

JEWELLE GOMEZ

Alcatraz Reunion

for Dolores Has No Horses LeClaire

Mother is a tourist visiting me as I did her
when I was a child being raised elsewhere,
always worried she'd forget me.

Now we pretend she taught me
how to read or ride a bicycle;
that she waited by the door for me
to arrive after school or watched me
dress for my first dance.

We act as if we shared secrets
when I was a teen, anxious then
the world would see me
for who I am... a child separate
from a mother.

Boarding the ferry
we are not exactly strangers;
nor are we a fragrant recollection
of worlds lived side by side
giving shape to each other.

We are two aging women
buying memories from
the souvenir stand
damp by the gangway,
taking snapshots that will
remind us how alike we are.

It's a cold ride and perverse
to be among those eager to
peer through prison bars and

glimpse long-passed misery,
the ghosts of anger pacing and
fear caged so close to city lights.

Only when we land does the spark
of Wampanoag and Ioway fill her eyes
as it did with her mother, as it does with me.

Prairie dust and Atlantic sea grasses
embrace this precipitous shoreline—
harsh and familiar;
mapping the beginnings.

Others stroll past us up the path toward
prison lore. We go deep, beneath
the thick, crumbling walls where
rock meets rock. Sacred space, not prison.

We cross the distance between us
on that hard, stolen place—
Ioway and Wampanoag meeting
Ohlone, Pomo, Yurok, Hupa, Shasta and
Hopi, Modoc, Sioux, Paiute,
Inuit, Choctaw. A nation of nations,
the soft shuffle of their feet on stone
in a dance meant to
bind all together.

Sitting on a bench finally we hold hands
as we might have done when I was a child.
Clinging tight as if the pressure
of our palms will allow us to
read each other's pasts.

*—This poem is part of the permanent installation in
the Native American exhibit on Alcatraz.*

Jewelle Gomez is the author of seven books, including the double Lambda Literary Award winning novel, *The Gilda Stories*, which will have its twenty-fifth anniversary publication in 2016. Her dream play about James Baldwin, *Waiting for Giovanni*, premiered in 2011. Her new play about singer/composer Alberta Hunter premieres in 2016. Her forthcoming collection of poetry is entitled *Still Water*. www.jewellegomez.com; @VampyreVamp

PETER RUDOLPH

Islesford Abstraction: Wake, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 60 in



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