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Mother in the Garden: A Collection of Poems

Heidi L. Everett

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This creative work submitted by Heidi L. Everett in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

MOTHER IN THE GARDEN

by

Heidi L. Everett

B.A., St. Cloud State University, 1992

Steve K. [Signature]
Chairperson

Creative Work

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Dennis [Signature]
Dean
School of Graduate and Continuing Studies

May, 1994

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Cucumbers. Each year when cucumber seeds are planted, the gardener cannot count on the light green leaves to poke their furry points from the soil. Nor can the gardener anticipate the number of ripe cukes that will surface throughout the harvest. Instead, after irrigating, fertilizing, and hoping for ideal weather conditions, the gardener can merely make way to the cucumber patch each morning—colander in hand—and lift the dense leaves, digging through pricks for enough cucumbers to can, to cut, and to consume.

Poetry is like this—the seeds embedded deep within the poet. The poet then plants the seeds on white, virgin paper, spaced accordingly, and waters them with ink, lead, or eraser marks. The future of the crop remains uncertain, sometimes drowning in floods of ambiguity. Nonetheless, the poet will continue tilling unfamiliar soil, waiting for seeds to root, to surface, and to sprout.

MOTHER IN THE GARDEN is the harvest from my first crop. The seeds were passed on from women I have to come know through personal interaction, printed words, or oral history. With my pen I have attempted to nurture their stories on the page and preserve them with an immortal, printed shelf life.

Their lives represent a maturation of sexuality, spirituality, and wisdom that is part of the human experience in a world that at times stifles growth. And, their struggles during maturation serve as a common

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Their lives represent a maturation of sexuality, spirituality, and wisdom that is part of the human experience in a world that at times stifles growth. And, their struggles during maturation serve as a common

bond for readers who may feel isolated during various stages of development or who may read poetry for a fond remembrance of experiences. The recognition and attachment may be a sentimental, humorous acknowledgement of advice passed on, like in the poem "Mother Always Told Me to Wear Clean Underpants." Or, the connection may be drawn from suffocating feelings of loss that are represented in poems like "Pieta" and "Dachau."

In addition to building a sense of connection between the characters' experiences in my poetry and the experiences of readers, I strive to illustrate the tone or action of the poems or character of the subjects within the sounds of the words on the page as well as the format of the words on the page. In "Kiitos, Jallu," for instance, the overwhelming use of "S" within the first stanza represents the sounds of water hitting hot coals in a sauna:

I remember
 rocks
 that steamed
 and spit
 hissing from wooden
 ladles and
 melted snow

Other poems, which are particularly biting in content, may utilize harsh consonant sounds and shrill vowel combinations to supplement the theme.

The format also should represent an overall picture of the poem. Granted, I am not a big fan of the concrete poem, like in "Ode to a Calendar Girl," but I do adhere to using tabs, enjambment, and line

spacing to illustrate a particular mood. "Postcards From Europe" is probably the obvious example of this, mainly because the stanzas are designed to represent the size and amount of words used on a standard sized postcard. Others, however, may not seem as calculated. "Sunday at Vera's Cafe," in comparison to the formats of other poems within the collection, is more blocked than the formats with sporadic indentations. I wanted this format to represent the conservative, continual progression of the main characters' life together--unchanging, formatted, possibly stiff. The format for "Looking Out My Window, 365 Days in Retrospect of New Year's Eve, with the First Night of Accumulation and Thoughts of Ginsberg" is radically different, representing the segmented and fragmented recollection of an evening experienced by the chemically-altered characters within the poem. I had a sense of unraveling in mind when I wrote the poem:

Along the alley
 past fingers grating
 brick
 holding bodies
 hunched, heaving, knock-kneed spewing
 past foul constrictions
 vasko refuse
 and cigarette
 butts
 smoldering

When writing poetry, my only fear is that I cannot capture a particular mood, situation, or character. Granted, I have the vocabulary and the skills to present words on a page, but I do not always know how to transfer the ideas within me to ink for others to experience the same feelings or thoughts as I. As the great poet Pablo Neruda once said in an

interview, Europe has been written, painted, and performed; the world has so many other untapped resources waiting to be discovered and written about. He was speaking from the world of Chile where roads exist without names, indigenous people live without recognition, mountain ranges remain unclimbed. I believe his theory is true for the world as I know it as well, and some of the untouched variables lend themselves to varying degrees of poetry. There are orange, cotton-candy clouds on August sunsets; nameless faces that every community can recognize on barstools, concrete, or behind counters; and back road towns with mounds of homemade mashed potatoes and real wedges of beef in the gravy. There are the realities of watching my abdomen transpose with every turn of my son's body and moments when his head and shoulders will slide into the world for the first time. Yet, I cannot be the messenger at this time to deliver these sights sounds, smells, tastes, or feelings. For now, I have captured what has been willed to me—experiences of women.

