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November
and up near Eureka
the highway has tumbled
with what may be
the last earthquake
of the year; offshore
jade green water
chops holes in the yellow
sandstone cliff.

November
and our metal eyes fly
past Saturn's rings
learnedly clicking
to steal strips of space
computer enhanced
for magazine covers.

Like robots last week
we slipped into the polls
to fling blindfolds at
the hand twitching
against the Pentagon,
finger hovered
over the bomb's red button—
it never mattered
which face he wore.

November
and there you sit
like Ishi
chipping arrowheads
from beer bottle glass
onto the earth
yawning up
to swallow you.

What if
the land slept,
the scales
balanced,
the arrows opened
our spirit teats,
Saturn kept
its secrets?

Inheritance [for Betty]

What there is of my mother
 in me: these hands
 posing others
 that stay out of the portrait,
 that scoop and fix
 the family group
 but are busy about the camera
 clicking on the edge.
 Scapegoat hands that shut gates quickly,
 large hands practiced in plating girls' hair,
 red hands that are like fish under water,
 scratched hands that pick morning-fresh avocados,
 swollen hands never unbending hooked fingers,
 American hands that have cast spirit ballots,
 English hands that have set tallships west,
 Miwok hands that have leached white oak acorns sweet,
 California hands that have chosen ripe citrus.

Hands
 mapped with boundaries of pain,
 Hands
 colored with smoke and rain,
 Hands
 that pray every bead of the rosary,
 Hands
 that throw stones at weeping daughters,
 Hands
 that threaten ropes tightly tying them,
 Hands
 that are weighted with puma's full teats,
 Hands
 that are tangible yet vanish at night,
 Hands
 that embroider the colors of fear,
 Hands
 that heft drought winds over the foothills,
 Hands
 lifting gold from the Mother Lode mines,
 Hands
 scratching hexes on university walls,

Hands
 shaping mountains out of whalebone pots,
 Hands
 pulling women west from cold northern waters,
 Hands
 that rest now, hands that rest . . .

Survival (at 39,000 feet) Over California

First time up
 this earthborn squaw*
 sits at the landside window
 of a 727 and thinks
 about the words that will
 surely survive her.
 Through imagined smoke and fire,
 through rumblings and tiltings
 unexplained and barely noticed,
 the stewardess smiles
 at the insect hunkered over paper
 on the left hand side in back.
 These things I worry about:
 air pockets into which
 this plane drops
 letting me see the Pacific
 from a glass-bottomed boat.

Must be over
 the Catalinas now;
 far below us
 spots of brown
 in a rippling blue field.
 San Nicolas Island: north
 a little, one of the Channels,
 where a woman worked alone
 surviving, ground pigment
 for her arms no husband would see,
 buried her young brother, sang
 countless songs leaching acorns.

Like her
I ride in the abdomen
of a silver mosquito,
the engines an air-blast buzz
circling my arteries and
licking their lips. Soon
California will reach up
with an ancient peninsula
and slap us into the sand.
Have I enough pigment
for my husband, enough
acorn meal
stored away?

*Squaw: used ironically. In common usage today, this
this is a derogatory term.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Wendy Rose, who is of Chowchilla Miwok and Hopi ancestry, has appeared previously in the Journal. She is a lecturer in Native American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her most recent book, Lost Copper (reviewed in this issue), has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Poetry.

