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Land Without Words

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Land Without Words

To my mother on her 80th birthday

by Linda Chown



“it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep. . . . “
Virginia Woolf

In deep blue afternoon sunlight of Powell Street in San Francisco,
my mother, dapper in her red suit, helps turn a cable car around.
Her posture, definite, gentle, sure, her face pulsing under
her tidy hat.
The image presses now
through a dusty window on my sick, silent childhood.
It stands, as she so often stands,
in knowings all her own.

Her sure self-sufficiency in this most public of places
shows me a land we know together, without words.
It goes deep, closer to our source.
She moves like patience in life’s kaleidoscopic swivel
in shapes alive and well inside her.
Her intuitions, gnawings of the heart, telepathic acts
can draw tears from my heart’s core.

This lustrous image dressed so finely,
my mother, challenges
a world that would confine our mystery.

