**“I Remember My Father’s Hands” by Lisa Suhair Majaj**

Because they were large, and square,  
Fingers chunky, black hair like wire  
  
because they fingered worry beads over and over  
(that muted clicking, that constant motion, that secular prayer)  
  
because they ripped bread with quiet purpose,  
dipped fresh green oil like birth right  
  
because after his mother's funeral they raised a tea cup,  
set it down untouched, uncontrollably trembling  
  
because when they trimmed hedges, pruned roses,  
their tenderness caught my breath with jealousy  
  
because once when i was a child, they cupped my face  
dry and warm, flesh full and calloused, for a long moment  
  
because over his wife's still form they faltered  
great mute helpless beasts  
  
because when his own lungs filled and sank they reached out   
for the first time pleading  
  
because when i look at my hands  
his own speak back

**“Public School No.18, Paterson, New Jersey”**

**by Maria Mazziotti Gillan**

Miss Wilson’s eyes, opaque

as blue glass, fix on me:

“We must speak English.

We’re in America now.”

I want to say, “I am American,”

but the evidence is stacked against me.

My mother scrubs my scalp raw, wraps

my shining hair in white rags

to make it curl.  Miss Wilson

drags me to the window, checks my hair

for lice.  My face wants to hide.

At home, my words smooth in my mouth,

I chatter and am proud.  In school,

I am silent, grope for the right English

words, fear the Italian word

will sprout from my mouth like a rose,

fear the progression of teachers

in their sprigged dresses,

their Anglo-Saxon faces.

Without words, they tell me

to be ashamed.

I am.

I deny that booted country

even from myself,

want to be still

and untouchable

as these women

who teach me to hate myself.

Years later, in a white

Kansas City house,

the Psychology professor tells me

I remind him of the Mafia leader

on the cover of *Time* magazine.

My anger spits

venomous from my mouth:

I am proud of my mother,

dressed all in black,

proud of my father

with his broken tongue,

proud of the laughter

and noise of our house.

Remember me, Ladies,

the silent one?

I have found my voice

and my rage will blow

your house down.