

even now  
as I sit watching the bad news on tv  
that they've bombed Baghdad  
the tv sound turned off as  
Peter Jennings, Bush, and  
stern grown-up men from Paris, London,  
Washington, and Jerusalem  
move their hands and mouths wordlessly,  
squint and blink their eyes into the tv lights  
and explain, report soundlessly  
about the bombs and The War,  
men with bald heads, or goatees, white beards,  
men with neither tongues nor speech,  
because I can't bear to turn on the tv sound  
and listen to the screech-bombing  
and shriek-boogying  
because I'm still too little  
to do anything about it.

#### BOREDOME

Boredome, not ennui, I called my boredom  
en faux francaise,  
bored from dancing all day  
or all night, the guys bored too now  
with this going-over-the-hill go-go thing  
a big, still-kicking, dying horse  
and while the guys weren't watching,  
while they talked shop, Nam, sports, and tv  
or watched another, prettier, go-go girl  
I did my own thing to those  
jukebox songs impossible to dance to

danced to the Righteous Brothers' "Ebb Tide"  
my Twyla Tharp moderne, pirouetted  
and pressed my fists to my forehead and heart,

danced to the Stones' "Sympathy For The Devil"  
my Josephine Baker banana dance,  
rolled my eyes, scratched imaginary  
monkey fleas from my ribs and armpits,

danced to the Doors' long-long "Light My Fire"  
my Cleopatra dance,  
and to the Beatles' "Ob-li-de-ob-li-dah"  
I danced a yo-ho-ho hornpipe,

one guy watching, though,  
my boss,  
the mean one with the  
Edward G. Robinson eyebrows  
warning me one more time  
to clean up my act before he fired my ass,

patting my red-sequined ass  
while he stared into smokey, blacklighted space,  
wondering what he'd do for a living  
after they closed down this place.

#### THE 1992 L.A. RIOTS BRING BACK MEMORIES

The night of the Watts Riots  
I went to work anyway at The Fort,  
the diviest, dirtiest beerbar ever  
on the wrong side of the tracks  
just 6 miles, as the crow flies, from Watts.

The doors of The Fort were locked  
and after I knocked a long time  
Mick my boss opened and said,  
Fuck, man, what're you doing here?  
You crazy or something, don't you  
know there's a riot going on?  
No, I didn't know about any riot,  
I'd slept all day to work all night,  
hadn't watched tv or read a newspaper,  
my riotous world inhabited mostly by me,  
my 3 kids and worries about overdue rent,  
and then suddenly I realized that the  
noises I'd heard on the freeway  
on the way to work had been  
sniper's rifles, not backfire.

Mick said come look,  
leading me up to the roof  
where the guys in the band  
did drugs during their breaks  
and he showed me the yellow fires  
and red sky of Watts just 6 miles away.  
The world is coming to a fucking end,  
Mick said, not knowing then  
that 1965 was merely Genesis 1  
of what was to come and be

then he offered me a suck off his joint  
and a quickie on the desk  
in the storage room he called his office  
but I said no and went on home  
back down the deserted freeway  
through the sniper fire, unafraid,  
because I was only 25  
and too busy with worries and life  
to realize yet that I was not  
immortal.

— Joan Jobe Smith

Long Beach CA