

JOURNAL OF ORDINARY THOUGHT

Things Are Not The Same

Summer 2003

JOT Writers from [Chicago Commons ETC](#), [Deborah's Place](#), [Jane Addams Resource Corporation](#), and [The Blue Gargoyle](#).

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Valleria Anthony

It was a cold and blissful morning. It must have snowed all night, the garage roofs were covered with white glistening snow.

There were two little red-hair squirrels playing in the trees jumping from branch to branch. The trees were so pretty trimmed in white snow, they looked like a picture post card. There were birds flying around looking for food. I threw him large pieces of bread. It was a big flock of birds that morning. They each pecked the bread and flew away. It was a funny sight. They were all sizes.

It had been over twenty years since I had returned home. As I sat wrapped warmly in an Afghan upon the old porch swing, I had pleasant memories of my childhood, when my siblings and I used to run and play.

My brother had come out and sat with me. I asked him, "What happened to the big old oak tree that was in the back yard?" My brother told me, "Oh it was getting too old. We had to have it cut down." I said, "We used to play Hide-And-Seek by that old tree. Things are not the same. What happened to the weeping willow tree that used to cry in the summertime? It used to hang over into our yard from our neighbors' side of the fence." My brother said, "Oh the roots were rotting out and it died. They had to cut down to the ground, was a lot of work."

I asked, "Is the old grocery store still on the corner, where we used to buy Mary Jane candy and jawbreakers?" My brother said, "No, it burned down many years ago."

"Well," I said, "what about our old Catholic school we used to attend, across the street from the park?" My brother said, "They renovated it, the convent was turned into a halfway house for women. The school and church were torn down, turned into a parking lot, and the rectory was tuned into apartments for senior citizens. Things are not the same anymore, things have changed."

WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

Christina Alvarez

Mommy, what's that noise?
Baby, that's cars.
OK, Mommy.

Mommy, what's that noise?

Baby, it's a dog and cat playing.
OK, Mommy.

Mommy, what's that noise?
Baby, that noise is YOU!

TRANSMUTATIONS

Susan House

Crashing
or crumbling
quietly,
trees,
large and small,
come down.

In between
those big falls,
leaves drift down
and pile up.
Life and death
intermingle
endlessly.

Death giving birth
to life,
life becoming death:

Fungi are the magicians
that pump the cycle,
bring order to chaos.

They send their hyphae
through the earth,
seeking the newly fallen
to decompose.

Could I hear them
making their way
underground?
How still would I have to be,
I wonder?

Will they enter me
and tie me
to the other mycelium
growing
throughout this forest?

Will mushrooms fruit
and open in me
and fling their spores
in all directions?

It is this alchemy
of the mushrooms
that most interests me.

So small, yet so powerful,
so small yet everywhere,
reaching, always reaching,
working death over,
and leaving behind:
the soil of new life.

The cycle goes on
around me
as I sit on an old stump,
still and quiet,
awaiting the arrival
of the mushroom wizards
to change me,
to incorporate me
into the life
of the forest.

In my next life
I will be a dung beetle,
bark on a hickory tree,
a long hair in a fox squirrel's lush tail,
the iridescent glint of a grackle's feather;

I will be a mockingbird's song,
the brilliant red pulp
surrounding a pomegranate's seeds,
the white patch on the back of a tiger's ear,
a sharp spine on a prickly pear cactus.

In my next life
I will be a catfish's sensitive whisker,
a cotton bole under a hot summer sun,
the chirp of a cricket,
a tastebud on a granddaddy long leg's
tummy,
and a whale's song.

I will be a tree and I will grow tall and strong,
Graceful, under the suns of many summers
and woodpeckers will eat grubs from under my bark
and countless birds will nest in my ample arms.
A squirrel family will gather my fall leaves into a
snug nest
and a gentle skunk will dig her burrow at my base.

I will be a tree and I will age and fall
and mushrooms will grind me
in their mortars and chant
their magic words
until I subside
back into the earth
to begin once again.

But all of that is in the future
for today, I remain an old woman
walking in a damp forest and
listening to the plop, plink, and tinkle
of a light rain falling from heavy leaves.