


Free Radical

By Alison C. Rollins

Before Gilgamesh invented
the kaleidoscope and Galileo
the Rubik's cube, before the
scimitar-horned oryx went
missing, before the tamarind
trees went bare, before the
stars' eyelids were wrapped
in tinfoil, before the leaves
could gnaw on water, before
electrons made donations,
before the owl wore a mask,
before the wind had a sound,
before the moon had a name
and the smoke a spine, before
the tulips crossed their legs,
before the tongue was
armored, before the ghosts
rode centaurs to riots, before
cyberspace was culled and
belly buttons sown to wombs,
before the taste had an after,
before intellect became
property and thunder
premeditated, before the
New, New World, before a
stone wished to be more
than a stone, before we had a
change of clothes, before the
grass was color-blind, before
the rivers lost their fingers,
and the rain stopped teething,
before the kings were all
beheaded, the gravedigger
neither young nor old, before
a lion was still a lion, before
the girls were all killed, before
the trapeze gave way. We
hung suspended in time
by the arches of our curved
feet and this tickled the gods,
tickled them to death. & I



think our silence cut us loose,
let us go falling from the doubt,
secretly thrilled at the hems
and ever so eager to break.