



...(joy kogawa) april 25, 1986...

her hands were never still –
one hand leafing pages of a book –
the other pulling glasses off and on
and off and on and off and on again –
tunnelling her vision into eyes
while lilting voice wove laughter into tears –

her hands were never still –
one hand pulling at an ear
bushing back a fringe of silver hair –
then rubbing back and forth across her nose
as if it was a magic talisman
that sparked the mysteries of word to sound –

that hand moved down to search a pocket
where there was no pocket to be searched –
fingering a waistband – belted black –
and slipping back to find no pocket space –
then moving up to pull the glasses off
and on and off and on and off again –

and still her voice sang on
imprinting images of families
and friends digging out the centuries
of mud-baked weeds with cracked and callused palms
and insect-driven skin and rain and cold
then back into the warmth of family –

and still her voice sang on –
haunted in skeletal images
that could not be forgotten or forgiven
until each death forgot that it was born –
until laughter understood its pain
and flesh absorbed what words could not explain –

her hands were never still
as if still digging into ancient fields –
one hand followed words across the page –
the other moved her glasses on and off
and on and off and on and off again –
and still her voice sang on.