

REUNION

by Angela J. Davis

You would tell me of anarchist parents refusing circumcision,
and of Lyon, where a father smacked a child for telling a gendarme
they were Jews. Separation because it was easier: hiding without children
across the channel and the nights for years, whispering after the alarm
a story of a magic lamp while they waited for the meteor shower.
And with a matchstick and a spoonful of moonlight, winter kept you warm.
They said: "We will all look at the same moon." But over the bridges & clock towers
you saw the dove-gray mornings, the milky night skies, the new flags and new words
on your tongue like snowdrops and you knew: It was not the same. After misleading
a woman not with words, but with "happiness," there would be marriage, your own
children, and half a lifetime until you would give me these pieces, glittering like the offering
of this bright blue hour somewhere in Angers. "Like walking into your own painting." *Lyon?*
The child I have named for you runs through the endless greenesses of the roseaie, fingers
a nautilus I plucked from Normandy, somewhere halfway between the war and today.
Her bare feet touch the same sand, and in the shells and stars, somewhere a music lingers
I cannot hear but she, I promise you, like David, will lift up her heart, perhaps a harp, and play.

BLUEPRINT

by Angela J. Davis

In the Bible, the blueprint for the temple leaves nothing to error —
and nothing to chance: sheep's wool spun purple, turquoise, and scarlet
goat hair and dolphin skin, pomegranate, lapis lazuli, acacia wood.
A thousand talents of silver and seventy of copper, hammered and offered
to a new firmament — such is the commandment: relinquish all instrument
of vanity, metal, and stone. This morning the Bible commanded and I looked
at you instead of myself in the mirror, in the hammered copper I relinquished
and the eyes precious stones on the Priestly vestments shot back — veins in the rocks
glittered and laughed: If the Bible wanted something more and something less
than beautiful, I, perhaps in part, obeyed. The angels atop the Holy of Holies
looked at one another, instead of us, instead of Heaven, but with wings unfurled
as though knowing what is coming, what is next: the endless burning animal cry
the blood river that flows from the struggle to keep one self clean, hands dry
in this Temple of knowing a place as beautiful and dangerous as Heaven, the World.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

by Angela J. Davis

Reptile green and red-lipped, the queen fingers her poisons.
Wind whistles through the dark hole in the knotted tree,
sky and ocean roar up, you touch the page as the mirror blackens,
and fairy dust falls from your small hands. You are three and already
know who is nice and who is not, know words I cannot remember
speaking in your presence and words I failed to suppress. Ordinary
life I could never hide from you. And yet: I will censor and shelter,
protect you from a word knowing I cannot protect you from the world.
"In this house the monsters are nice monsters," including the unseen
monster in your closet, for now. In this house we can mute the voices
of presidents and kings. Later you will read of them all, read how Augustine
thought "evil" a privation of being, like the beast Grendel in his infinite joylessness:
fated to fall. I cannot say you will not be convinced; will not fix the stars to your sway,
as I could not fix them for you, and all of the demons less ordinary and still farther away.