

## **Snow over Kyoto**

When will I see you in Kyoto?  
I thought we met last winter  
in Kyoto in the deep snow.  
So you noticed?  
I wanted to help you with your bags that day.  
Bags filled with fruit and vegetables.  
I was frazzled  
looking for incense  
for my mother's memorial.  
There were things I wanted to tell  
my mother before she died.  
She loved yellow orchid in winter.  
She said I was a little flower when I was born.  
It snowed all night.  
My mother placed a blanket over me.  
I wish I was there on her last day.  
How do I stop my memories from melting?

Miho Kinnas & E. Ethelbert Miller

## **The River Steam**

Are you just a winter wind?

I cover myself and try to stay warm.  
When we take our shower together  
the steam covers everything.

I write our names  
across the mirror.

You smear body oil on the back of your hands.  
Your hands becoming your mother's hands.  
Bones and veins spreading like a growing forest.

In the steam, your skin softens.  
I bite your shoulders.  
You turn and watch water flow between  
my breasts.

I wonder if this is what Langston  
meant when he said - I've  
known rivers.

The heat from my delta  
calling your name.

Miho Kinnas & E. Ethelbert Miller

## **A Sympathy Card from Hong Kong**

Where is my guardian poet during  
these days of destruction and despair?  
I once received a sympathy card.  
It came from overseas. Hong Kong I think it was.  
The corners were bent and it took weeks  
to reach me.  
I am slow when it comes to opening  
letters. I often just stare at the postage  
stamps.  
It is like reading a book of poems.  
I hold the letter up to the light.  
I am a translator trying to see  
what might be hidden.  
How do I hide my thoughts?  
My husband wants to know who I know  
in Hong Kong. Why a sympathy card  
in Autumn? Has our marriage died?  
How did my lover find my address?  
I had never seen the songbird on the postage stamp.  
Ominous or auspicious?

Miho Kinnas & E. Ethelbert Miller

## **Korin and Stovall**

From behind the screen Ogata Korin emerges.  
He asks for Lou Stovall's phone number.  
They will talk about erasure and abstraction.  
They will go on a picnic next weekend.  
Birds and trees will follow these artists  
back to paradise.  
The coral-pink moss spreads.  
The ink indigo springs into a well.  
Lou Stovall's studio is filled with students.  
Korin stands in the doorway nodding his head  
and nourishing the idea for kimono design  
with autumn blossoms.  
Both men move across history like paintbrushes  
on fragile paper, a tender rustling touching  
the hands of a clock.

Miho Kinnas & E. Ethelbert Miller

## **Songhua River**

Is history a river or a boat?  
The sandbags along the Songhua river  
made my mother remember the time  
she almost drowned a lifetime ago.  
Water and memory is what connects  
me to her. When I swim I believe  
in the possibility of love.  
She did not know how  
to swim. We are all made  
to float. Do you believe it?  
Our mothers are keepers  
of creation myths. They share  
secrets and perform magic.  
They tell us they drowned  
so we might walk on water.  
Lately the mother in me longs  
to build a boat with things washed  
up onto the beach after the terrible  
storms.

Miho Kinnas & E. Ethelbert Miller