

ONCE I DANCED

without music,
in a circle
in a village
at mid-morning.

One woman danced with me:
the senior wife
toothless and haggard
of the smirking old chief.

And all the other
wives
and all the children
watched.

And I in my jeans
and my bra-less T-shirt,
camera dangling on my breasts,
wanted to stay.

Rhoda Howard
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WATCHERS IN THE MARKET (Kumasi, Ghana, 1981)

“Fear woman,” they said.
She struggled in her green cloth print.
Soldiers in grey
on the grey floor of the market.
Stench of fish and flesh.
Vultures eating
watching.

“Fear woman,” they said.
Tore at the shawl around her waist
pulled her child
off her back
held him by one arm. He screamed
reaching for her
watching.

“Fear woman,” they said.
She makes too many profits
selling in this market. We men
pay woman
she has power over us.
They shot her before the crowd
watching.

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