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## A Woman at the Window

Nellie Wong

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*Nellie Wong* · A woman at the window

sees herself in a white silk linen blazer,  
a black skirt with a slit, a cinnabar-red blouse,  
and she sees herself through the plate glass  
standing there with her hands thrust deep  
into her pockets standing there watching the sun  
sparkle in a thousand lights in pools of silver needles  
as she wanders in search of memories  
As usual the sun intrudes her darkness  
her feelings of aloneness and privacy  
and when the phone rings she dashes  
to answer it, changes her mood from aloneness  
to sounding office official sounding  
like the secretary she is  
though sometimes she forgets that she is a poet  
and prefers to stand at the window, imagines  
herself a mannequin in a shop window  
posing with a vacuous stare with her hands extended  
like hammers ready to crash through the plate glass  
breaking loose from the wool and the silk  
from the neon lights the store decorator  
has knotted around her neck  
If she crashes through the window she would  
see blood dripping from her fingers  
but she wouldn't lick them  
she doesn't always like to taste red  
but she knows the violence that is contained  
inside her body as she feels trapped  
like a silver fox desired for her skin  
to be worn by a woman who passes her by  
She knows instinctively that she is a woman  
who wants to float in and out of other skins  
a witch, a princess, a bag lady, a dim sum shop girl,

her mother dying of cancer, her grandmother who feeds  
pigeons in the park, or a sewing factory woman  
who plans to organize for higher wages,  
for music and bright lights, for time to play  
with her infant daughter  
She doesn't understand her feelings of floating  
water hyacinths or lilies  
as a dragon imbued with powers  
as wind that rages through her limbs  
as a lion at the electric typewriter  
as a voice of women and men of Asian America  
She knows that she isn't alone or lonely  
that the memories will find her standing  
twenty-three floors above a city lake  
that sunlight is her companion that the air  
she breathes though filled with pollutants that she will  
fight them with the swallowing of antihistamines  
that she will fight them, a woman at the window  
with her fingers that desire to become wings