If I had to label the collection or contrive a simile for what I want the collection of experiences to represent, I would say it is an album of yellowing photographs. The portraits in the album are valuable accounts of growth, captured in the snapshots of poetry. Their importance lies in the demand that we are not isolated in times of struggle. Like an old photo album, these pages can be opened at three a.m. after a glass of wine has started a flood of memories, or at three in the afternoon when the baby is asleep, and silence is peaceful and not deafening.

The collection also is an evolving definition of myself. Merely acknowledging the presence of many of these women has helped me

define my strengths and ideologies as a woman, a human, an American. I look to them or their stories as guidance or symbols. I also watch how the importance or the interpretations of their experiences changes as I do. Now, in my eighth month of pregnancy, I search for advice on motherhood. Perhaps, when I am seventy and wrought with varicose veins, Alzheimer's and high blood pressure that is handed down in my family, I will look to these portraits and laugh at the naivete of my words, or I will rewrite the stories with words from fifty more years of experience.

Until my voice and perception changes, I will continue as any gardener who is passionate about each year's cucumber crop. I will plant and nurture words on the page, hoping to cultivate and harvest from the soil enough poetry for nourishment.

In the doghouse

we'd crawl

dogs

at night

caressed

by worn winter straw

dehydrated shit

and the damp earth

at the

blackened doorway

of the slunged green

abode

inside, with knees

to

chin

and backs hunched

head hanging

to avoid rusty roof nails

and webs

we'd smoke

the sharp cricket bite

of whistle and tobacco pops

with mom's

ivory

dancing on dew drops

across the lawn

In the doghouse

we'd crawl
 dogs
 at night
 caressed
 by worn winter straw
 dehydrated shit
 and the damp earth
 at the
 blackened doorway
 of the shingled green
 abode
 Inside, with knees
 to
 chin
 and backs hunched
 head hanging
 to avoid rusty roof nails
 and webs
 we'd smoke
 the sharp cricket bite
 of whistle and tobacco pops
 with mom's
 ivory
 dancing on dew drops
 across the lawn
 from the cherries of
 stolen Marlboros
 awkwardly held
 in shaky fingers.

the boys

pixied and lanky
I mounted my
bike and kept stride
with the boys

yellow, soiled gripping
Climbing rusty ladders
oblivious to copper colored
palms and scraped bloody
knees we'd run along the plane
of the battered old Burlington-Northern
some years since retired.

another day
Sitting in the slice of light
homage was paid to every
heel, staple and banana in
the stack of soggy
magazines kept on
stash at the car

Sunday came
And when the boys
joked of stink finger
in the bowels of our
steel furnace

tapped
I felt the heat
illuminate, shrink, and burn
from the cherries of
stolen Marlboros
awkwardly held
in shaky fingers.

to
heaven

religion as to Me in Sexless Dreams

"God damn you!"
she screamed
ankles tangled in vines
eyes to the sky
yellow, soiled gripping
gloves grasping
twiney viny
fried
cucumber
patches
after yet
another day
of
scorching
suicidal
sun
still
no rain... but sweat
Sunday came
always the same
at ten and twelve
perched on the pew
while toes
tapped
and tantalized
organ tentacles
turning
the tunes
for the one
way ticket
to
heaven

He Comes to Me in Sexless Dreams

between linen
 at night
 I see
 pallid
 deserts
 that stretch like
 exposed stomachs
 laminated
 with
 sweat
 scorching
 sun orange and fiery
 presses hotly
 on
 molten asphalt
 stretching
 and snaking
 burning
 tar stench
 hugs dirty
 white VW bug
 and dry
 fingers clutching
 cigarettes.
 palms pawing
 bare
 bourboned
 backs
 I'd stand, I'd sweat, I'd sing off-key "I
 Love a Parade,"
 and kissing the bald
 the black
 the carriers of
 both X
 chromosomes

