

**Mike Amado** (1975-2009) - Three Poems

She Who Gave Me Words

Mother is a mystery.  
She styled her hair herself; even after  
two kids.  
She would sway her neck when a man  
gave her a compliment,  
a demure giggle, intentional coolness.  
She walked me to school on that first day  
wearing an orange miniskirt  
and a psychedelic blouse.  
I've seen Polaroid's of her from the 50s,  
in a poodle skirt and flowing hair.  
Almost a "white girl" easily Cape Verdean.  
She a consistent mystery.  
I issued from this woman,  
pale-olive from coffee-brown.  
She wrote poetry in high school.  
She showed me words were Play-Do  
and can shape worlds.  
She taught me to read the Lord's prayer,  
one night, the Saturday before Easter.  
That thin sheet of paper  
on a table cloth of pastel flowers.  
Sitting in the kitchen, after dinner,  
her voice the voice of God.

Every Day Is Wash Day

Washtub is a deep sink  
filled with suds, blue water.

Blue jeans and T-shirts from two kids,  
three bakery uniforms  
and one blouse and pair of pants.

The scent of washing-soap floats  
over the aroma of breakfast.

Always scrubbing.

The sun reaches the kitchen  
window by late morning.  
Unfolding on the floor of  
green and white diamonds  
like a blanket.

Still scrubbing.  
Every day, I saw her scrub  
from kindergarten until I moved out.

There are some things that  
you can't clean.  
The world will always roll in dirt.

As long as our clothes were scented  
with Jergen's we shone  
like diamonds.

#### In the Beginning

I slept in a crib until I grew out of it.  
My older sister slept in her own room.  
Mine was the living room, the room  
that my nana trained us to call a "parlor."  
I would send myself to dream  
seeing flecks of brain chemical colors  
that mimicked the wallpaper  
in my sleepy head, as it rested on the pillow  
just underneath a picture of cats on a fence.

I hated school. If I was a Viking,  
every grade would've been razed.  
I didn't like wearing new pants for  
the first day. They came from the  
"irregular" store, every item a mark-down.  
How that starchy, un-broken-in fabric made me itch.

I learned to learn on my own.  
My young mind was a chalk board  
full of the cartography of a world that forgot  
inner wisdom.  
Every time I fell asleep, I was wide awake  
and my soul grew like a giant. When I awoke,  
I came back to a sicker body, forgotten

in a world that yawned when it spoke.  
That's why I turned to the drums:  
That kept me awake.

I was often sick. But my illness  
waited for me in "the future."  
Doctors, with thumbs in their mouths,  
goo-goo-ga-ga-ing like suicidal baby dolls.  
Drumming and words were my healing.  
The unerasable spray paint.  
The balm for my spirit.

**Mike Amado** [1975-2009] was co-founder of two poetry venues in his hometown of Plymouth, MA, "Poetry Showcase" a yearly event and "POETRY: The Art of Words" a monthly event. Mike published three books of poetry during short lifetime, his poems have appeared in numerous on-line and printed issues of poetry over the years. He also appeared as the feature poet at 16 venues throughout eastern Massachusetts . His poetry reviews have appeared in various places including Doug Holder's *Boston Small Press and Poetry Scene*.

*The Book of Arrows*, recently released by Cervena Barva Press, is his fourth book of poetry. The poems above are from this book. It was co-edited by Jack Scully, his literary executor and Nancy Brady Cunningham. The book is available from the Cervena Barva Press at <http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/>