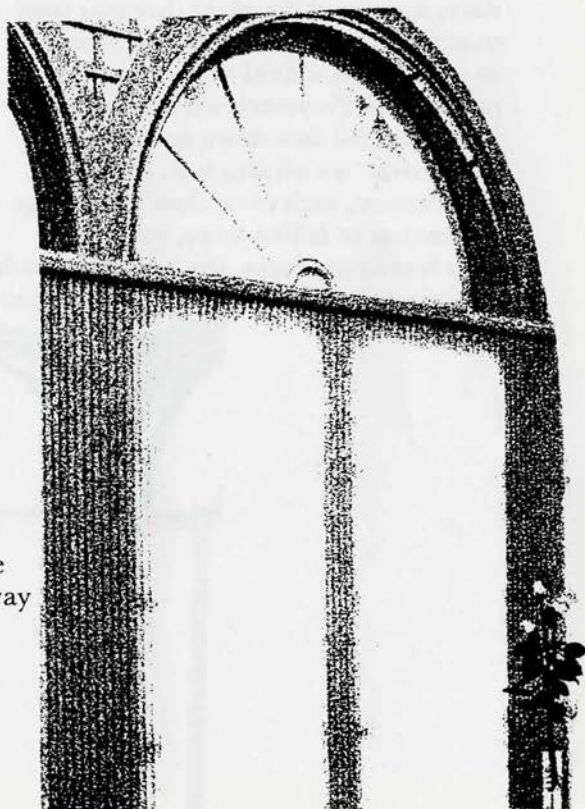
home

Months after silence you call:

now your father has Alzheimer's
or some drunkenness has settled
in the smoke of his brain,
gray matter like a cloud, ephemeral,
full of poison and stones

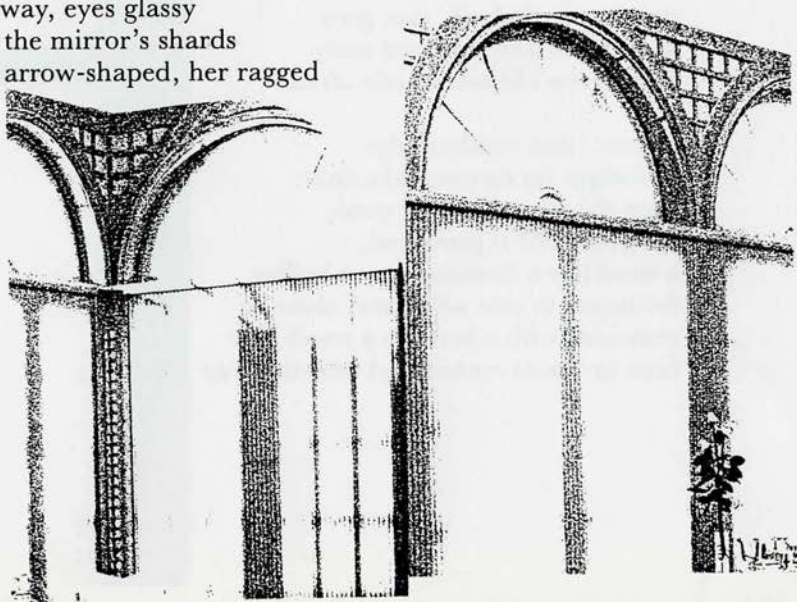
All those stones we threw back into
the sea the summer our love
caught on, and off: you grew
sunburned and thin and surly
and I grew old and a little afraid

of you: that reckless edge
of danger for its own sake only;
even the sexual tremor gone,
only the ache it provoked,
a need like a burning in our bellies
for more, to ride white surf alone or
entwined with a lover in a small blue
boat as waves rocked and took us away



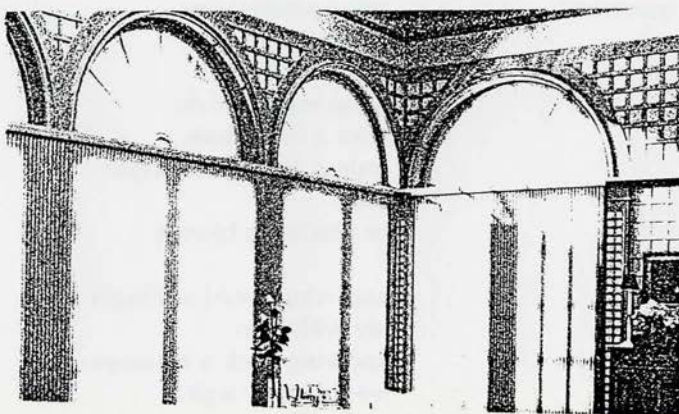
that night, with the mirror balanced
on our knees, the mushrooms making
our vision huge, we saw many things
from the deck of our house:
a fat moon rollicking in a deep blue
sky, white topped waves heaving up to reach it,
a skunk at the door we mistook for a cat, the familiar
call of love: another woman's heart
you tried to yank into your mouth, and left me,
alone, with my pulse racing every time I lay down
till you returned at 4 a.m., I could have
cried for your breaking there like a girl,
but the tide was already pulling you
back/the candle's fire, what we had made
home—the circle between us, white with
light and only ours, no longer enough
or too much

Your lover does needles in a brownstone
in Brooklyn like a million others
and you find it unique, the final
dare, a shoot of the silver dice you used
to carry till you lost them somewhere
in a white-out a final time in upstate
or was it in Provincetown that night our
last friend fell face down and smashed
the mirror: we all laughed, cruel with
late-August, each of us close to the edge
of dancing or falling away, eyes glassy
with fear or madness, the mirror's shards
gleaming around her, arrow-shaped, her ragged
sigh



Thirteen years ago I dreamt these images: you
as a knight, white horse mistaken for safety
and you carried me off to garden or cliff, we
had to choose. The hooves of your horse made
a bright clean sound as you galloped away. The sky
darkened with evening and I stayed alone, waiting.
You are vanishing now, like your father's memory,
while you sit all alone waiting too,
for something to save you, not the white horse,
never a knight. I try to dream something else:
you with your pale hands in the ground this May
as it warms and opens, your head resting on a soft
belly of earth, ears full of seeds and voices,
your arms loose and growing sunburned, your
face like that moon we'll remember as we eat fruit
in my garden, tossing the stones past the snow fence,
listening to the woodpecker busy with home, the sparrow
brave and so small in the fiery sky, the muddy creek
running fast behind the house, and, becoming
distant, the sound of the horse taking leave.

This dream becomes the other dream and I no longer
believe the truth of either. What we search for
we find: garden, cliff, the edge of death like
the muddled face of knight or any warrior after
battle, after dream turns into darkness,
irretrievable as your silver dice forever lost
for real and in memory. Angles shift in light, your
voice still flutters through my sleeping dreams.
Waking I am afraid for both of us, for what we might
choose, darling, after the horse, even, is gone.



PATRICIA SPEARS JONES

La Bella China

the moon is on the wane
stars have risen
but you don't see them
they're not for you

they're for the ones
on the other side of the world
who are eating breakfast
and thinking of
balloons
roses
and lines of credit

you are carrying
four white flowers
and two yellow ones
and trying to recall
the face of God

La Bella China
the neon lights are flashing
for you
everywhere
in all cities
at the same time

thursday night air cold
a skinny Black drunk says
"hey, wanna ask you a questions
just one questions
is the moon three-quarters
or what
do you call that?

you answer
it's on the wing

a blonde man passes out
on the gleaming bar
of the new expensive restaurant
under a halo of luxurious
bar light

you're word drunk
the champagne an afterthought
if you could kiss the tall
brunette waitress
in the black tuxedo, you would

Oh harbinger,
Spring is on her way.