Mardi Gras

At fifteen I dreamed
 of
 New Orleans in February
 away from starch white walls
 in mother's basement rooms
 calloused arches
 gripping corroded metallic
 box tops
 of daily news
 on the burnt
 red
 cobblestone
 of Bourbon Street

 with "Get Out of Hell Free" card
 clutched high above saturated skull
 and gold lamé reflections
 spotlighting bare
 flattened breasts
 framed by beads of yellow and pink
 my liquored tongue licking stale
 cigarette lips of orange sequened
 feather
 faces and cardboard
 palms pawing
 bare
 bourboned
 backs
 I'd stand, I'd sweat, I'd sing off-key "I
 Love a Parade,"
 and kissing the bald
 the black
 the carriers of
 both X
 chromosomes

Ode to a Calendar Girl

Oh to
 be beautiful
 and dumb
 tump
 lacking
 cerebrum endowed in rump
 turn up the fans oh
 calendar god 1,000
 watt bulb
 bathes
 silicone
 bod
 paste on
 the shimmer
 les of green
 overstuffed
 obscene a
 smile and
 quish
 got to
 say
 nothin'
 just
 a few
 grains
 of
 in
 a
 perfect
 belly
 button

For all girls of sixteen... Ode to a Calendar Girl

Traveling through the dark Oh to
 North of the kennels be beautiful
 On County Road 83 and dumb
 I succumbed to the opera as a stump
 of ebony cacophony reverberating lacking
 Stretched and crucified cerebrum endowed in rump
 emerald veins expounded turn up the fans oh
 and backs arched over buck calendar god 1,000
 heat of ten toes cracked condensation watt bulb
 sacrificed for a bag and a tattoo bathes
 silicone
 bod
 paste on
 the shimmer
 triangles of green
 300 buck Dior
 overstuffed
 obscene a
 smile and
 a squish
 ain't
 got to
 say
 nothin'
 just
 a few
 grains
 of
 sand
 in
 a
 perfect
 belly
 button

For all girls of sixteen...

Traveling through the dark
 North of the kennels *dom baby*
 On County Road 83 *from*
 I succumbed to the opera
 of ebony cacophony reverberating beyond the windows
 Stretched and crucified with arms nailed to blind spots
 emerald veins expounded
 and backs arched over buckets
 heat of ten toes cracked condensation *hear actually*
 sacrificed for a bag and a tattoo

adoration and respect
that she so loved
in the family dog

He, at least, was paid for

So, I existed in the family photo
had my placemat on the dinner table
a proud member of the twenty percent
of ineffective prophylactics.

self *Glass Blower*

She told me last night that
 I was the broken condom baby
 the words just sang from
 her lips of the accident
 of two taut tummies *are there by choice*
 on prom night *in cement*
 years ago

I dragged heavily on the only vice permitted
 It was something I'd always wanted to hear actually
 encompassing all of the
 adoration and respect
 that she so loved
 in the family dog *lungs*
 each word filling my ears
 He, at least, was paid for *smoke*

yet not as grey
first of So, I existed in the family photo
 had my placemat on the dinner table
 a proud member of the twenty percent
 of ineffective prophylactics.

lids, cheeks, nose

somewhere in the story you left out the adjectives
the callousness of groping
the vulture-like hunger
limbs, lips parting
yours and sucking life
entombing your fragile skull
your body, legs with the pressure of dead weight

He burned you, shaped you, molded
you with the skill of a glass blower only
to smash you on concrete
leaving shards to rip and slice
as he shoved six inches into seven years.

The Glass Blower

We sat on the steps
I smoking
you tapping irritating
cold, rigid concrete
I wouldn't say we were there by choice
but rather, confinement

I dragged heavily on the only vice permitted
locked on swirls
of smoke, liberated
fleeing, freely over
the rotted fencepost
Each drag filling my lungs
each word filling my ears
You talked as freely as smoke
yet not as grey
first of the home then of the self
Recounting times he held you
looked into you, through you
kissing
lids, cheeks, nose

somewhere in the story you left out the adjectives
the callousness of groping
the vulture-like hunger
limbs, lips parting
yours and sucking life
entombing your fragile skull
your body, legs with the pressure of dead weight

He burned you, shaped you, molded
you with the skill of a glass blower only
to smash you on concrete
leaving shards to rip and slice
as he shoved six inches into seven years.

genuflect *Mid-afternoon Rainfall -- Lake Miltona, July 1985*

Oh, large penguin
 sister Anna Maria
 you should have given
 up the food this
 season
 tell me
 If I sign the
 cross is it
 sacrilegious
 masturbation
 from head to navel
 to shoulder and
 shoulder

*With face upturned
 nestled
 in
 mother's vast white
 breast
 suckling
 tongue licks lips
 bathed
 with
 warm
 milk.*

And this holy water
 perrier of priests
 I must question
 if it has been
 blessed,
 bottled,
 or tapped

If Mary was a virgin
 was she
 missing
 out

Do Bedre Midafternoon Rainfall -- Lake Miltona, July 1985

Slamming shoulders against
the wooden planks bowed
and creaked then on
the gusty cool rooftop of
Hvid-hus
The blinding white buried
me deeply in silhouette
you were grey
almost green
every pore opening
breathing

With face upturned
nestled
in
mother's vast white
breast
suckling
tongue licks lips
bathed
with
warm
milk.

