

June 2007

Three Portraits

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Recommended Citation

Rahim, Jennifer (2007) "Three Portraits," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 9.
Available at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol5/iss1/9>

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MISS I-TIRED

I hear her calling to the houses she knows.
At Lydia's gate, always stopping for a chat
and rest before she takes up her weight again,
holding the same pain at her waist, her head
leading her feet onward to the next station.
Dotsy's name sings out. A brief exchange.
Then she teases Nathaniel, coaxes him to speak.
He plays her game and pronounces a string
of undecipherable words and her joy erupts,
embracing the entire mountain. Complete.
She moves on. Behind her, the entire ocean
straddles her back - all the time going up
to a home way past my seeing. Her eternal
prayer showering Rose Hill - *Lord, I so tired!*

MY MOTHER TOOK IT (*Grenada, August 2003*)

My mother took it. Aaron standing with me
before Annadale Falls. A miracle shot really:
an August evening after rain, the light fading,
and mummy awkward with the camera shifting
this way and that, and we restrained by smiles
forgot to say *flash!* She wouldn't take another.
For all my pleading simply said, *It'll be fine.*
With that being that, we climbed single file
like pilgrims leaving a shrine. Now, there it is,
with me wherever I go, the way we carry love:
Aaron leaning gently on my side, behind us
a pierced dark gushing water anoints his head,
and both of us beaming out at the woman
fumbling with the camera whose light was on.

MY MOTHER SANG

My mother sang no lullabies to soothe
us when we cried. I cannot remember
her songs, only her hands: tough palms
and chipped nails that dreamed to be long.
No. My mother never sang - not then
when her mothering was a pilgrimage
of doing whatever she could. She held
us strong with small hands that even now
seem strangers to tenderness, shy to give
what her endless labour never named, love.
I never knew her songs, though her stations
were all a full-measure giving - the music
my heart secreted and sings back to me
in the sweet tenor of my mother's voice.