

Anna Ruth Henriques



## *Aunt Tidy*

*(March 28th, 2002)*

Today, a door closed. A shade was drawn, a shutter bolted  
down.  
Within the walls of tiny house, all sound, all motion ceased.

Days ago, I had stood at its threshold,  
had announced myself softly to the caretaker of this little  
abode  
hoping she would hear me. Nothing. No response all day.  
But toward evening I saw the louvres shift  
slightly, saw her peer out. Although it was dark,  
she recognized me. Wryly? Wistful, perhaps.

*I'm packing, leaving,* she seemed to tell me  
through a pane of glass, scratched, opaque.  
The words emerged muffled through her slowly moving  
mouth.

*Stay. Please stay if you can.*  
As if in the brief moments between sealing one box  
and starting another, she would have the time to share  
a sentence, or the silence of that unspoken bond  
of two people who have known each other's past,  
understood each other's soul.

As the louvres closed like eyelids,  
I looked at the fragile façade,  
at the thin but impervious burnished wood walls,  
the thick rust-colored thatch that had withstood



## *Not Quite Three*

She inspected my toes.  
'No polish?' she asked,  
although it was obvious I had none on today.  
'Like mine,' she smiled,  
pushing her foot forward for me to see  
and acknowledge our sameness.

'Daddy have no polish either,'  
she proudly remarked without pause,  
pointing out the affinity between the three  
of us, if only by our toes.

'Mummy, why Daddy not here in our house?'  
my daughter enquired that Sunday morning,  
running her finger over the nailbed of my big toe,  
tenderly caressing it,  
knowing full well that he had his home  
and we had ours,  
but exploring the possibility of repatriation  
in this raw unfinished incomplete world.

'Well, polish them!' she declared, decisively.

A sigh escaped as I looked down.  
Yet I was reconciled to this state,  
stripped bare as they were this Sunday morning,  
standing exposed, knowing,  
as she did not yet have to know,  
that it was I who had removed  
that pale opaque iridescence  
behind which her father and I  
had presented ourselves,  
beneath which we, of concrete three,  
had been, not just naked,  
but fraying.

At two years old, she  
did not understand as yet  
the want of this untainted state,  
the idea of infinite possibilities,  
the mere anticipation  
of being able to walk toward Monday  
as if it, like I, were a clean slate  
of two, the notion of three

only looming

## *The Son* (*Ode to Richard*)

The son rose  
climbed the turquoise sky  
and when he had seen  
all that he wanted to see  
he started to descend

slowly

and in the fading light  
saw himself reflected  
in the earth's waters.

and he sighed

and sank

and night fell.

We did not see him for a long while.

But in the early morning  
of another life  
he showed his face again