I wiped the bugs from
side to up to down
with damp cloth pulled taut
on my back
yet held on legs finding leverage
on the ledge of your waist

When the sucking of stale sweet
salty sweat of your cheek
released
the moist mists of
limpford screamed like
trains through my nostrils

Athens, 1990

Bo Bedre

It is paid for

Slamming shoulders against the i
the wooden planks bowed
and creaked then on
the gusty cool rooftop of the
Hvid-hus

The blinding white buried
me deeply in silhouette
you were grey
almost green
every pore opening
breathing

penis

I wiped the bugs from
side to up to down
with damp cloth pulled taut
on my back
yet held on legs finding leverage
on the ledge of your waist

pulled to scuffed

When the sucking of stale sweet
salty sweat of your cheek
released
the moist mists of
limpjord screamed like
trains through my nostrils

fingers

in

palms

grey diet sneakers danced atop
brittle white stoneware
between

piles

of plates

and pie tins

aluminum and
carnations of pink white red
cutting stale cigar steam
and aniseed air

Dachau at the Louvre in Black January with Icy Mud on Boot Heels
for Mona

Transfixed in
ash laden
barbecue pit of
human flesh

Piecing together
soft grey flakes of
fragile limbs
defenseless hands

jovial youth

Living dead

Flailing arms
Writhing torsos
Clawing
Grasping
Screaming
Searing

Silence

Carrying the stench
humanity's irrevocable guilt
hanging blood like dew drops
along the plane of
barbed wire
Wishing i had been born
a Jew.

still,
you're mounted
and nailed among
the crucifixion in foreign
tongue,
nakedly dressed
in transparent glass.

in the animation of the inanimate
I find myself unable
to name your pain

Refuge at the Louvre in Black January with Icy Mud on Boot Heels
for Mona

Flo:

boot heels clicked

balls slipped

and i passed you once

twice, maybe more

i had traveled cumulus

and crest with

limon plaid covers and

over sixty-five babble

of those that fondle

nine-irons

i peered alongside of them

i admit

pseudo-gurus

of Leo

that pay homage

kneeling at your stare to feel

what you say

we adopted you

to prostitute for holidays

of national discontent

flashing your two-dimensional

bosom for abe and george

like some celebrated whore

Is it longing

envy or pity

I feel for you

still,

you're mounted

and nailed among

the crucifixion in foreign

tongue,

nakedly dressed

in transparent glass.

in the animation of the inanimate

i find myself unable

to name your pain

Postcards from Europe in damp Mediterranean sands

Flo:

1. After 14 hours it is hard to distinguish
the stench of bilingual-sweat-stained
train leather worn from my own waxy
flesh. Both bury smoke in spongy pores
like lonely lovers on one-night boxspring
boards
2. On a 3 a.m. from Hamburg I met a
woman. Swaggering, she lurched with the train
her bare breasts pressed flat on the window
Spotlighted by the jasmine moon
like glistening cherry crepes.
3. I saw Parisian stars last night
jagged and cold as the chips in my
back on the concrete banks of the Seine.
4. I feel red as the map line between
legendary stars. The shortest distance between
two points is not this. I feel like a short
cut gone bad. Last night I talked to a reflection
broiled for twenty minutes in the mist coated
window of evening third class.
5. Do you prefer black and clean or
white and dirty?
6. In Greece today, Baklava sat like a cast iron
weight in my stomach. I sweat ouzo that
pours aniseed air in streams along my flesh.
I am drunk on my own scent.

7. With feet buried in damp Mediterranean sands
I ate papaya, insides reminded me
of silicone breasts corroded with cancer.
I stared through the union of smokey grey sky and sea
fingers pressed circulating in soft lumpy centers like nipples.

8. Brobst! Frothing black beer erodes
concrete slumber on train station floors
laminated with urine. 50 marcs will buy two squares
of tissue and a few moments with feces-stained procelain.

