

# Inside Out

By Diane Wakoski

I walk the purple carpet into your eye  
carrying the silver butter server  
but a truck rumbles by,  
                  leaving its black tire prints on my foot  
and old images       the sound of banging screen doors on hot  
                  afternoons and a fly buzzing over the Kool-Aid spilled on  
                  the sink  
flicker, as reflections on the metal surface.

Come in, you said,  
inside your paintings, inside the blood factory, inside the  
old songs that line your hands, inside  
eyes that change like a snowflake every second,  
inside spinach leaves holding that one piece of gravel,  
inside the whiskers of a cat,  
inside your old hat, and most of all inside your mouth where you  
grind the pigments with your teeth, painting  
with a broken bottle on the floor, and painting  
with an ostrich feather on the moon that rolls out of my mouth.

You cannot let me walk inside you too long inside  
the veins where my small feet touch  
bottom.  
You must reach inside and pull me  
like a silver bullet  
from your arm.

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Source: *Emerald Ice: Selected Poems 1962-1987* (1988)



The poetry of Diane Wakoski has affinities with that of Beat poets like Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg: it alternates long and short lines, is frankly personal and wildly humorous, and expresses a mindset in stark opposition to Americans' materialism and moralistic rigidity. Her conception of poetry as a deeply human and natural activity is reflected in her prolific production—

over 40 collections published—while her “physiological imagery” of the female body has spoken powerfully to feminists.

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