

## Estrangement · Jane Cooper

You dream someone is leaving you, though he says kindly,  
    *It's not that you're cold*  
or *After all you're an affectionate person.*

You can't explain how hard it is to explain or even to write this poem  
so you blurt, *I was ashamed, they put me in the class for remedial speech.*

The doctor leans forward: *Do you feel you have failed me recently?*  
The dream answers through you: *I am locked in a struggle with the truth.*

(I was ashamed, I couldn't speak, they voted me out of the shelter.  
Like Rousseau's Sleeping Gypsy I lay exposed to the nuclear night  
till a dog found my throat.)

You watch your own back growing smaller up the beach.

## Class

*Jacksonville 1934*

How the shrimp fisherman's daughter did a handstand  
    against the schoolyard fence  
proving she owned no drawers  
just as my grandmother's old black Packard drove up like a hearse

How we dug in the woods for pirate gold  
and found only the bootleggers' empties