

*Delores Gauntlett*

## THIRTY YEARS LATER



We met after she bumped into my name  
over a poem in a local magazine;  
I with a glass of wine, and she,  
having nothing alcoholic.  
The pallid birthmark on her cheek,  
her pregnant mother's craving for milk,  
had vanished into her darkening skin.  
We leafed through the thickets of thirty years,  
to the uniform we both hated  
because it was the same white gingham  
blouse under the same dark blue, pleated tunic  
as our primary school's,  
and talked about the Pitman Shorthand which  
as girls we'd looked forward to with pride,

and about the crammed tuck shop, and the crowd outside  
with the early morning St. Catherine's mist clearing—  
those mornings that started off with the mist  
sitting on silent haunches over the Rio Grande,  
then drifting like a ghost through the Bog Walk gorge  
and over the fields, and the rusting railroad tracks,  
while the sun waited out of sight.

She talked, I listened; and I imagined the cancer  
she told me about in passing listened too.

We talked about everything except her approaching death:

About walking to school between the orange groves,  
our rain hats sweating dew and the mist  
creeping into the English classroom,  
shrouding Silas Marner's hermetic life—

how he crouched from those blows to the heart  
behind the bag of gold he hoarded while weaving cloth!

Always there was the mist, barely touching what it touched,  
each day renewed, each day lingering  
as though hoping to be invited in,  
dissolving beyond the football field like time itself,  
withdrawing like a memory that cannot be traced.

Descending from out of nowhere, it locked us in time,

then crept away, unnoticed—

while the sun's blaze broke through the silence

giving us back what we already had and were—

each day working its way out like the one before.