

Fleda Brown Jackson

THE WOMEN WHO LOVE ELVIS ALL THEIR LIVES

She reads, of course, what he's doing, shaking Nixon's hand,
dating this starlet or that, while he is faithful to her
like a stone in her belly, like the actual love child,
its bills and diapers measured against his blinding brightness.
Once he had kissed her and time stood still, at least
some point seems to remain back there as a place
to return to, to wait for. What is she waiting for?
He will not marry her, nor will he stop very often.
Desirée will grow up to say her father is dead.
Desirée will imagine him standing on a timeless street,
hungry for his child. She will wait for him, not in the original,
but in a gesture copied to whatever lover she takes.
He will fracture and change to landscape, to the Pope, maybe,
or President Kennedy, or to a pain that darkens her eyes.
"Once," she will say, as if she remembers, and the memory
will stick like a fishbone. She knows how easily she will comply
when a man puts his hand on the back of her neck and gently
steers her. She knows how long she will wait for rescue,
how the world will go on expanding outside. She will see
her mother's photo of Elvis shaking hands with Nixon,
the terrifying conjunction. A whole war with Asia will begin
slowly, in her lifetime, out of such irreconcilable urges.
The Pill will become available to the general public, starting up
a new waiting in that other depth. The egg will have to keep
believing in its timeless moment of completion without any
proof except in the longing of its own body. Maris will break
Babe Ruth's record while Orbison will have his first major hit
with "Only the Lonely," trying his best to sound like Elvis.