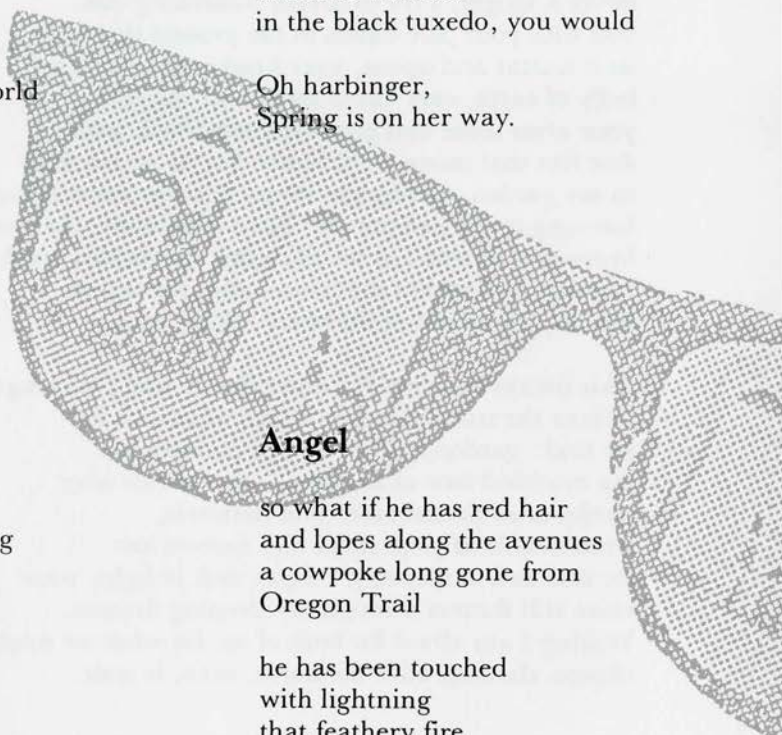
Angel

so what if he has red hair
and lopes along the avenues
a cowpoke long gone from
Oregon Trail

he has been touched
with lightning
that feathery fire
but wears no sword
nor presides over
virgin births

what would he do
with a spiky halo
unless it colored purple
blue
or platinum blonde

and who would willingly
lay with him
knowing such a message
would go straight
to God?



JANET McCANN

Sunday Afternoon

the baby tears up
kleenex one at a time,
you do nothing,
wade through the whispery snow.

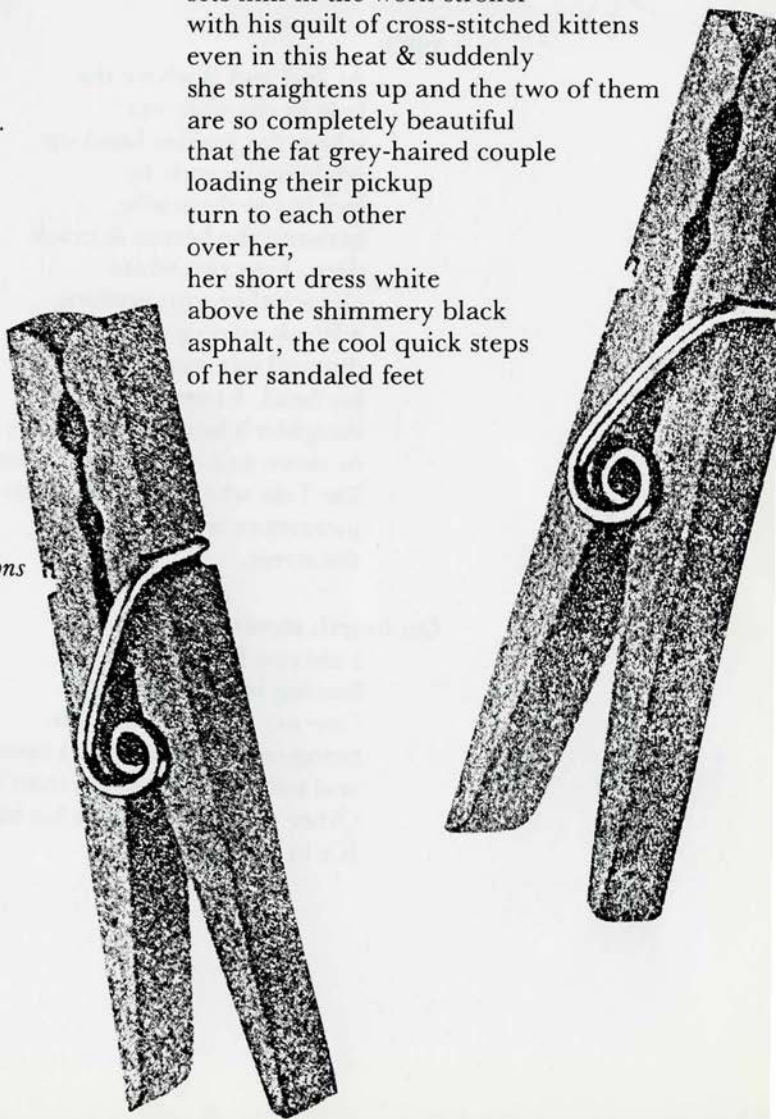
watch the wall
for a time,
its whiteness
slowly seeping in,
diffusing through your skin.

the afternoon winds
down, your watch
ticking less and less
loudly as the light
thickens. the baby
rips pages out of the
dictionary, this does not
matter so you
give him the calendar
to tear up too.

in your diary
you write, *under these conditions*
nothing is possible.
the possibility of nothing
grows in your head
like a cloud. you sit
at a table with the
phone in hand, listening
to the dial tone. its buzz
is a road inside your head
going on and on,
its white line leading
nowhere in both
directions.

August

The yellow heat
pounding down
on the supermarket parking lot
& the girl with the white
leather sandals unbuckles her baby,
sets him in the worn stroller
with his quilt of cross-stitched kittens
even in this heat & suddenly
she straightens up and the two of them
are so completely beautiful
that the fat grey-haired couple
loading their pickup
turn to each other
over her,
her short dress white
above the shimmering black
asphalt, the cool quick steps
of her sandaled feet



LOISAIDA TEXT II (Parts of a Performance)

1979

En Loisaida the junkies &
the gentry run circles round
each other trying to find
a hole to shoot up in
or displace somebody.

1983

At 2nd and B where the
hole in the wall was
where the junkies lined up
while police rode by
looking at the traffic,
between the heroin & crack
time, I see two white
plainclothes cops pushing
a Black man up against
the wall w/a gun upside
his head. I turn my little
daughter's head up to the sky
or down to a struggling flower
like I do when we pass porno
pictures or men peeing in
the street.

On fourth street

I see two Black men
leaning in a doorway.
One say it's a shame to be
living in the white man's country
and not know the white man's history.
Other one say we know his history,
It's in our bones.

October

I have a friend who
cannot forgive her parents
for living in the Nazi time.

'Their denial makes me feel
so guilty,' she says.

'Guilt is a screaming impatience
for relief,' I say.

'Uhhh!' she says slapping her foot.

'It could take centuries,' I say.

'Uhhh!'

'Where you are & when you are there
is who you become,' I say.

'But I came over here to get away
from that.'

'What you do w/where you are
is another story.'

And we look at the bright ironies
and rap and rap in the dark night.

That nite

the people smelled winter coming.
All day they'd been rushing to hunt. The
hotness was strange. Beer cans and crates
for sitting came out that nite & the people
let down like the heat makes you do on the
sidewalk.

'So you wanna be an American. . .' the brown
man said, 'wanna have that red, white and
blue passport! Poor people come over here
to get their things back. Even Cubans
come over here to get their things.'

'Americans are thieves!' a woman said.
People laugh, say, 'yeah yeah.'

Women call after their children.

They'd sent those troops
all over that nite. Hot
all over. Consciousness
hanging out. Conscious
hanging out.

WAR ZONE: THOMPCKINS SQUARE SUMMER '88

CATHERINE DeMARIA



On the evening of Sunday, August 7, 1988, an anti-gentrification demonstration called to protest a midnight curfew in Thompson Square Park on the Lower East Side of Manhattan erupted into violence when over 450 riot police charged demonstrators, bystanders, residents, tourists, the homeless, beginning a rampage which lasted until the early hours of the morning and spilled over into the adjoining neighborhood. Over a hundred official complaints of police brutality were filed. One year later only six officers have been indicted (at least two of those indictments have been thrown out). The situation continues to escalate as violence continues against homesteaders, the homeless, artists and community residents who stand in the way of the real estate speculators and monied interests. This documentation by artist/photographer Catherine DeMaria was edited from a taped interview.

I started hearing helicopters hovering over . . .

