

Some days you were tired
And silent, the long winter
Settled in your hip,
Your face pale as the sun
Those dark afternoons.

Then you remembered
The sudden blizzard—
Your father and you snowblind
In the buckboard, in the middle
Of the vast bare tableland.
How he gripped your arm and dropped the reins,
Turned it over
To the two dark geldings
That led you home.

MONUMENT

Driving past Price Canyon I enter
Coal country, smokestacks
Puffing like trains,
Dark shale peeling the hills,
Leftover snow black
On the roadside.

On Main Street
In Helper, Utah,
Dwarfing the Catholic church
Where the painted arms of Jesus & Mary
Welcome the dusk
Big John, the coal miner
Swings a pickax over his shoulder.
He smiles and steps west
Toward Spring Canyon
Where twenty years ago
A town disappeared
In a shaft.

Starlings fall from his cap,
Children run through his legs, brushing
The quiet snowfall of dust
Off his boots.



David Gerry

my mother wore a rose in her hair

painted her Mexican skin pale
with powder

skated round and round
her body not yet feeling its heat
sixteen was still young then
it was Green's Ice Pond on Rindge Rd
there were men there—they watched
her as they worked—cut blocks of ice
to keep Fitchburg's ice boxes cold
they watched her whitened face
as she tried to blend in with the white landscape
of New England

that was Fitchburg
the place of her birth not blood
there those men sat on blocks of ice
as if to cool themselves
watched from a distance
the movement of her body
her anthracite hair shining like a skate blade

later when it was summer
her brown skin exposed, offered
herself with a rose in her hair
to my Yankee father.