9. Painted my body in Aalborg after rolling the day and licking it shut
with dehydrated tongue on waxy paper.
Emerald wings seemed fitting on skin that won't stretch
I think the sign said sterile, but you know false cognates
(estoy embarazada!)

10. Ran like a nymph through Hvid-hus park today.
Denmark leaves are much softer on virgn arches.
Soiled jeans and tee scattered the lawn as I wedged
my soft body between the cold emerald frames of the girls.
Thank heaven for automatic timers.

11. Smothered apples with imitation peanut butter on the
way to my plane. How I long to eat the fruits of the fridge.
Toothless man bought me a coke and offered a motorcycle
ride to his "willage." Why do we speak louder and slower
with non-English speaking people?

12. Foreign tongues stand out like flutes
among clanging symbols of English drawl. I'm in Chicago
and wanting one-way tickets to anywhere but home. I'd sell
my body for the carbon copies but couldn't buy a destination farther
than Indiana. See you tonight. . .

Looking Out My Window, 365 Days in Retrospect of New Year's Eve, with the
First Night of Accumulation and Thoughts of Ginsberg

Along the alley
past fingers grating
brick
holding bodies
hunched, heaving, knock-kneed spewing

COAXING FRUIT

past foul constrictions
of vaso refuse
and cigarette
butts
smoldering, smashed
from lips of lovers
loners
lost

There's a wooden door
marked dirty white
no parking any time
with red-rimmed
corners bent
and rust
rocking
when
bumped on one
bolt

This door, spitting
line of light without lock
but hole to
suck and scrape
fingers when
pulled
opens to steep
stuffy stairwell

rubber stops caress
and crack
the
edge of 20 steps
wet-winter
soles

Looking Out My Window, 365 Days in Retrospect of New Year's Eve, with the
First Night of Accumulation and Thoughts of Ginsberg

Along the alley
past fingers grating
brick
holding bodies
hunched, heaving, knock-kneed spewing

past foul constrictions
of vasko refuse
and cigarette
butts
smoldering, smashed
from lips of lovers
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There's a wooden door
marked dirty white
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This door, spitting
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but hole to
suck and scrape
fingers when
pulled
opens to steep
stuffy stairwell

rubber stops caress
and crack
the
edge of 20 steps
wet-winter
soles

some caved
 some creaky
 some
 worn
 to swim in coating
 It was there
 in blinding white
 and
 the two-cushioned
 couch in the
 hall at the
 top of the stairs
 my back
 Boxy wheat
 Bristly burlap
 torn and
 frothing foam
 stained
 drops
 on top of semen spit
 spilled secretion
 unknown
 limbs splashed
 shadows on
 rusted bicycle
 rims
 empty boxes
 shredded duct tape
 the sides
 letting it melt
 canary yellow
 radiator
 ticked
 stretching thighs
 its
 I'd suck
 bars masturbating
 heat
 third in a party of
 two
 drowning old acquaintance
 tick
 of tick
 constant calcium
 of craving.

An Ode to Calcium

give me milk
 a vat
 to swim in coating
 my skin
 and
 sticking to pores
 like opaque
 saran wrap
 I'll arch
 my back
 and
 float
 nipples
 surfaced like bouyant
 butterscotch
 drops
 on
 ice
 cream
 ice cream
 the glacier of milk
 I'll climb that too
 without
 a spoon to pick
 the sides
 letting it melt
 on my lips
 an alabaster lipstick
 to streak my chin torso
 stretching thighs
 dripping like milk
 I'd suck
 the
 udder
 of a cow for milk
 to live
 and breath
 and be a warrior
 of the
 constant calcium
 of craving.

Wyoming says Told Me To Wear Clean Underpants
our first trip

And I just had to wonder if
We abandoned I-90
for chipped tar
and a tangled tentacle that
stretched and
swept up farms

Wheels kicked
pebbles off
asphalt into
freshly bathed stalks
of wild wheat
that hugged barbed wire
Each brake
prefaced another corner

Did Antoinette or Princess Di
The base of your
skull teetered on
cushion with
every tap of my foot
on pedal yet your eyes
had had enough
landscape
I caught it from the corner of mine
and feared your head would roll forward
too quickly, rocking on the burgundy
tendon of your neck, finally
snapping

As medics crawl about the place
The old tree of kiwi
was ahead, to the right
on your left and we had
no compass
The map
eight fold in the
glove box

You sleep
your breath an opaque
fog on the rain-spattered window
I see the tree in the
rearview mirror.

