



Eugenia Hepworth Petty

EUGENIA HEPWORTH PETTY, born in San Antonio, Texas, moved with her family to Aptos, California in 1969. She received her BA in English from Mills College in 1982 and her MA in Poetics from New College of California in 1995. Her poetry has appeared in various publications, including, most recently, *The Newport Review*, *Brick and Mortar Review*, and *The Pedestal Magazine*. A chapbook of her work will be published in 2006 through a grant from The Rhode Island Council on the Arts. Her photography is forthcoming in *Terra Incognita*, and she continues work on a manuscript of poetry and photography related to her experiences as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine from 1995-1997.

LVIV, UKRAINE FALL 1995

Today I was in love
I bought blood red berries
Pomegranates torn open
Dried herbs tied in bundles
Eggs in glass jars

All around me the city breathed
Centuries of mourning
Born against the weight of the sky

The carved stone of doorways
Armenian apses
Layers of language on markers of the dead
Fortresses
Courtyards
Sculptured turrets of thick walled arsenals
And tiers of icons enshrined in light

Today I was in love and the city breathed
Bouquets of burnt-orange lamps
sputtered
Priests swung censers through Moldavian
cathedrals
Edifices arched
Not buildings at all
But monuments to fortitude
Like the faces of people

THIS POEM

This poem was waiting to be born
in foxholes
with six year old
mud slung soldiers
doing bottle cap runs
in barefoot blistered haze
for the cool linoleum of Piggly Wigglys

This poem lay in wait
by the hurricane ditch
for the horny toads
to wake from sleep
crawl out of the shadows
shoot blood from their eyes

This poem climbed out of its shell
a clean-flesh cicada
old self brown and drying
on snowbells and dogwood

This poem ran down the alleyway
with the neighbors'
surgically deodorized skunk
but this poem
wanted to make a stink
so it turned back
waited till dawn for a skillet hot sun
like a halo behind
the yucca plants

This poem fought like a fire ant
fresh from the next
coppered with sweat
and an unforgiving heat

This poem burned like a fuse going out
sputtering like fireflies
that appeared and disappeared
on the periphery of night

This poem watches egrets
knee deep in swamp grass
before "Ducks Unlimited"
took over the Texas wastelands

This poem swam the canals
of the riverwalk
colored lights strung
under cypress and oak

This poem stayed in town where it lumbered by
sea walls
listening for steel drums and gulls
ratsnakes and vipers

Texan
provincial
this poem never left home
learned to stay cool under Southern moons
stalwart
basking
a cotton mouth of words
waiting to strike.

L(I)ST

I woke and wept screaming afraid of my voice
I traveled toward dusk

I dug beneath fences of rendering plants
I examined old bones

I set out traps for mice and small insects
I devoured cruel words

I scavenged in dumpsters for gold tinted
bric-a-brac
I embellished deceit

I knelt in a circle of torn black thread
I refused to feel

I collected bright scars in hammered tin boxes
I constructed new altars

I buried glass bottles of urine and wolfbane
I exercised prayer

I bathed for three nights in the skins of boiled
walnuts
I ascended, singing


I listened for wind chimes on warm wooden
porches
I remembered the sky

I emerged from cold bunkers with armfuls of
roses
I heralded spring

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