The day of what later became known as “The Thompkins Square Police Riot,” I had been out shooting a photo reportage assignment on the East Village in New York City for “Ajho Blanco,” a Spanish periodical. I was at an apartment on East Fourth Street waiting for a couple of friends and wondering why they didn’t show up—they had been right behind me—when I started hearing helicopters hovering over. At first I instinctively flashed to my memories of Nicaragua and Northern Ireland where I had been in the middle ’80s doing documentary assignments. I looked out the window and the rationale I came up with for why a helicopter was hovering so low and flashing lights all around was a blackout was coming because of the heat. Anyway, that was the story I made up for myself. Then, all of a sudden, my two friends came into the apartment—one was sort of hauling the other one up the steps—and I looked at them and said, “What the hell happened to you guys?” They told me they were going to stop at a cafe on the way and ran right smack into a demonstration. They were standing on the sidelines and someone threw a bottle off the roof which either landed near or hit a policeman, but didn’t really hurt him, and all of a sudden the police just rushed the entire crowd of demonstrators, bystanders, whoever was there. There were police on foot, on horseback and when they rushed, my friend got hit on the side of the ear and had this huge welt on his head. While we were putting ice packs on his head, he kept saying, “You should be down there photographing. You’re on assignment. You’re doing reportage on the East Village.” My initial reaction was, Oh god, I don’t want to go down there. One of the reasons I had decided not to go traveling in a war zone and to stay in New York that summer was because emotionally I didn’t feel up to dealing with it at that time. As it turned out what I saw in New York was far more violent than anything I had seen personally in Nicaragua. It was more comparable to my experiences in Northern Ireland. But I figured being a good photojournalist I was supposed to go, so I grabbed a camera and two lenses and I borrowed a small flash and off I went.

When I got to Avenue A and Sixth Street I was really blown away. The helicopters were hovering so low I was told at one point a helicopter landed on First Avenue. I didn’t see that personally but I did see a helicopter two or three feet off the ground at Avenue A. There were about two hundred demonstrators there at that point and at least double the amount of cops as well as cops on horses and paddy wagons along the sidelines. So I just started photographing and talking to people. There were a lot of people standing around looking banged up. There was a lot of really intense anger. At this point there was about a five foot distance between the police and the demonstrators. And there was a little neutral area I kept trying to wander into to photograph the police line and the demonstrators’ line. You could just feel the tension building. I really felt there was not much of an indication when the police charged—nobody really did anything—it seemed like the police just decided, this is it. There were a lot of people just standing along the sidewalk when they rushed the crowd. I started photographing whatever I could. It was very hard to photograph because you had to constantly avoid getting clubbed. I had press ID on but they seemed to have no qualms whatsoever about clubbing press.

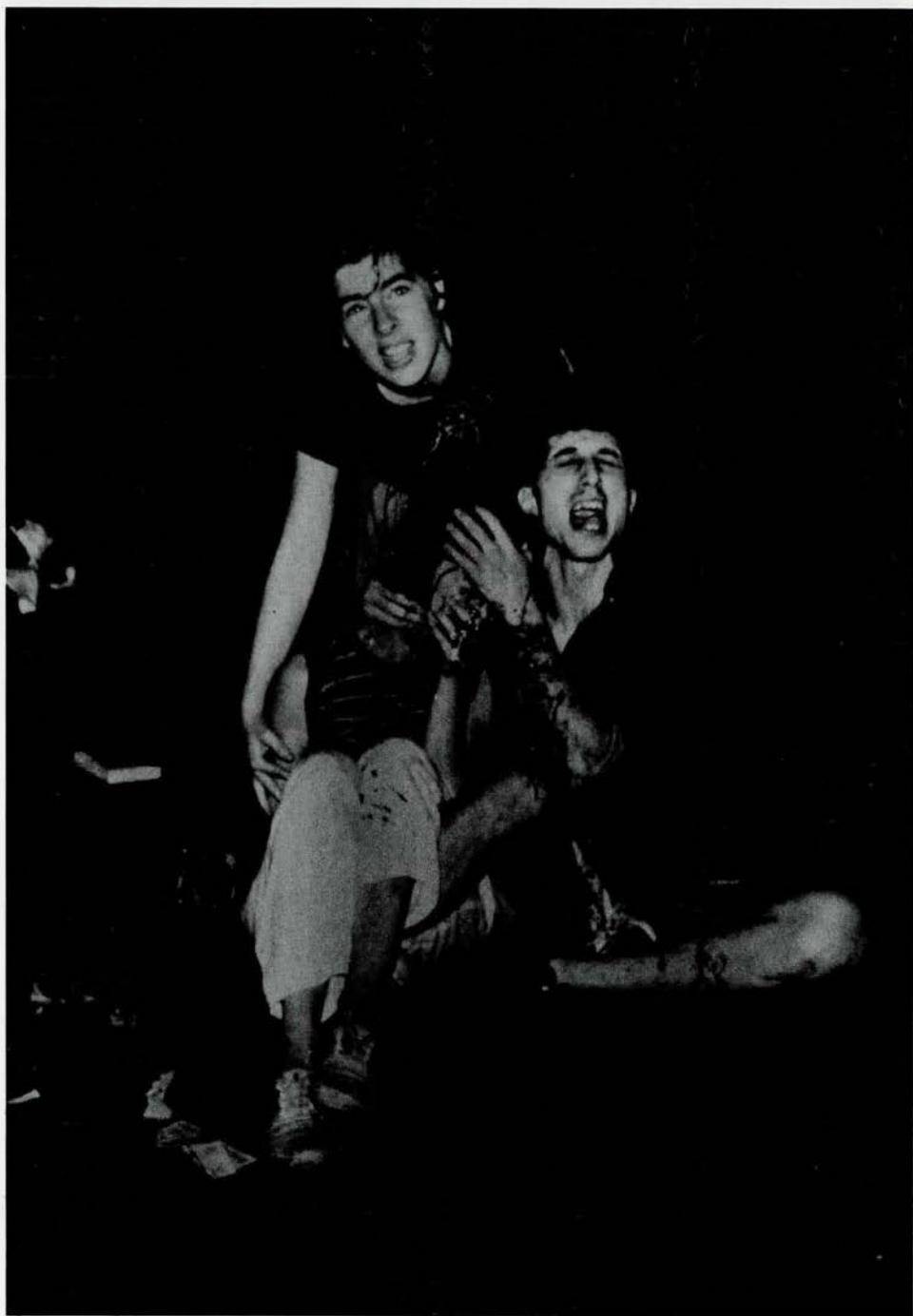
“I can’t believe this is happening . . .”

As they rushed the crowd I got shoved onto the side of Sixth Street and just as I came around the corner I saw a cop grabbing that guy you see in the photograph—he was just walking down the street. I think that my taking the photograph is what stopped the cop from beating him, because he was just about to smack him with his club when I raised my camera and the cop turned and focused on me. He came after me with his club and I just ripped my press card off my shirt and held it up and started screaming press, press, New York Post—which is what my press card was, even though I wasn’t shooting for them. I think that’s what stopped him from hitting me. I really screamed loud enough that it stopped him for a second and he knew I had a photograph of him. Of course, this was all happening in an instant. That guy was such a pathetic sight, he was just walking around the corner trying to get away, not even running.

Then there’re the photographs of the woman who was really brutally beaten over the face—and this is the most horrific thing I think I’ve ever seen in my life, I mean this cop rushed her on the sidelines. In fact, she had her keys out—you can see them in the photo—which indicated to me she was probably close to her home. He was beating her *over the face* with his club. Repeatedly. A friend of hers who rushed in to help her also wound up getting beaten up. I could hear the thumping sound. That impression really stayed in my mind. Of that club hitting her face. It was really grotesque. That dead sound with blood splattering all over the place. At the point the cop was beating her, I froze. I was so horrified, I couldn’t even photograph it. The woman kept screaming, “I can’t believe this is happening.” Those were her words as the cop was beating her: “I can’t believe this is happening.” I took a couple of photographs, but I guess it was at that point that I realized you’re a photojournalist, but you’re also a human being. I couldn’t continue to photograph the situation, I was crying so hard, and I ran off on this mad search to try to find a phone to get an ambulance. I ran over to one cafe and started banging on the glass and screaming to get an ambulance, but everything was locked up and they wouldn’t let anybody in or out—they were protecting their customers. I didn’t know if they understood me or not, so I rushed down the street. None of the payphones worked, so I stopped at a Deli, where they wouldn’t let me in either. Finally, after banging and banging on the glass, I saw a guy inside go to a phone and call an ambulance. He said, “Okay” through the glass and then I went back to the spot and that’s where I got the shot with everybody standing around her. I think that was the most violent thing I’ve ever seen happen. It’s definitely the bloodiest image I’ve ever taken in my life.

