

## The Point of the Western Pen / Etheridge Knight

*(for my son, Etheridge Bombata)*

Where come we from? and so forth?  
The point of the western pen is red  
With the blood of us. The pages of Harlem,  
Timbuctoo, Waycross, flutter  
And float on the midnight waters  
And turn to flowers.

Where come we from? and so forth?  
The point of the western pen is red  
With the blood of us. You, me.  
The sages sing.  
We sunflowers facing the east,  
Dancing in the wind and folding at night.

Under the noon-day light  
We drop, red petal by red petal  
Into the mid-night waters,  
Into the rushing, swirling waters.  
Where come we from? and so forth?  
The point of the western pen is red  
With the blood of us.

## The Old Women of Paris / Dudley Randall

In the Boulevard Raspail  
from classic grey apartments  
with show windows displaying  
new cars and antique treasures

morning bright young women  
in orange, red and green  
pour to the blue canvas stalls upon the grass  
for fresh fruits and vegetables

and at dusk black-gowned women  
their backs curved like bridges across the Seine

creep from crooked side-streets  
to stoop and scavenge in the grass  
for shreds of vegetables and squashed fruit  
cast out from the closed-up stalls

## Jericho / Ai

The question mark in my belly stretches, kicks me  
and I push back the sheet, watching you undress.  
You put on the black mask and lie on your side.  
I open the small sack of peppermint sticks  
you always bring and take one out.  
I suck it as you rub my shoulders, breasts,  
then with one hand, round the hollows beneath,  
carved by seven months of pregnancy,  
stopping when your palm covers my navel.  
You groan, as I slide the peppermint across my lips.

So I'm just fifteen, but I've seen others like you,  
afraid, apologizing because they need something  
maybe nobody else does.  
You candy man, handing out the money, the sweets,  
ashamed to climb your ladder of trouble.  
Don't be. Make it to the top.  
You'll find a ram's horn there.  
Blow it seven times, yell goddamn  
and watch the miniature hells  
walking below you all fall down.

## Soul Soul Super Bowl / George Barlow *(A Poem Evidently for Duane Thomas)*

Evidently, Duane Thomas  
is a badassed brother.  
Evidently, the brother  
was the Super Bowl . . .  
running thru/around/under/over  
Dolphins all day long . . .  
shootin hoodoo thru the middle,