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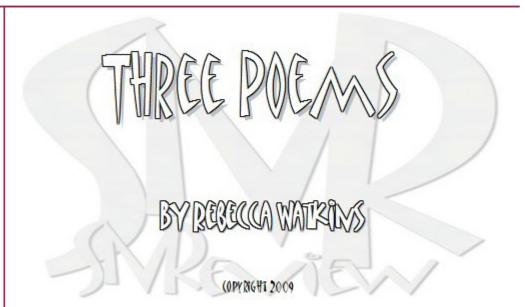
Summer 2005

Editor's Note

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Trinity Test Site, New Mexico

Your barren land

stretches

past all vision

Squat junipers

clutch the sand

their darkened berries dance.

Rocks rise and mesas merge

with the alkaline flatlands, white, like bleached sheets, their edges press into the asphalt.

Your ridges protrude like spines through skin Your dry arroyos dip like the backs of knees

In the land of Jornada del Muerto, as the sun rose,

Your sands swallowed
Our blinding dawn.
Your sky buffered

The blistering kill,
The roll of fire,
The sleeves of smoke.

Throbbing over the mountains.

In Alamogordo La Virgin was waiting in her rose draped altar For the flores and cantos to protect the poor

And the chiles were hanging along the porches drying,

Their bruised bodies swinging against the sun.

On the Tuesday She Turned 35

Her sister called to say, "There are tumors the size of Granny Smiths on the walls of my uterus." He paused the movie that they were watching and the actors caught and held still, until she knew the scene Intimately. As she cried, he rubbed two fingers up and down her spine as if trying to smooth it out.

The next day as drove, she saw ice burst from the palisades In frozen waterfalls and the lights along the street glowed like orange peels in glass. She crossed the Hudson River and wondered what lived there in the shadows of floating ice. What blood moved coolly through their hearts?

Reading to Helen

Helen looks like she could be dead when she answers the door Skin dry and folded the color of nicotine

Her face peers from above her long arms and neck A bird perched among skinny branches

Blue eyes turned inward -blind - like two fish gone belly up

In her apartment the walls are made of books Loose pages fluttering around us

Like children's hands brushing our faces Covered with the sound of edges moving

Helen collects dead flowers she presses each one into a year Until the decade is frozen in her gin

This is how to make it smooth She says and sips from her glass

Outside shovels scrape against the sidewalks On the table is a photograph of her dead husband

Past the window the crush of snow Once she told me there was someone she had loved more **Rebecca Watkins**, originally from Cincinnati, moved to New York via New Mexico where she lived and worked on the Navajo Reservation and in the miniscule town of Gallup. She has been a volunteer, a youth mentor, an organic gardener, and yoga instructor. She received her BA in Telecommunications from Ball State University in Indiana, and is currently an MFA candidate at the City College of New York where she also teaches composition. She has been published in the *MT Cup Review*, *Whiskey Island*, and the *Red Mesa Review*, and has been a contributing writer for *XRay Magazine and The Gallup Journal*.