At that point mostly everyone was dispersed and the cops had no one to hit, so they began smashing bicycles and car windows. I saw this one cop go over and completely mutilate this bicycle that was chained to the side of the road. I tried to photograph him, but I didn’t end up with an image because one cop started yelling to another about “this photographer” at the same time a guy was getting beaten right next to me. He grabbed me as he was going down and that turned out to be a very good thing, because I had my camera up ready to take a photograph and what I didn’t see was another cop was swinging his club at me. When the guy grabbed me and I started to fall, the cop hit the top of my flash right off







my camera. If I hadn't fallen at that moment, it would have been my face. I got myself back up before the cops could hit me again, but now my flash was gone so I couldn't shoot anymore until I replaced it.

. . . to have that happen to someone who was really close to me.

At that point I ran home to get another flash. Brenda was there and I told her what was happening and she said, "I'm going to go down there with you." I really advised her not to come because so many people just standing on the sidelines were getting hit, and if I was there with someone who wasn't a photo-journalist or a demonstrator, I would feel obligated to watch that person and I felt that would create a very dangerous situation—which ended up being true.

Anyway she wound up following me back there. At this point there were hardly any demonstrators left because most people had gone off to the hospital. The only thing I should add here is the way I personally saw most demonstrators being hit was over the back of the head as they were running away. If you do any research, the majority of the injuries that were reported—which were something like 100—were from being hit on the back of the head. I told Brenda to stay way back on the sidewalk away from the maybe thirty, forty demonstrators and about 400 police. Minutes after I came in, the whole area was blocked off and you couldn't get out. The police had the demonstrators wedged into the center, so the demonstrators started turning over garbage cans and setting fire to them. All of a sudden fire engines pulled in and other people who were on rooftops started throwing down bottles. At this point it was really getting tense and it looked like the police were going to rush any second, so I told Brenda to go over by the side of a wall and take cover, and I went back up to the front and started photographing the police line. Within seconds of my being up there, they rushed the whole crowd—the forty people who were there. I didn't take a single image because I couldn't. The police were swinging their clubs, and as I turned to look for Brenda, I saw her running along the sidewalk and this cop hitting her over the back of the head with a billy-club as she was running. There's a certain amount of distance you have as a journalist, but to have that happen to someone who was really close to you, to see someone that you live with just going down on the ground. It was like slow motion. She got hit on the back of the head, and I saw her just sort of floating down and hitting the pavement, rolling on the ground and then getting back up again. I did this complete about-face and began running right into the police rushing us in order to get her. She had gotten up and was running in this dazed state, so we almost passed each other. I grabbed her, and I could feel this huge lump on the back of her head and her arms were all bruised and scraped and her leg was bleeding. So I got us out of there as quickly as I could and to the hospital.

The hospital was a whole other scenario. It seemed we waited forever and when Brenda finally went in, they had her in and out of there without even taking an x-ray of her head or anything. The waiting room inside the hospital was filled with people with bandaged heads and bandaged and broken arms and cut and stitched faces. Everybody was from the "riots." Sitting and waiting for Brenda, I found out what had been going on all over. One photographer in particular had

all of his equipment—he was carrying two cameras—smashed to the ground. The cops beat him over the head and broke his arm. A writer for *Downtown* magazine was sitting there with his head all wrapped up, he had been brutally beaten. Everybody was outraged. They kept saying to me you really should have been here earlier—the waiting room was jam-packed and everybody was sitting with torn and bloody shirts and bandaged heads. When we finally got home, it was six o'clock in the morning.

I guess I learned a few things about myself . . .

I guess I learned a few things about myself, about being a detached “professional photojournalist” when confronted with a violent situation like I found myself in that night. The impression of that woman being beaten over the face and Brenda being hit over the back of the head will never leave my mind. I took two photographs and I had to stop and get an ambulance. I had to do something.

That was one thing I learned. Other than that, I missed the Sixties, so this was the first time I was really confronted with that kind of violent situation. I expect to photograph that kind of thing in other countries, but I never expected to do it inside my own country. Also it made me much more aware of police brutality. I know this happens in Detroit. It happens in Miami, Florida. It happens here, but I wasn't as in tune to it until after I'd experienced this, after I saw this. I was so angered for a very long period of time. For months. To see such violence. In Northern Ireland I was a block away from a place where a British soldier was shot. The IRA shot him—he was riding inside of a tank type thing with a cage on the top. And I started photographing that scene, but from a block away because we were filming something else in another area. That was a very violent situation. Someone was killed. But I never saw it. But to be so close to violence, to be right inside of it, and to have it happen inside of my own country—I still don't believe it in a way. That it really happens. And also, quite honestly, it really made me want to stay away from a violent situation again. Because it made me aware of my own vulnerability, a photographer's vulnerability. It made me afraid. Although given the same circumstances, I'm also sure I'd do the same thing again.



Minus

One bad habit I've got: I can't quit subtracting.
E.g., reading the Contributors Notes to poetry anthologies.
"b. 1910, d. 1973." It's automatic.
Oh, 63 years.
The ultimate question: Did she live long enough?
If she didn't, I ask questions.
Oh, I guess she contracted a rare disease . . . ?
Maybe she committed suicide . . . ?
But it's not the asking; it's the subtracting and the telling.
"b. 1911, d. 1969." It's a nervous mannerism.
First I estimate. 60. Next I correct the error. 58.
Then satisfied, relieved, I move on along.
Sometimes the rest of the bio also gets subtracted.
E.g., "married in '37," "husband killed in tragic car accident in '52," and
there I go subtracting again.
Subtracting down the beaten path.
Subtracting as though my heart would break.
As though subtracting could help.
"Son born in '42, daughter in '45"; there I go yet again.
How far apart the babies were, how many childless years they had, at what
age each kid was semi-orphaned, how long she lived a widow.
The mad subtracter, I'm the mad subtracter.
Toss me two dates and I'll toss back their difference.
It's an addiction, this subtraction!
I'm a Woman Obsessed.
I'm very curious. I've very interested.
Not in what's left
but what got taken away.

The Middle #2

The transfinite cardinals are beyond the searchlight
and beyond the Thundercat sword.
They sweep across the dome
scoop up the earth
and everything at the bottom.
They do this as many times as themselves
and still it all fits in one corner.

And they get bigger and bigger
bigger than a baby to another baby
bigger than a baby to itself.

And the bigger they get, the bigger the distance between them.
This distance is bigger than a yawn
bigger than a scream
bigger than a morning dream.
There is, in fact, a conjecture that there is no earthly way to describe them
and a paradox that it can speak neither of itself nor of the absence of itself.

Epsilon and delta are also impossible.
Smaller than electrons, smaller than perspective, smaller than the Princess's pea.
To some epsilon is smaller; to others delta.
And to all does their product mean business.

But super- or sub-finite, none of these numbers has digits.
And when you add or multiply them, nothing happens.
None are prime, none are composite
except in a boring, cheating way.

There are no factorials, no Fibonacci, no Mr. Magic 9
and the reciprocals are all the same.
Yes, when they talk about number theory
they mean the numbers in the middle.

GIGI MARKS

Overtime

Sun broken out in to the cold morning is
kind as an animal and when I first woke
there was only a fur-like thickness, gray
settled in. I know already the capacity for
change in everything is there
before it happens, that I'll wait for it,
live through a morning to see what comes next.
Sun, sometimes I feel inviting,
that I am asking for things to happen,
for the earth to slip its axis and
spin us somewhere new.
Last night I walked to the hill-top and saw
the sunset, a full moon rise. And soon
there was nothing but moon. When I am alone
sometimes I think, come down, come down.
I think of the friends I have and the sun
just back of the clouds.



