

YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO FALL IN LOVE

Chezia Thompson-Cager

misty webs
of unlost entanglements
persist

"How did I get myself
into this mess?" he asks.

irresolvable but indispensable
pieces of bodily history
Fragrant Refuse
that diabolically reappears

to establish
its hold on his pursuit of
TIME, MOTION, AND DESTINY
toward oblivion
disintegration
DEATH

the rights of sleeping fetuses
take precedence over
the evolution of civilization
women can shape history
with their bodies
and therefore must be kept

in check
CONTROLLED
by courting the blatant disaster
of the return
of the unnumbered dead
from butcher's tables
and shallow graves

"I grew up in Missouri,"
she said softly.
And I remember -
It could have been me
It could have been me
It could have been me."

uncomfortable hearing her
voice ring inside him he
felt shot through with
the nagging sensation
that a cherished
wish was coming
true too late
and after too
much prolong
ed pain to
be accept
ed as a
gift

that every woman's body
is a temple unto itself
to be violated
only
at the risk
of Death
it is hers
to grow or destroy
nurture or give away
on a whim

He told her, "You're not allowed
to fall in love; I told you not to..."
and she repeated it
"I know, I'm not
allowed..."

to derive significance
and history from
intimate acts
without suffering
to pay for them
I'm not allowed
to expect graciousness,
love
or commitment
in a future littered
with nuclear waste,
afflicted bodies and
fragile white masculine
egos

whose fear of the
Black, Brown, and Yellow
forest of faces
surrounding them,

whose fear of the death knoll
of AIDS in the houses
of The White, The Rich, and The
Powerful

whose fear of the inevitable
Truth of a World
dominated by Asian and African
People of Color,

whose fear daily performs
destructive mental
Magic Acts
as it holds the hand
of one supreme court judge
who now sends
an entire nation to war
in the 21st century
where they will find

No Peace

"BUT LOVE ME ANYWAY," SHE
SAID.

and he closed the door

THE WELFARE OFFICE

Adrienne Willis

They try to tell me
I am common
typical
ordinary
dirt.
Dust under a
bed of
bureaucracy.

They try to tell me
I am without voice
small
less than less
occupying space
like soot
clinging to old bricks
over time.

They try to tell me
I am invisible
passing
like hot-choked
humidity
rising from asphalt
in waves
of dead summer.

I wrestle with
their lies.