In my dream, drilling into the marrow of my entire bone, my real dream, I’m walking up and down Beacon Hill searching for a street sign - namely MERCY STREET. Not there.

I try the Back Bay. Not there. Not there. And yet I know the number. 45 Mercy Street. I know the stained-glass window of the foyer, the three flights of the house with its parquet floors. I know the furniture and mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, the servants. I know the cupboard of Spode the boat of ice, solid silver, where the butter sits in neat squares like strange giant’s teeth on the big mahogany table. I know it well. Not there.

Where did you go? 45 Mercy Street, with great-grandmother kneeling in her whale-bone corset and praying gently but fiercely to the wash basin, at five A.M. at noon dozing in her wiggy rocker, grandfather taking a nap in the pantry, grandmother pushing the bell for the downstairs maid, and Nana rocking Mother with an oversized flower on her forehead to cover the curl of when she was good and when she was... And where she was begat and in a generation the third she will beget, me, with the stranger’s seed blooming into the flower called Horrid.

Nel mio sogno, trivellando nel midollo del mio intero osso, <nel> mio sogno reale, cammino su e giù per Beacon Hill alla ricerca di un segnale ossia ‘VIA DELLA MISERICORDIA”. Non qui.


Dove siete finiti? 45 Mercy Street, con la bisnonna inginocchiata nel suo corsetto di stecche di balena che prega gentilmente ma con veemenza davanti alla bacinella, alle cinque del mattino, a mezzogiorno appisolandosi sulla sua sedia a dondolo, il nonno che schiaccia un pisolino nella [dispensa, la nonna che suona il campanello per la cameriere di sotto, e la Tata che culla Mamma con un fiore gigantesco sulla sua fronte per coprire un ricciolo di quando era buona e di quando era... E lì dove fu concepita e dopo una generazione la terza che avrebbe concepito, [me, con il seme di uno sconosciuto che stava sbocciando nel fiore chiamato Orrido.
I walk in a yellow dress
and a white pocketbook stuffed with
cigarettes,
enough pills, my wallet, my keys,
and being twenty-eight, or is it forty-five?
I walk. I walk.
I hold matches at street signs
for it is dark,
as dark as the leathery dead
and I have lost my green Ford,
my house in the suburbs,
two little kids
sucked up like pollen by the bee in me
and a husband
who has wiped off his eyes
in order not to see my inside out
and I am walking and looking
and this is no dream
just my oily life
where the people are alibis
and the street is unfindable for an
entire lifetime.

Pull the shades down
- I don’t care!
Bolt the door, mercy,
erase the number,
rip down the street sign,
what can it matter,
what can it matter to this cheapskate
who wants to own the past
that went out on a dead ship
and left me only with paper?

Not there.

I open my pocketbook,
as women do,
and fish swim back and forth
between the dollars and the lipstick.
I pick them out,
one by one
and throw them at the street signs,
and shoot my pocketbook
into the Charles River.
Next I pull the dream off
and slam into the cement wall
of the clumsy calendar
I live in,
my life,
and its hauled up
notebooks.