

# HOMELESS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

*by* Bobbi Lurie

Tall shadows, bent in places, cover and uncover me.  
Gesticulating strangers crowd the entryway  
Where I am planted like a crop growing human feelings.

The marquee on the church says: *Blessed Are The Meek*  
But the religious who weep, who enter  
Turn their heads to profiles as they pass.

I am tarnished by the sun, weathered over  
On this particular Tuesday. April and  
The rank smell of humanity fills me.

Sounds from the choir leak through to the street  
But their songs do not touch me,  
Not even in the barefoot places.

Only the occasional kindness of a stranger,  
The curve of his back, a slope rushing past me,  
Is luminous, the coin pressed in my hand . . .

And yes, I beg.

I open my palm  
As Jesus did.

X

The Sisters of the church arm in arm,  
Covered with the black protection,  
                        smile as they leave,  
Welded in belief and the repeatable.

I am shamed by my separated spirit.

X

I press myself deeper  
Into the mute tulips,  
This bedspread where I lay my head at dusk.

Clouds threaten to stroke me with pneumonia  
But I welcome the thought of the hospital cot.  
The boldness of death, yes, I welcome it.

The skyline stretches itself out like a lie.  
The city darkens into twinkling lights.  
I rest my face in the gentle, gentle  
                        rain.