Dimensions

One time I see a girl
on the roadside flat, grassy
enough for cartwheels—
her legs go over in that
arc and then she's up.
It is spring when the robin
comes with a deep red breast
and singing. And the girl's
hair sweeps the ground as she
turns, always reaching
down from her.

When the ground softened,
ground swells split
the road I travel home on,
leave off this hill.
Today there's no rain,
the clouds seem to promise it,
and when I'm walking up
there's no girl; it gives me
reason to see her hands
printed in the dirt. The brown
wet loam holds them, and
I think how often it is
I go by looking past
myself on these roads.

In a Greenhouse

Gray of outside will slip in
and reach her although
she is by the bright flowers.
I've watched her pick all
morning the geraniums' tall buds
into a mass of red
so bright it is another day
almost and not the rain.
Imagine if we become
the things we work with,
a natural extension of ourselves
into them, and into that other
world of being; so a woman
could be those flowers
in her hands, dark with all
that color.

I watch the rain as I work,
not always seeing the waterhose,
the tender transplants in
my hands, heavy bags of peat
or lime. Rain in sheets
almost reaches us inside
and tries the doorway, showering
in. Why would it want
to come inside if not
to be with the flowers to
feed them, with
women whose heavy shapes
flowers could become.



Ideas of Forsythia

The turkeys I saw were in a group
of more than ten from across a field
I was crossing in the snow. They were
big and graceless and walking to the woods;
sometimes the surprise of things will make
them lovely. The sky was gray across a view
of hills; I could see so far without even
the clouds breaking. It is strange how
the lengthening days now that it is March
have begun to seem edged with other colors—
a pinker wash to those clouds. And two
days I woke with the idea of forsythia,
of forcing cut branches into my large
blue pitcher. It is such a strange idea
after all winter forcing nothing.

FOR YOUR DEAD SONS

*What kind of lover have you made me, mother
who drew me into bed with you at six/at sixteen
Oh, even at sixty-six you do still
lifting up the blanket with one arm
lining out the space for my body with the other*

*as if our bodies still beat
inside the same skin
as if you never noticed
when they cut me out from you*
—Cherrie Moraga

I.

I was seven, mother,
and before the doctors convinced you
to dry your milk from your last pregnancy,
you let me have a taste. At seven, curious girl,
I had asked you many times
about that pretty white liquid coming out from your body.
You, big and beautiful,
your long black hair tied in a long braid,
were now home back from the hospital
bringing my deformed brother, the newborn son
who lived for two years; the one with the big head
who never walked or said a word.

You and my father gathered us together
around the old dining room table
and tried to explain in simple words
the family's bad luck. Spina bifida, you said,
words that I learned to spell in such a casual way.
But that day I was afraid to ask what they really meant.
Would his head grow more each day? My little brother asked,
the one who did live to be tall and slender,
the brilliant writer who walked and talked
and died, his choice, at twenty five.
But at five, my little brother was afraid,
afraid of the baby's head,
and after his question you started to cry.
He didn't look like any of my baby dolls, I said,
and you kept crying and ran upstairs.

Our two older sisters sat us on their laps
and told us to stay quiet, not to ask too many questions,
better go and play in the backyard.
Silently, my father paced the room.
He didn't look like any of my baby dolls, I said again,
before I was pushed gently to the sun.

At seven, mother,
I learned that toys like grown-ups,
can lie and hurt and destroy dreams.
At night, from my bedroom I heard you crying still.
For me, it seemed during that time
that your days always began and ended with tears.

My new, strange brother had the eyes of the man
I've always suspected was your lover
—clear blue, intense color—
the only one in a family of black eyed children.
But he was my father's son and he loved him,
the baby who died at two, and never walked or said a word
except for momma, momma when he saw you.

He liked me, I remember.
Sad memories, no matter how hard you try
to push them out, mother, they always come back.
They take you by surprise, wherever you are,
writing, cooking, working,
making love, sleeping, dreaming—

He liked me. I remember his grin, his big blue eyes
looking at my face when I entered your room.
We couldn't have a nursery for him.
His crib was right near your bed, hospital like.
For him there were no toys or stuffed animals.
This baby was too sick to spend a night alone
and you with him stayed awake.

He liked me. You used to tell me
that he even recognized my footsteps
and I believed you. But I never held him.
He didn't look like any of my dolls.
Spina bifida I learned to spell.

Innocently at eight,
I wrote about it for my second grade composition,
the assigned homework that we had to give to the teacher
after each weekend recording what we did or didn't do.

My sick brother I titled it
and underlined each word with a red pen.
I wrote about him crying, about the nurse, Zoila,
who came to take care of him
and played monopoly with us during his nap.
I also wrote about how much I missed my mother's voice,
your voice, the normal one that used to sing
those old *boleros*, Spanish songs,
sad tales of lost loves and betrayals.
After she read my story the teacher called me during recess
and gravely stated that pretty little girls like me
were supposed to write about happy subjects.
I looked hard for one, mother, I never told you my efforts.
You had enough with your own unsuccessful search, I thought.
And when I couldn't find one, I invented events.
A puppy that I never owned, family trips that never took place.
I couldn't write about those long Sunday hours after church
or after the regular visit to the hospital if the baby was there.

In the afternoon you would send my little brother and me
to the matinee with the maids
or with one of my sisters who always complained.
And I wanted to be with you, have a real family outing,
fly a kite helped by the city's winds.
For my composition I didn't want to write a lie.
But pretty little girls were supposed to be happy,
senorita Atala said.
I tell you mother. I pretended well.

II.

When you baby son died I did not cry
and for the funeral I wore a pretty white dress
matching his small coffin
that had smiling angels carved on the top.

You sent us to school the following day and began to pack
for our summer vacation in the mountains.
For months you took us to the cemetery every Sunday.
You'd buy carnations from the peasant women
whose colorful tents lined up that deadly road.
Each one of us was given a single flower to place on his grave.
My little body trembled and I tightly held your hand.
Mechanically, your voice with no feeling
would recite a prayer to the Virgin Mary or some patron saint.
We didn't stay long. Just a few minutes.
But at night I had nightmares.
Bad dreams with flowers, red messengers of death.
For years I hated their smell.

III.

It is the one of my other brother, the writer,
the grave that I have never seen.
You have tried to convince me to take that journey with you,
on every visit mother, on every trip home,
and I say no, no, almost crying, pleading,
like that child I was with a red flower in my hand.
And you cry at my refusal, my lack of interest you say,
my lack of love.
Mother I want to scream, please understand.
I am not seven anymore, but still my body trembles
and I feel so distant now from you
to reach for the security of your hand.

IV.

Right after the baby died
you filled the walls of our house with his pictures.
You put one above my bed.
I took it down that same night and hid it.
The following morning I saw it in your room;
his grin, another one, another picture to cry about.
The same thing that you did
when the other son died eight years ago.
Just photographs, you say, just photographs I have of them.
And one day sitting in front of your three daughters
you clearly stated: I have no children left.
We just sat there across from you,
still, rigid motionless,
discarded snapshots of your past.
Three sisters, your three daughters,
not one of us responded, not one of us confronted you:
How about us, don't we count,
blood of your blood like them, the dead sons?
We say there silent.
I saw one of my sisters covering her face
with her long, elegant hands.
A picture had been taken,
and I sat, still, rigid, faded photograph in your eyes.

V.

So many memories, mother,
 and no matter how hard you try to push them out,
 they always come back;
 unannounced they travel, visitors that you don't expect.
 More than twenty five years later, mother,
 in another country away from you,
 I seldom write, I seldom tell you who I am,
 what have I become.
 But now, so clearly I see your face,
 the memory of that day in the afternoon.
 For some reason I was not in school
 and alone with you, wanting to braid your hair,
 I asked again about your milk and you let me have a taste.
 So thick and sweet it was, so different from the plain liquid
 that I with a much hated cereal in the morning.
 I even thought that it had to have another name.
 Not the same, mother. Not that rich sweetness of your body.
 It had to be more than milk your milk, mother.

Those few seconds,
 a girl of seven, your braid, a comb,
 a brush, your breast.
 My child's mouth taking it, swallowing.
Es rica, I said, and you held me close
 and we both laughed.

