



2003

## Griotte

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### Recommended Citation

Pernia, Marjorie Evasco. "Griotte." *The Iowa Review* 33.2 (2003): 118-118. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.5648>

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MARJORIE EVASCO PERNIA

From *Dreamweavers: Selected Poems*  
(Manila: Editorial and Media Corporation, 1987)

*Griotte*

the story I remember Sandie Mbanefo remembers  
her Igbo father telling her the old village storyteller  
sat in the moonlight middle of a circle of ears and drums  
beating the story in to let each one remember  
stories from the very beginning simple complete  
the way to throw nets onto the center of the lake  
the way to cast spells to tame spit of the black mamba  
in the countless spirals of words seeking the listening  
whole navel dark pit memory called Mother in any tongue  
in any story remembered and passed on in time  
from time to time resurfacing in another other parts  
of the world woven with skein like hers like mine like  
Lina Sagara Reyes bathing in the moonlight because  
Bohol Electric cut off her supply her power to tell  
the moonlight to me undiminished under the candleglow  
as she remembered how rain water splashed  
a shiver of fireflies on her brown body washed off salt  
and silt from her twilight search for mollusks at Loay Beach  
with the village women who also tell stories  
what they remember everyday where crabs dance mate spawn  
at new moon tide extraordinary things glowing  
in the mangrove swamps while my feet tread their way  
back to the night Sandie showed me Nigeria  
the ceremonial clay figures in the round of storytelling  
pulling me into the silent stretch of words as time curves  
the gesture of fishers' nets on to another lake where  
I sit listen with Mabel Alampay to the blind  
storyteller of Talisay remembering Taal Volcano  
spewing lightning bolts the memory burned onto thin membrane  
of eyelids shut forever into seeing inward a story of awe  
passed on passing