

JUNETEENTH: The Bicentennial Poem

*and pink with pleasure
smile self into self
one and now say my
name say my name and
smile friend and in that
name be home.home.words
from other lives held
now in smiles and dark
with pleasure I smile
your self in my self
one and more sealed in
friend sealed in home signed
in joy darkened skin*

for bob elliot 1/76

—Sherley Anne Williams

1. The Dream Realized

*the waters don't sing in that land
they run sly and silent deep in the ground*

north county
for inez talamantez

The freeway is a river
of light rounding the base of
Mt. Soledad, its distant
drone a part of the night. I've
watched in the darkness as the
river dimmed to the fitful
passing of solitary
cars and heard the coyotes
in the canyon crying their
survival to the strange land

I booted up one day, walked
out across the mesa that
fronts along my place till the
land was a shallow cup around
me and the houses were lost
in the distance on its
rim. The plants were the only
life I saw—muted greens dry
browns bursts of loud purple and
lighter blues, brilliant in the
spring light; something rustled the
undergrowth; a jet murmured
in the softly clattered sky.

The Indian dead are here
buried beneath Spanish place
names and the cities of the
pioneers and the droning
silence is witness to what
each has claimed, what each owned.
My father's grave is here some
where his tale lost like that jet
in clatter his children
scattered along the river
voices singing to the night.

—Sherley Anne Williams