

The aroma of freshly baked bread bothered my nose. My mouth swelled with saliva as we strode toward the counter where a short, small-eyed, frail, sixtyish-looking woman peeked over the cash register smiling. Mummy placed her order and slid a toonie and a loonie across the glass counter.

The woman extended her hands, punched a few keys on the cash register, and deposited the change in the drawer before hobbling off, disappearing into the back of the store. Moments later she reappeared, holding two crispy hot-out-of-the-oven Jamaican beef patties sandwiched between two cocoa breads—just the way we would have it back home. The glass door chimed again as we pulled it open. We continued in the direction toward our apartment building.

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## RENEE NORMAN

### This Is What It All Comes To

gumming cookies  
I soften for her in tea  
her teeth in a container  
on the table  
mouth and mind unwilling  
the teeth an irony of centrepiece

she is hungry  
I cut crusts off egg sandwich  
hand her tiny pieces  
wonder if it hurts  
to chew with gums  
she is back to baby

the woman who shakes and shakes  
approaches  
her babble either foreign or nonsense  
I can't tell  
pat-pat-pats me on the back  
folds in the tag on my shirt  
I feel her longing  
solicitude a tribute of sorts  
she knows the tenuous  
mother-daughter bonds

in a surprising burst of lost language  
my mother asks  
for a solution  
high-vocab-speak for drink  
later I rub her back shoulders  
arms  
the only conversation she truly understands  
she tells me  
*stop picking*  
I am back to baby

*Renee Norman's poetry appears earlier in this volume.*