Mother Always Told Me To Wear Clean Underpants

And I just had to wonder if
the other mothers did this too
And in my little wondering
I thought of all the moms I knew

There's Kris and Kim and of course Kelly
who of the three was the most smelly
who never dressed in fancy pants
only the dirt of flies and ants

And what about old lady Prine
whose monstrous briefs hung on the line
like three-holed kites her undies flew
above the trees and into blue

Did Antoinette or Princess Di
wear noble briefs pulled way up high
and if their chariots tipped and fell
would snugly softness save from hell

Our lady on the white house lawn
although we know her mumsie's gone
Does she have stacks of accident pants
or wear her dirties all on chance

When I get dressed I see my car
overturned wheels on roads not far
and I can hear the cherries race
As medics crawl about the place

Upon my face assurance glows
from eyes to chin to cheeks and nose
For I have choice and left the drawer
with cleans in hand, dirties on floor

Pieta

you held him
 your first born
 his back
 arched against
 the flesh that housed
 the womb

that flesh now cushions
 sweat, blood, thorn
 ribs outstretched
 exposed not from skin
 but tepid
 transparent
 film
 gnarled from
 cracks of recoiling leather snake
 bites and blood-stained
 stone throws

your hands
 weathered ivory on your lap
 cupped matted hair
 and the same white purple
 that carried him from you made
 him
 slick
 in
 your

hands.

A Toast

A toast was made to
my breasts this new year
glasses raised and brimming
like the lactating mounds
awaiting the arrival of my
son in June

Female eyes reflected thoughts
of mammal functions
while men questioned
how long roundness
lasts after milking season

My son simply floated
to the slow, melodic thump
of a tired heart in the warm
nine month bath drawn for him

He too will know me
by my breasts one day, the apothecaries
and divine suppliers of iron
and antibiotics

But tonight, from behind
the rims of sparkling flaxen
I am simply breasts
round robust revered

mother's hands...er uglies

the how majestically
 you soil puckered
 and oil on soft, silken
 of prickly cucumbers
 kohlrabi
 cantaloupe
 boiled vinegar
 mahogany stain
 of in
 pickled in
 I have beets ne thought...
 canned in crevice amp a
 of calloused
 dry his nail of the eye
 dyser fingers an
 dappled scene
 and twisted way through
 as birch in your -doped in
 knots
 and mud and ed tea with the
 spoth flesh
 hanging the
 like of gout
 bolts
 Ah in of bent on
 noble silk
 must harbour genteel
 words for thee
 "Such exquisite
 beauty yet
 the slipper
 does not fit. I
 fear you shant
 be the one."

...but first the sister uglies

Ah! how majestically
 you perch puckered
 bottom on soft, silken
 cushions of silver
 dearest

Drizella
 Gently cupping
 your extended
 foot in
 princely palm

I have but one thought...

Is this fungus stump a
 size thirteen?

and this nail of
 dysentery green
 is quite obscene
 fighting its way through
 runners in your
 hose.

Have you had tea with the
 apothecary

I sense the
 onset of gout

Ah me! bent on
 noble knee

must harbour genteel
 words for thee

"Such exquisite
 beauty yet

the slipper
 does not fit. I

fear you shant
 be the one."

and water hosed
 shrapnel knees

my friend
 I see the
 deep blackness
 of your skin

response

to
Emmett Till

Jimmy Lee Jackson

Sheyann Webb

James Merideth

Fred Hampton

with
my friend

as with my ears vibrate
with resounding thunder
that of outstretched fists
and body
the revolt
from steel shackles
of white whipped words

thin lips drip the salt of
earth

rimmed
nails
and field sweat

I am constricted by
vapors
of
semantical excrement

and feel tight
coagulated crimson
of leather lashed neck
cords
and water hosed
shrapnel knees

my friend
I see the
deep blackness
of your skin

wanting floor Birthing Ward

to

Glisten step inside

wearing it bottomed

like in robes

a new blue stripe

mother's barely

around hug pery

shielding images

of dangling

feet

with an assembly line

bottoms

as white as

the flesh tic

that in

tied nce with sharp

the allic wails

knot and deep bellars

of ungreased

engine parts

scraping

They

walk

worn

paths

within inches of white

walls

waiting

for the show

and

warm

wet ankles.

Fourth Floor Birthing Ward

Glistening

stout-bottomed

pears in robes

of white blue stripe

knotted barely

around slippery

flesh

they walk

an assembly line

plastic

elastic

feet in

cadence with sharp

metallic wails

and deep bellars

of ungreased

engine parts

scraping

They

walk

worn

paths

within inches of white

walls

waiting

for the show

and

warm

wet ankles.

