

THE COUNSELLOR

"My mother told me, Miss,
'Don't trust the whites.
It's only black people
Who'll treat you right".'

(So did my mother, Earl, so did mine.
It's hard to choose to spit that poison out.)

"The teachers tell me what I have to do.
I have no choice or space to sort things out.
And yet they say
I ought to do my work".

(So did my teachers, Earl, so did mine,
Enforcing education through dislike.)

"The other kids don't like me and I know
If I don't smoke and won't hop school
Or muck about in class
That they won't like me more".

(My friends were like that, too, Earl, like that too.
A fickle audience for clowning to.)

"It's just as if this school can make me change.
Like when I walk inside that gate I'm lost.
I'd like to bring my outside self to school".

(I would have liked that too, Earl, liked that too.
I gave away my power, just like you.)

And so we meet, Earl, so we meet and merge.
My child from long ago with you, here, now.
My silent child shares secrets with no speech.
And so we heal, Earl, so we heal, although
It's hard to choose to spit that poison out.

Valerie Blomfield