



when all along the trepidation between  
 the voice and the voiceless;  
 the affluent and the penniless;  
 the black and the white;  
 is but a poor veil  
 to what has always been  
 a part of us.  
 On the outskirts—  
 away from Hurricane  
 drinkers and  
 bead throwers—  
 we ride with the men and women  
 on the bus line  
 to dance on the street in Vieux Carré  
 outside Jolly Roger's,  
 while they make their way home from  
 late-night work shifts,  
 casinos and jazz clubs,  
 catering to tourists that look  
 like me—  
 last stop  
 everyone off,  
 a mile march along the banquette,  
 where rats and roaches  
 follow like protective pets.  
 Walking where no government cars pass;  
 no celebrities roam with carnival cameras.  
 It is here,  
 in the hole of the Crescent,  
 where we first learn about humanity.

\*\*\*

## Necessary Durability

I suppose the high wasted briefs—  
 Granny panties  
 and the boxed Playtex bras—  
 white thick strapped brassieres  
 shaping breasts like summit peaks,  
 tips of torpedoes—  
 kept hands from meandering  
 beneath turtlenecks and sweaters,  
 unlike the girls who wore tank tops and sundresses—  
 their thin satin straps showing,  
 nuzzling under lace and polyester blend,  
 those girls smelling of patchouli oil and sweat  
 just like my sister  
 stretched out on family living room floors

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with boys they loved  
with boys they devoured way too soon.  
Top heavy and weighted down,  
bras that were purchased for me  
lifted and secured,  
corrected posture to retain femininity  
like the ladies who worked  
the assembly line at the soap factory  
coming home smelling of lard and lye  
making seventy cents to his dollar—  
maybe less,  
god damn, they were  
tough and durable  
and able to get the job done.

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