Cryptic Coloration

*It follows that any being, if it vary
however slightly in any manner profitable
to itself, under the co* **NOT READY TO WHISTLE DIXIE**
*varying conditions of life, will have a better
chance of surviving.*

-Charles Darwin, Origin of Species

1. We stood
stripped of bark
albino feet rooted in needles
Trunks and limbs
flat wirey
whispers of
virgin pine

2. Split from the storm
ripped limbs dangle
from forked branches
suspended over knotted
birch
leaves
white bellies
arched

3. Pains cased
clay clam bellies caked
thick, burnt red

From ankles you carved
crevice, cap, blade
with blind hands
pink flesh melting
with pockmarked road
canopied with lacquered oak
leaves of June green

Clasping webbed fingers
wet white feet
whistled milky puddles
toes diving
for jagged pearls

Cryptic Coloration

*It follows that any being, if it vary
however slightly in any manner profitable
to itself, under the complex and sometimes
varying conditions of life, will have a better
chance of surviving.*

-Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*

1. We stood
stripped of bark
albino feet rooted in needles
Trunks and limbs
flat wirey
whispers of
virgin pine

2. Split from the storm
ripped limbs dangle
from forked branches
suspended over knotted
birch
leaves
white bellies
arched

3. Palms cased
clay clam bellies caked
thick, burnt red
From ankles you carved
crevice, cap, blade
with blind hands
pink flesh melting
with pockmarked road
canopied with lacquered oak
leaves of June green

Clasping webbed fingers
wet white feet
whirled milky puddles
toes diving
for jagged pearls

Bangkok

Electric
 yellow burning
 "Pussy Galore!"
 neon through
 rancid
 air illuminating
 soft
 jasmine
 skin
 of
 Patpong

tender shoulder
 blades
 grating brick
 stroking thighs
 with
 outstretched
 fingers
 red ribbed
 tank
 molds
 hard provocative
 twelve year old
 breasts jutting
 nipples
 of
 wasted
 whores
 whispers barbers
 lecherous grasps
 500 baht
 fingered
 fondled
 fucked
 faint crooning of Thai

"How
 long
 you stay
 in Bangkok?"

for sappho

I remember him too
 sweet sappho
 upon the rock
 in blinding light
 legs welcomed
 him like
 wings

and rock
 branded
 me

He shed that day
 offering waxy
 flesh
 webbing fingers
 clutching his strong
 oak back

He took salt
 of my cheek
 scampering as
 quickly as he had
 come
 racing shadow and clouds

In the stream
 later
 chilled ripples
 caressed

in swirls
 of wake

skin
 that had dried and
 fallen

It is then... Vera's Cafe

They were known as the chicken strip people
 when electric together fifty years
 damn yellow and gas lamps him
 die
 and menthol smoke
 fades into blur rising off asphalt on a humid July day
 beer waxed wood
 Never made it any farther than the first booth, nearest the door
 back alley lovers
 and one round friends
 retire
 to dust lined the side for her of course
 shelves and
 uncracked
 classics
 washed and hung
 Vera like
 bloated
 brandy
 snifters
 in whiskey bars
 that daily news
 and stained fingers
 imprint
 dailyware
 coffee cups
 and
 that is
 all
 that
 matters.

Sunday at Vera's Cafe

They were known as the chicken strip people
must've been together fifty years
damn, she was patient with him
Parkinson's they said *in the*
but she walked alongside of him
like watching the blur rising off asphalt on a humid July day
he shook, left wrist to his chest, hunched over
Never made it any farther than the first booth, nearest the door
every Sunday between two and four
avoided the rush that way
Senior chicken strips with baked potatoes
sour cream on the side for her of course
and the wild rice soup for him
she wasn't a big soup fan
needed French dressing on the side for her salad
They always had Lemon Meringue pie
Vera had tried a faddish Lemon Supreme once
we were told that it wasn't quite right
Meringue is back on the menu
I got thirty-five cents the first time I waited on them
I was pissed, disliked them
Saw them coming, Today
left the coffee, soup, salad, on the table
first booth nearest the door
got two bucks
and she winked, holding the door for him
as they made their way to the parking lot
moving side to side
more than moving forward.

