1981

There and Here

Barbara Anderson

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2671

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.
There and Here · Barbara Anderson

Someone’s lost and someone turns on
the light. In the middle of the night
the boy rushes into his parents’ room
but they are not there;
only the rustle
of his mother’s nightdress as she packs
away his father’s shirts, and books, binoculars.
The paperweight—faces of the old poets
magnified under glass: Coleridge,
Wordsworth, Tennyson, Whitman.

A gift from the woman they argued about
when his father returned from a trip.

“Thank you,” the woman had written
on the note with the hotel letterhead.

His mother packs that away too, and what is hers
in another carton and the child’s in a third,
and the words there and here in thick black print
on a lined tablet from the first year
he learned to read; his teacher
wanted him to know the difference,
the distance from school to home,
from this morning to afternoon
when he fell asleep for so long
he thought no one could find him.

Until his mother took him out
to feed the ducks in the park.

Really she wanted to tell him
that now he’d have two homes,
one here and the other there,
and her finger pointed away
towards the mountains on the other side
of town. "There in that direction."
Right here with the lemon trees
neither of them cried.

He didn't cry and his mother bought him
metal soldiers with cannons
that shot out if you pulled a lever,
soon they would be packed away
or broken. Isn't childhood
really a form of insanity, said his mother's new friend,
and the night to come when he would sit
with his father and look down through the binoculars
to the city lights—
a place that was neither here nor there.