

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

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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