*the water hole as
Yel Bichai dances
over the horizon*

Monument Valley

Squinting from the sun
old woman Navajo
drives sheep across
pallid wrinkles in the
sand

Raven black hair sharply
parted, pulled
taut
in braided rope
down her back
and

Deep valley
winds wrestling
vibrant emerald
glowing
pink
fabric
clinging, molding
accenting
staunch sensual thighs

Trenches
deep feet of crow
in worn
weathered face
red
as Earth
stare towards
the water hole as
Yei Bichai dances
over the horizon

Eve all dependent women that left

She is born hungry
 from the rib
 of
 no man
 but conceived
 of soil and root

Rain
 is silver
 blood that spirals
 through her veins
 as the sun the red light
 hotly presses
 on rock wretched
 molten like
 sweltering breasts
 hers
 exposed
 moist

She walks
 bare with vacuum
 sands you had a clue
 steaming, frigid or wet
 arches
 welcoming the
 caress of grain
 like a one you lost
 dying
 virgin gave up

I'm not ready to
 whistle Dixie
 standing on my head
 with a hot pink feather
 duster
 shoved
 up
 my
 ass

...for all dependent women that left

6 p.m. you're hungry

I bet

a tasteless

tin foiled wrapped

t.v. tray is in the

fridge for you

packed with

preservatives finished

in minutes like you

right? If you can figure out

the oven

(hint: if the red light
is on...)

wrinkled, wretched

stench filled

work attire

in a heap

on the floor

where the hamper

used to be

I took the vacuum

not that you had a clue

we owned one

I'm off to

find

myself

the one you lost

I gave all

finally gave up

I'm not ready to

whistle dixie

standing on my head

with a hot pink feather

duster

shoved

up

my

ass

Kiitos, Jallu

I remember
rocks
that steamed
and spit
hissing from wooden
ladels and
melted
snow
you beat
me with
birch
branches thawed
in buckets
opening
pores
fissures
on my
exposed
back
issuing lava
streams of sweat
meandering
along skin
collecting in pools
beneath toes
and
thighs
darkening
cedar benches

your mouth
rimmed with
salt
tasted of
vodka
and buttered eel
charcoaled
black.

Bevor Freiheit

on a slab of rail
stretching
Hamburg
to Berlin East
in pale hours of dusk
stood a woman in garden
on the edge of
a hamlet dressed in
weeds and rags the
tone of earth and hair
white and fleeing
from scarf and
dry grooves,
our eyes met
briefly
and her fingers defiantly raised
two weathered doves
aiming skyward

Future on pillows

laying here
 watching
 grey through
 your hair
 like charcoal as it warms
 I realize that gravity in
 a tug of war with your chin
 is winning
 your bassy
 metronome lulls
 me into sleep and
 I'm at peace
 knowing once
 again
 we'll have
 coffee
 in the morning

to a green television
 screen as if waiting for the
 microwave to spit out
 his supper or the bed
 linens to wait their
 wrinkles out each
 morning

And each morning
 grandma watches him
 in the kitchen
 as he reluctantly pushes
 coffepot buttons like a virgin
 faced with pallid flesh
 waiting
 for a spring of water, the
 unfamiliar steam

When the hungry
 growl of the machine wakes
 she smiles
 her
 cottony grin like grandpas
 morning hair and
 blowing milkweed

Post Humous Post
 Transitions

Let me die
 When grandma bernice died
 the hospital lost her teeth

on polished wood
 We buried her anyway
 mouth built up like
 a new down pillow
 fixed forever in her
 grandma grin

by film
 grampa watched the
 earth swallow her
 burgundy box at his feet
 before going home

in videos
 And at home he sits
 on the couch listening
 to a green television
 screen as if waiting for the
 microwave to spit out
 his supper or the bed
 linens to waltz their
 wrinkles out each
 morning

And each morning
 grandma watches him
 in the kitchen
 as he reluctantly pushes
 coffepot buttons like a virgin
 faced with pallid flesh
 waiting
 for a spring of water, the
 unfamiliar steam

first edition
 When the hungry
 growl of the machine wakes
 she smiles
 her
 cottony grin like grampas
 morning hair and
 blowing milkweed

Post humorous Poet

Let me die
 tomorrow
a dust ball
 on polished wood
 naked
with elbows
 under knees
swept into
 corners
by firm
bristles

but
 leave my pen
an endless
 spring
of ink
 to scratch on
satin-lined
 boxes
of soil-ridden souls

 my
footsteps will
echo
hollow
in fourth
 floor
corners
 of
 back shelf
libraries
 past soft studying skins
to autograph
 first edition
books