But when was it that I remembered this,
 the taste of you, my full smile,
 was it the first time that I saw another woman's
 naked breasts,
 or was it one day when I heard a poet sing
 mother, mother, landscape of my heart?
 I forgot. . .
 So easily I did. So easily I do.
 You let me taste your milk, mother.
 It was so sweet.

White Trash: An Autobiography

CAROL TARLEN

1948: Dysentery in the First World

My daddy was a truck driver. In Salinas he hauled lettuce. When I was five, we lived in a three-room trailer: my mother who played Little Squirrels with us when it rained—my brother, sister and I who pretended we lived in trees, gathered nuts and it was never winter, we always ate—and my father who never went to high school, who once was a fireman on the railroad, who was a Teamster. Daddy never crossed a picket line, never scabbed. Our friends were Mexicans, Indians, Okies, farmworkers, gas station attendants, taxi drivers, carpenters, communists, ex-cons, out of work, Red, Brown and White Trash. We didn't have lawns, instead we shared the gravel, the wash tubs, the showers, the toilets.

My little brother and I played in the fields behind the trailer court. Once we found an irrigation ditch to wade in. I pushed my brother, he fell down, stuck his hands into the slimy water, lifted his fingers to his mouth, licked. That night he awoke with a belly ache and diarrhea. I watched from my bunk bed as he sat on a pot in the middle of the trailer, his shit turning to blood, blood turning to thin white liquid. His ribs protruded from his white skin. His red hair shone luminous in the dark. Sores grew on his lips. He was all the time thirsty.

He went to the county hospital. After two weeks the doctors told my mother to take him home to die. Instead she took him to the University of California Medical Center. He was given antibiotics and lived.

He got lots of toys. One was a stringed horse that wobbled and danced when you pushed the wooden knob it stood on. His favorite was a book called "The Little Pond." It had pictures of animals with their faces dipped in bright blue water. Deer, raccoon, sparrows, rabbits. My mother tried to read it to us when he was well, but she always cried. She said that when he was sick, she sat by his bed day and night and listened to him beg for water.

Summer came. The lettuce shriveled in the fields. Daddy got laid off and we moved to Redding. The trailer park we lived in had grass and oak trees. In the evening, when the air cooled, we sat with the neighbors under the oaks. The women talked. The men played dominoes. The children ran, pushed shouted. Lizards climbed our legs. Giggling, we shook them off.

Daddy lost his job. We moved to Folsem. Hospital bills followed us up and down California. We never paid.

1949–1954: Cold War Recruits

I liked to play with the boys. I had two boyfriends. We climbed the hill above the trailer park and played war. When a plane flew overhead, we pointed to the

sky, screamed, "The Japs! The Japs!," and fell on the ground with our hands over our heads, like they taught us to do during air raid drills at school. Sometimes we built forts out of sticks and tin cans and played Cowboys and Indians. I got to be a cowboy even though I was a girl. In the evening, before it got dark, our mothers would gather at the bottom of the hill and call for us. "Car-ol. Bob-by. Jim-my. Sup-per." As Mommy waited, I picked bouquets of mustard flowers to decorate our table.

My daddy bought a dump truck. He tried to get construction jobs, hauling gravel or sand for new roads and dams. On weekends we filled the back of the dumper with blankets, air mattresses and a tent and went camping at Big Sur, where I would climb into the hollows of redwood trees and play "Lost in the Forest."

One Sunday evening, as we unpacked from our camping trip, Nancy Thompson knocked on the trailer door. Mommy served her coffee. "Truman sent troops to Korea," she said. "That means war."

The Thompsons lived two trailers down from ours. There were Nancy and Roy and five kids — Billie who was eleven, Mary whom I always wanted to play with because she was nine and pretty, Ellen who was a year older than me, and the twins, Carol and Cheryl, still in diapers. Their trailer had two tiny bedrooms. Ellen slept with Carol and Cheryl. Ellen's first grade teacher called her mother and said, "I don't think it's wise for Ellen to sleep with her sisters. She smells like urine." When I asked Mommy why she was mad since it wasn't any of us who smelled, she said, "It might as well be." She told me that Nancy and Roy were Communists and Roy went to the teacher and explained things. She also said that Communists believed money should be divided up equally, which sounded good but didn't work. Then she said, "Don't tell anybody about Roy and Nancy being Communists or your Daddy could lose his job."

In school I learned that Communists made kids spy on their parents, and in the middle of the night the secret police would break into homes and drag people off just because they believed in freedom. Communism turned everyone into slaves. No one could go to church or listen to the radio or even talk. Everyone had to whisper. Communists lived in Russia, and wanted everyone else to be Communists too, even us. I never told about Nancy and Roy. My father kept losing jobs anyway, but Mommy said that was because there was a recession and work was slow. She said Roy couldn't find any jobs because he was blacklisted.

Nancy and Roy were my parents best friends. I listened from my bunk bed as they talked late into the night about their kids, jobs, and other things, like the Rosenbergs. The Rosenbergs were spies who were going to the electric chair. "The other inmates are putting glass in their food," Nancy once said. My mother looked funny. She didn't like to talk about the Rosenbergs.

A few years later, we moved to Smith Valley, Nevada. We lived in a house on a cattle ranch. We lived in the middle of a cow pasture. The winter before we moved in, the house's roof had blown off during a blizzard. Stained wall paper sagged from the walls and hung in strips from the ceiling. In the Spring, a new roof was installed. It was tin. Late at night I would listen to it rattle in the wind, the noise mingling with the distant cries of coyotes.

It was while I was living in Nevada that Joe McCarthy got his. Everyone

talked about McCarthy. He had called lots of people Communists, even the Army, which made the Army mad. My mother said you shouldn't mess with the Army. My aunt made silly pictures by cutting out acid stomach ads from *Life* and pasting his photograph in the middle.

She said this was a sophisticated art form called collage. McCarthy didn't go to the electric chair, but he was ruined. That's what my mother said. She said McCarthy made her sick and she was glad the Army exposed him. My brother, sister and I would listen to the McCarthy-Army hearings on the radio. Then we would replay them. My brother would be the Army, my sister the judge, and I would be McCarthy. He was the best part. Every time my brother tried to talk, I would yell, "Point of order!" I was glad that McCarthy was exposed, but I still hated Communists

1956: The Right Side of the Tracks

We moved to Elko, Nevada when I was in eighth grade. I liked Elvis, James Dean and "Rock Around the Clock." I saw "Rebel Without a Cause" three times. We didn't have a TV, so I went to the movies every night. Admission was 20 cents.

Prostitution was legal in Elko. The houses were located across the railroad tracks. They looked like old two-story hotels with all the blinds pulled down. They had initials for names: "The D and D," "The L and M," like brands. Elko was cattle country. Bubbles was the madam at the D and D. The junior high kids laughed whenever Bubbles went downtown on a shopping spree. Only white trash lived on her side of the tracks. We rented a big house on the highway that passed through town. My bedroom had once been a parlor and all the windows faced the street. I didn't have to share it with anybody, but we lived across from a casino and anyone who passed by could look in my window. I kept my shades drawn all day. My daddy got mad and said he didn't want people to think this was The D and D, but I reminded him that we lived on the right side of the tracks.

The Indians at our school were Piutes who lived on a reservation five miles outside of Elko. The reservation had no running water, so it was trucked into them, five gallons per family. The Indian kids were bused to the school in town. Juliana was in my class. She was large, moved slowly and had long straight hair and big breasts. She wore old skirts and dirty sweaters. She didn't say much and got bad grades. She just sat at her desk and pulled hair from her scalp. Mostly we ignored her, but she was good at volley ball.

I was the class radical. I was for Stevenson instead of Eisenhower. I argued with my teacher about Stevenson. I said he was good for working people, just like my mother had told me. Mr. Hollander said the Democrats gave Hungary to the Russians, and anyway, we should go to the war for the sake of the freedom fighters. I didn't know what to say, because I was for freedom. Mr. Hollander was young, but he had a large belly that hung over his belt. He had been a Marine in Korea. If we talked too much he made us write out the Bill of Rights. If we yelled and threw wads of paper, we had to write the whole constitution. I copied the Bill of Rights nine times. I really liked the First Amendment. Juliana escaped punishment by never talking. That summer I had listened to the

Democratic convention on the radio. I got excited when John Kennedy almost won the Vice Presidential nomination. I decided he was going to be president some day and put his picture on my wall between George Nader and Sal Mineo. But I was a good Democrat and supported the Party's nominee. Our class held a mock election: 19 for Eisenhower and 3 for Stevenson. The next day, while I was sharpening my pencil, Juliana came up behind me and whispered, "I voted for Stevenson." I never asked her why. In the Spring she stopped coming to school.

