

due to the civil war conditions).

Luxmi and her family live in a three-and-a-half [room apartment] and are paying \$350.00 (excluding heat and water). When asked about the problems with housing, she mentioned cost, inadequate security, and communication problems with the janitor.

Luxmi and her husband want to stay in Montreal at least until their Refugee Claim is accepted. Luxmi's husband even regrets having to abandon his job on the ship, as he had completed five years of service and believes that he would have become the 3rd Engineer. Both husband and wife are very keen to educate their children. Luxmi's two brothers and her father are well-known musicians in Sri Lanka and West Germany. She has dreams

of training her sons in the same line.

Luxmi first heard of Canada when she heard others in the village talk of it as the country where many SriLankans have sought and found refuge. She had heard that Canada was safe and SriLankans need not fear being sent back. They had been warned that finding jobs would not be easy in Canada, but had made the decision to move in order to have a haven from fear, persecution and discrimination. Luxmi still feels that their expectations have been fulfilled. Even though she has to struggle in a new country where the languages spoken alienate her further, the future seems bright because her children will be safe and have an opportunity to gain a good education and lead a life free from persecution.

Determined to provide a better future for their children in Canada, hoping to help family members who are in Sri Lanka have a chance to resettle in Canada, and somewhat resigned to the cultural roles assigned to them, the ten Tamil women I interviewed seem to face the future with mixed feelings — hope, determination and fatalism. The long-term effects of living and working in a country so different from their own, with its different cultural mix and social norms, on the relationship between husband and wife, between parents and children and on the attitudes and values that influence relationships, are unknown. This causes them profound concern and anxiety.

Promises vs Nipples

(for Jane Storrier)

One summer in a lush valley
me and my best friend Jane
swam and waded the emerald green river
all one day, heat so intense
the mist lifting off white water
was smoke from our bodies,
nearly on fire.

Miles downriver we both spotted
the fallen-over tombstones,
the raw snow-coloured stone,
black fungus hovering like a cloud of gnats
above the cracks.

Climbing over the intricate iron gate
into the long sweet-smelling grass,
we saw most were deaths in childbirth, of women,
or children themselves, of smallpox.

We looked down the lengths of our bodies,
taut as archers' bows, we promised each other
we'd steer clear of husbands, sex, and children,
choose instead tranquil, professional lives.

Then we noticed our neighbour's son
on the opposite bank
in the shade of a huge willow,
its yellow leaves swinging across the grass
like scythes.

Blushes rose to our cheeks
we had been saving all school term,
in our lunch pails, in our sweater pockets.
We felt the silk of our nipples
push against our swimsuits,
we let ourselves down into the water
like muskrats, and swam underwater to him
leaving the tombstones and their stories
on this side of the river.

JAN CONN Two Poems

The Hands

Me and my middle sister, Diane, stand
side-by-side, hip pressed against hip,
shoulder-to-shoulder.

We've taken off our clothes, quickly,
a little embarrassed. I'm 34, she's 28.
We're trying to find traces of our mother's body,
passed on to ours.

We want to see if her death changed the shape
of our limbs in some subtle way,
the elbows, the knees, the wrists.

So we examine ourselves and each other
in a full-length mirror. Diane has my father's
nipples, I my mother's breasts. We both have
her dark eyes and hair.

But what we really want to see is our hands.
We hold them up in the harsh light of Manhattan,
early morning. We turn them over and over.
Both life-lines are long, no sudden unexpected
deaths.

The nails are trimmed close for practicality.
The half-moons are hidden.

There are no identifying birthmarks or features
so if either of us disappears in Guatemala
or El Salvador and the hands are all that remain,
no one will be able to say these are Conn hands
any more than they might say they are Lopez hands
or Graciliano Ramos hands.

We touch each other's fingers, briefly,
just a brush of skin.

Then we turn to examine our backs.