

## At Seventeen

Regine Velasquez

I learned the truth at seventeen  
That love was meant for beauty queens  
And high school girls with clear skinned smiles  
Who married young and then retired  
The valentines I never knew  
The Friday night charades of youth  
Were spent on those more beautiful  
At seventeen I learned the truth

And those of us with ravaged faces  
Lacking in the social graces  
Desperately remained at home  
Inventing lovers on the phone  
Who called to say "Come, dance with me"  
And murmured vague obscenities  
It isn't all it seems at seventeen

A brown-eyed girl in hand me downs  
Whose name I never could pronounce  
Said "Pity please the ones who serve  
They only get what they deserve"  
The rich relationed hometown queen  
Marries into what she needs  
A guarantee of company  
And haven for the elderly

Remember those who win the game  
And lose the love they sought to gain  
In debentures of quality  
And dubious integrity  
Their small town eyes will gape at you  
In dull surprise when payments due  
Exceed accounts received  
At seventeen

Adlib

To those of us who knew the pain  
Of valentines that never came  
And those whose names were never called  
When choosing sides for basketball  
It was long ago and far away  
The world was younger than today  
And dreams were all they gave for free  
To ugly duckling girls like me

We all play the game and when we dare  
To cheat ourselves at solitaire  
Inventing lovers on the phone  
Repeating other lives unknown  
Who call to say "Come dance with me"  
And murmur vague obscenities  
At ugly girls like me, at seventeen