1958-59: Irvington Square

When I was fifteen, my best friend was named Diane. She was Metis, French Canadian and Indian, but everyone thought she was Mexican. My father drove a diesel rig. We lived in a house in Irvington Square. It was small and square and painted turquoise. It had one bathroom, a cement block tile floor and no foundation. Our neighbors worked in the GM plant. They were Okies and Chicanos. All the houses in Irvington Square were identical. The streets were named after movie stars: Elizabeth, Gina, Rita, Marilyn, Hudson, Wayne, Dean, Lancaster. I lived on Gina.

Diane's father drove up and down Irvington Square in a blue pick up like it was a hotrod. Girls thought he was cute; he had a ducktail. Diane's mother was dark, thin, beautiful, with a straight nose, small hands. One night her father didn't come home, but the neighbors saw him driving around with a girl snuggled close. They said she was sixteen and pregnant, like his oldest daughter, the one who was married to Ernie Jimenez, the one who lived in Decoto, the one who was pregnant.

Ernie was in the joint in Tracy for Mary Jane possession. Diane's sister lived with Ernie's parents in Decoto. Diane and I went to the baby shower. While her sister opened presents, we walked around the town's dirt streets, watched the children and dogs run in the road, pretended to ignore the cute guys when they whistled. Diane said she liked it when they called to her, "Heeeey Chicana." The rest she didn't understand because she didn't speak Spanish.

I wrote Ernie to cheer him up. He said jail wasn't bad because there were lots of books. His letters were full of big words: "effervescent" "simultaneous" "coherence" "rapport" "amiability."

One day Diane's father came home, said he wanted to see his baby son. His teenaged girlfriend sat in the passenger seat of the pick up. Diane's beautiful mother took a milk bottle and threw it at his head. She chased him outside with a butcher knife, tried to open the pick up door, slashed at the windows with the big, steel blade. The girl locked the doors and cried. Diane's father grabbed the knife, threw his wife down on the asphalt, then drove his sixteen-year-old pregnant lover someplace safe, while Diane's mother stumbled down in the middle of the street, screaming, "How many babies will you give her, you bastard, how many?"

Diane ran after her, shouting, "Get out of the street, Mama." The neighbors stood on their lawns. No one said anything. Diane's little brother and sister huddled in the doorway, crying.

Diane got suspended for smoking in the high school bathroom. Three,

four times. She flunked English, General Math, Health Education. She quit going to school. She was fifteen.

The bank foreclosed on her house. The social workers came. Diane, her mother, little sister and brother got AFDC and moved to the projects in Oakland. Ernie got out of jail. The older sister stayed in Decoto. Louie, the older brother, parked his car by the Safeway and lived in it, painted a picture of a Mohawk Indian on the passenger door. He was six feet tall, with shimmering brown skin and black hair that flowed into a waterfall over his forehead and almost touched the arch of his long, curving nose. Everyone called him Chief.

1958: Two Virgins

Diane had strong, long legs that swung from wide hips. Her brown hair was cut short and curly on top of her head and straight in back. It fell to a point between her shoulder blades. She helped me cut my blonde hair the same. Her eyes were large and brown, her mouth full. When I first saw her I was afraid. I thought she was Queen of the Pachucas. I thought she was bad and beautiful. I thought she would choose me out. I thought she would beat me up.

One evening I met her at Lucky's. She was trying to buy cigarettes. I helped her steal a pack. We ran to her house and locked the door. No one followed. I stayed for dinner — hot dogs and Hormel chili. When it was dark, we went for a walk. We walked to Mission San Jose, talking all the way. Men and boys followed us in their cars, asked if we needed a ride. We laughed at them, called them ignorant fools, kept walking.

The houses in Mission San Jose had sunken living rooms, dens, double garages, two and a half bathrooms, well-trimmed lawns. We pretended we were married, had three children. We chose the homes we would live in, when we were mothers, when we were married, when our husbands brought home paychecks. In the daytime we walked to newly constructed houses and pretended we were buying. We chose the model with an enclosed dining area and sunken living room. The salesmen ignored us as we sat for hours on the Montgomery Ward sofa.

Once we hiked to Niles Canyon and had a picnic. We talked about the ghost who appeared every Halloween — a teenaged girl killed on her way to a dance ten years before — who sat on a rock in the middle of Niles Creek and wept for the children and husband she would never have, a house with a separate dining room.

Two kids got killed driving 100 miles per hour around the Canyon's curves. The grieving father towed the wreck to the high school parking lot as a lesson. We stood around looking for blood and bits of flesh, but no one spoke. A few hours later, when he left, he was crying. The next morning, a picture of twenty students staring blankly at a mangled car, appeared on the front page of the local paper.

Diane and I didn't have boyfriends with cars. Day and night we walked. We once sat in a cafe booth, ordered cokes, lifted sandwiches wrapped in wax paper from our purses, ate our lunch. The owner said he'd let us stay this time, but never again. We giggled and kept on chewing.

One night, as we walked on Mission San Jose Boulevard's gravel shoulder,

a car followed us. We ignored its headlights. It stopped. We weren't afraid. We never were afraid. A man stepped out, said he was a cop, showed us a badge. He asked for our names, took down our descriptions. (Two female juveniles: one dark, medium frame; one fair, slight frame.) He called on his unmarked car's radio. We checked out, we weren't runaways. "But you have a reputation," he said, "for walking around." He let us go. We kept walking.

1960: The Projects

I took the bus to Oakland to spend the weekend with Diane. The projects were rows of wood-framed barracks, once painted white. Children played in the trash sprouted lawns. Teenaged girls gathered in bunches along the sidewalks, whispering, taunting us as we walked past on our way to the corner store for cokes. Diane and I sat on her front step and filed our nails. We stared back with cold and menacing eyes as we slowly ran the metal points over our thumbs. Sharp dudes with slicked back black hair and thin moustaches drove past in raked 56 Chevies. Shades covered their eyes. Sunlight gleamed on the white walled tires, silver spikes twirled from the hubcaps. "Hey Sheena," one yelled to me, "you Queen of the Jungle?"

"I hate that blonde puta," a girl hissed from across the street. Diane and I narrowed our eyes and continued to file our nails. We didn't giggle in the presence of the enemy.

"Her sister used to go steady with Johnny Moreno," Diane whispered, "but now he goes with me."

Diane walked me to the bus stop so I wouldn't get hassled by the girls in the projects. She was wearing striped pedal pushers, a black sweater and back flat-heeled shoes. She hadn't bothered to put on lipstick, and her hair was in rollers because she had a date with Johnny that night. She told me she liked Oakland, liked the guys, felt like she belonged there. I promise to visit again, but I didn't know when. "You know, school," I said. I thought the projects were kind of scary, but I didn't want to tell her that. "See you around," she said. Then she turned and walked away. I waited for the bus by myself.

I spent the summer watching TV and playing Monopoly with my mother and brother. When school started, I became friends with Becky Martinez who lived on Rita Street, but we didn't walk around. We played records in her bedroom with the door closed. We called boys on the phone and hung up when they answered.

I was put in college prep classes. The girls asked what housing tract I lived in. When I said Irvington Square, they stopped talking to me. When they got bad grades they said, "Watch it, you'll end up waiting tables," or "You don't want to marry a truck driver, do you?"

Becky started going steady with Bobby Gomez. I stayed home and read: *The Amboy Dukes*, *Knock On Any Door*. I discovered Theodore Drieser, Richard Wright, George Orwell. I read about drama during the Thirties. I read "Waiting For Lefty." I wanted to join the Group Theater in New York. I wanted to join Hemingway in Spain. I wanted to read Brecht, but he wasn't in our school library.

