thunder faced you hold your children
babbling brooks protected from
the flood of daddy's fears
by strong arms
that grip your little girl
talkative accusing daddy I want to come home
as your eyes trail her mother
man eyes
a dyke that holds back the deluge
your son tugs at your collar
so close to your heart
pulls it up to his mouth
sucks saturates it with saliva
you glance down
so close to your heart
not sure that the wetness has come from his mouth
and your daughter's fingers crawl up your neck

insy winsy spider

you pull your children closer

shields

as their mother wheels the shopping cart past

her upper body rigid

impaled by the javelins in your eyes

her refusal to look is

her shield

fragile as paper

and you are both forced to conduct

dthis jousting match of shame and guilt and anger and

love

in the arena of C.K. Greaves supermarket

in a country so small that

a man has no place to hurt

except in full view

in a country so small that

a man has no place to forgive

except in full view

in a country so small that

love is weakness and

forgiveness weaker still
so a man must hurt rather than forgive
what women must forgive everyday
and because your dyke is so deep and
so wide reinforced by steel honed
in a country so small that
all pain is communal
the deluge changes course
and forces its way through
the channel of my eyes