Jorie Graham

UNTITLED TWO

And shades approached. A masonry of shades, one in a parking lot. Give him the darkest inch your mind allows. Hide him in if you will. But where? And fearless truth, where is the thing? And excellence, and skill, all throbbing in the parking lot. And fashion, too, and brute strength, flickering. . . . One that did earn an honest living. One like a statute -lean-one like some gold someone is looking for, one gray-eyed like a verdict, one ribbony with bits of valor, or is it stringy now with blips of laughter? The parking-lot coagulates, quasi-maternal, and strict with cradling unnumbered slots—one tall one fingering his hair as he arrives, one coughing as he keeps on wondering. They gather round, gloat, tangle, clot—they're many-eyed—they forage. Over the gleaming fins and hoods, they seem to chatter. The windshields singe with them, but then they clear. Overhead sparrows snarl-up, and river, dive, making a dark clean thought, a bright renown, and quote each other endlessly, and throng in hundreds in surrounding trees. The shades have liquefied. I try to think them up again. The banks of cars—the lot is filling up—now oscillate in morning-sun. And the sunlight, toothless now, how it keeps drinking-in. And thinking, thinking. Until the walled-up day hives-open once again. And they foam-out along its veins. Syllable by syllable. I give them liberty. They gnarl, they sweep over the hubs, into the panes, they fill the seats. Somewhere the tea is cold. Somewhere the fire is almost dead. Somewhere a fear that has no form.

And someone thinking they are home at last. The past is hanging from a beam. Around us, toying, like a gigantic customary dream, black water circles, perishing and perishing, swirling black zero we wait in, through which no god appears, and yet through which nothing can disappear, a maximum delay, a sense of blurred desire in it, a slumbering, a catch-all mirror for the passers-by, silky frontier in which it is all saved—the voices of the girls now walking through, vaguely hysterical, their plaids and lycra staticky, the exemplary hair-bow twitching in the light, crustaceous mylar day must nibble at, gum at, gold arm in arm the girls now walking through the shades, most of which now course into the long parked jewelry of cars, so that they hive-up algebraic in their rows, among the hundred worn, black steering-wheels, gigantic sum of zeros that won't add, scoring the rippling field in which they wait, gear-shifts and knobs and dials bearing the news, fish-eyed rear-lights squinting alternative genetic codes, and through us now, on break, the hurrying girls, their voices swirling-up-impregnable-frayed-edgedbecause one of them is earnest now, is lowering her tone, and four of them begin enameling the light with deep choked listening,

and then another takes her turn, voice rising quick and bright, and two now interrupt, high-heeled—scales of belief, quick blurtings-out now like a bright red jug raised high into the waves of light, which their onrush of chatter fills now, spills, and then a hard remark, slammed-in, a lowering again of tone, quick chitter from the group, low twist of tone from in the midst, and then a silence—like a wing raised-up, but only one—a hum all round, heads facing forward in the cars, heads pointing forwards in the cars, anti-freeze fingering daylight near tailpipes, here and here,

a brutish click, sound of black-water lobbying, and then one girl, like a stairway appearing in the exhausted light, remembers the *reason* with a fast sharp gasp, and laughter rises, bending, from the chalice of five memories, as they move past us towards the railing of the lot, one stepping over, quick, one leaping high, giggling, red hair above her as she drops—two whispering, one hands in pockets looking down as she, most carefully, leans into the quick step over the silver rail—oh bright forgetting place—then skips to catch up with the rest, and the rail gleams, and the rail overflows with corrugated light.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF NOT FEELING

As where a wind blows. I can teach you that. The form of despair we call "the world." A theft, yes, but gossipy, full of fear. In which the "I" is seen as merely a specimen, incomplete as such, overendowed, maneuvering to rid itself of biological precipitates-hypotheses, humilities, propensities. . . . Do you wish to come with me? You know how in a landscape you see distances? We can blur that. We can dissolve it altogether. You know the previous age? How it lacks shape until it's cut-away by love? We gust that lingering, moody, raw affection out, we peck and fret until it's gone, the flimsy courage, the leaky luggage in which you carry round your drafty dreams-of form, of hinged awarenesses, all interlocking-up-dream onthe chain is rattling that you've cast, yet it is made of air, of less, look, here it mirrors, here it curves