Louie visited. He asked to stay for supper. He hadn't bathed in weeks. He said Diane was pregnant. Her boyfriend had stolen a car and was in jail. Louie said Johnny had beat her up a couple of times. Write her, he said. I didn't. I didn't know what to say.

Becky married Bobby Gomez.

I went to junior college.

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RACHEL GUIDO deVRIES is director of the Community Writers Project in Syracuse. Her novel *Tender Warriors* was published by Firebrand. She has just completed a manuscript of poems, *Cave Songs*, and is presently working on a new novel, *The Lost Era of Frank Sinatra*. Starting with the next issue she will be Fiction Editor of IKON.

CATHERINE DeMARIA, an artist and photojournalist for the past ten years, has done photo documentation on Nicaragua and Northern Ireland—where she also worked on a film called "What's the Difference Between a Country and a House?" which deals with violence in the home. Fifteen of her images from Belfast were included in a traveling exhibition, "Belfast Exposed: Women's Perspective on Belfast."

KATHY ENGEL has just finished her six year Executive Directorship of MADRE, a national friendship association with women and children in Central America and the Caribbean. She is a board member of the Middle East Peace Network, Pregones Puerto Rican Theater Company, and MADRE. She lives in New York City with her partner, photographer/sculptor/teacher Jonathan Snow, and their daughter Ella Simone Engel-Snow.

FATISHA, born and raised in California, is the author of two collections of poetry, most recently *Love Tongue and Mother Wit* (Damascus Road). She is working on a new manuscript, partly written at MacDowell. Otherwise, she spends her time as an astrologer.

DIANE GLANCY (Cherokee) teaches Native American literature and creative writing at Macalester College. She has been published in several anthologies including *A Gathering of Spirit* and *Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back*. She is the co-editor of "Bearing Witness," *Calyx's* special issue of Native American/Latina women. Her two new books of poems are *Offering* (Holy Cow! Press) and *One Age in a Dream* (Milkweed Editions).

ARLEEN GOLDBERG graduated from Queens College in 1970 with a major in oral interpretation of literature. She has been writing poetry for over twenty years. She shares her East Village apartment with her cat Sarah and is the proud Aunt of Jill and Tracy.

KIMIKO HAHN is Project Director of *Word of Mouth*, a multicultural literature project in Chinatown, and former poetry editor of *Bridge: Asian American Perspectives*. She was awarded grants for poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1986 and The New York Foundation for the Arts in 1987. Her most recent book is *Air Pocket* from Hanging Loose Press. With this issue she joins IKON as Poetry Editor.

MICHELLE HOVET, a twenty-two year old senior at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota will graduate in December with a concentration in Women's Studies and History. "Color" is from her senior honors project, a collection of short stories about growing up female in American culture.

GALE JACKSON is a poet, writer, storyteller, librarian and an organizer in cultural education. Her work has been published in a number of journals. She is co-editor of *Art Against Apartheid: Works For Freedom* (1986). She is currently working on a collection of her short stories and a novel called *The Precision of the Embrace*. Her most recent book is *We Stand Our Ground: Three Women, Their Vision, Their Poems* (IKON Press, 1988).

NZADI ZIMELE KEITA is a writer/poet, born and raised in Philadelphia under the name Michelle McMichael. Her poems have appeared in *Shooting Star Review*, *The American Poetry Review*, and *Confirmation: An Anthology of African-American Women*. She has taught poetry workshops in the public schools and in community centers. She holds degrees in Journalism and Creative Writing from Temple University and Vermont College.

IRENE KLEPFISZ is an activist in the lesbian/feminist and Jewish communities. She is the author of *Keeper of Accounts* (poetry) and the co-editor of *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women's Anthology*, just issued in revised and expanded form by Beacon Press. She is a founder of the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation, Suite 1178, 163 Joralemon St., Brooklyn, NY 11201.

BARBARA MAHONEY, Editorial Associate with IKON, currently resides in Manhattan. She won the Elizabeth Luce Moore Prize for Fiction (1984) and received her B.A. and M.F.A. from Skidmore College and Sarah Lawrence College respectively. She is now working on her first novel.

CAROLINA MANCUSO, a resident of Brooklyn, has written for the theater and is an editor in the field of international education. Her fiction appeared in the anthology *Love, Struggle & Change: Stories by Women* (Crossing Press, 1988) and won First Place in the 1988 Reed Smith Fiction Awards sponsored by *Amelia*. She is currently working on a collection of stories and on a novel set in 13th century France.

GIGI MARKS: "I grew up in New York City, received a B.S. in agronomy and an M.A. in creative writing—both from Cornell University. I work as a gardener in the upper Hudson Valley and am expecting my first child in July (kind of breaks up the growing season a bit). My poems have appeared in *Prism International*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Northwest Review*, *Sojourner*, among others."

VALERIE MAYNARD, a visual artist, painter, sculptor, printmaker, has been widely represented in numerous exhibitions internationally including one-woman exhibits at The Caribbean Cultural Center, Riksstallningar National Museum (Sweden), Howard University, and the Reichhold Center for the Arts (University of the Virgin Islands) and has been published in or written about in many books and periodicals including *The Washington Post*, *Black Artists of the New Generation* (Dodd Mead), *Artforum*, *Art News*, and the *New York Times*.

JANET McCANN has had poems published in the *Kansas Q*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Sou'wester*. Her most recent chapbook is *Dialogue with the Dogcatcher* (Slough Press, 1987). She teaches creative writing and "other things" at Texas A&M.

ROBBIE McCAULEY was born in Norfolk, Virginia, reared in Columbus, Georgia and Washington D.C., and "grew up" on the Lower East Side of New York where she now lives and works as a performer, writer, and theater artist. Her work has appeared in *The Quality of Life in Loisaia*, *The Portable Lower East Side*, *The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church*, and *Catalyst*. She teaches at City College of New York's Davis Center of Performing Arts.

SUSAN SHERMAN is a poet, essayist, and editor of IKON magazine. She was awarded a CAPS poetry grant (1976/77) and editor's awards from CCLM (the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines) in 1985 and NYSCA (the New York State Council on the Arts) in 1986. Her most recent book is *We Stand Our Ground: Three Women, Their Vision, Their Poems*, in collaboration with Kimiko Hahn and Gale Jackson. Her collection of essays, short prose and poetry, *The Color of the Heart: Essays, Short Prose & Poems*, will be published by Curbstone Press in the Fall of 1990.

CLARISSA SLIGH's career has ranged from work in finance and computer science to photography, film and painting. A 1988 NEA and NYFA recipient, she has earned degrees in business and fine art. Sligh's work is based on her experiences of growing up Black and female in the Southeastern United States. Currently she is National Coordinator of the Coast to Coast Women of Color Traveling Exhibition.

MARY JANE SULLIVAN is a poet and Artistic Director of Now and Then Productions. She was the Associate Producer on the documentary "Maria's Story," which follows activist Maria Serrano in the war torn northern hills of El Salvador. She currently lives in Brooklyn.

CAROL TARLEN is co-editor of *Real Fiction*. Her poetry and prose have appeared in *Practicing Angels*, *IKON*, *Central Park*, *Sing Heavenly Muse!*, *Hoboken Terminal*, and *A Room of One's Own*. She lives in San Francisco where she is a clerical worker and member of AFSCME 3218.

PATRICE VECCHIONE is a native New Yorker currently residing in Santa Cruz, California. Her poems have most recently appeared in *Quarry West*, *The Berkeley Review of Books*, and *Yellow Silk*.

JANINE POMMY VEGA has recently completed three books, all in 1988: *Drunk on a Glacier*, *Talking to Flies* (Tooth of Time Books), *Skywriting* (City Lights Books), and *Candles Burn In Memory Town* (Segue), a prison anthology she edited. She is currently working on a series of poems from Nepal called *Red Bracelets*, as well as a collection of short stories.

AMY ZUCKERMAN is a documentary photographer whose work has an ethnological and anthropological approach and has taken her to Kenya, Morocco, the Dominican Republic and Mexico to document and create portraits which depict the lifestyles, values, and cultural aesthetics by which individuals live. She is affiliated with the Impact Visual Photography Agency in New York City.

*"Writing which addresses the root assumptions...
the very ground on which we're standing..."*



TRIVIA

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JOURNAL
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FEMINIST BOOFAIR

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