

Nellie Wong · A woman at the window

sees herself in a white silk linen blazer,
a black skirt with a slit, a cinnabar-red blouse,
and she sees herself through the plate glass
standing there with her hands thrust deep
into her pockets standing there watching the sun
sparkle in a thousand lights in pools of silver needles
as she wanders in search of memories
As usual the sun intrudes her darkness
her feelings of aloneness and privacy
and when the phone rings she dashes
to answer it, changes her mood from aloneness
to sounding office official sounding
like the secretary she is
though sometimes she forgets that she is a poet
and prefers to stand at the window, imagines
herself a mannequin in a shop window
posing with a vacuous stare with her hands extended
like hammers ready to crash through the plate glass
breaking loose from the wool and the silk
from the neon lights the store decorator
has knotted around her neck
If she crashes through the window she would
see blood dripping from her fingers
but she wouldn't lick them
she doesn't always like to taste red
but she knows the violence that is contained
inside her body as she feels trapped
like a silver fox desired for her skin
to be worn by a woman who passes her by
She knows instinctively that she is a woman
who wants to float in and out of other skins
a witch, a princess, a bag lady, a dim sum shop girl,

her mother dying of cancer, her grandmother who feeds
pigeons in the park, or a sewing factory woman
who plans to organize for higher wages,
for music and bright lights, for time to play
with her infant daughter
She doesn't understand her feelings of floating
water hyacinths or lilies
as a dragon imbued with powers
as wind that rages through her limbs
as a lion at the electric typewriter
as a voice of women and men of Asian America
She knows that she isn't alone or lonely
that the memories will find her standing
twenty-three floors above a city lake
that sunlight is her companion that the air
she breathes though filled with pollutants that she will
fight them with the swallowing of antihistamines
that she will fight them, a woman at the window
with her fingers that desire to become wings