SUDAN FRINGE, 1985

People,

what were people,

lodged under trees, in tents,

from helicopters that pass timely

as the evening news, from

above, people,

fixed sand grains

blown into pitted limestone

nodules left by that older sea,

now reclaiming, diurnal

in kindling sand,

wind of another surge.

Rahel,

the dusted glisten

of your distended belly

pulses too quickly. Stretch marks;

your children doze, minds

still play at play,

drag sticks

through caked dirt,

scratch for roots, allium;

scatter to canyons, picking up tuft

headdresses of dried grass

soon snatched from them

for the fire.

The live, expectant

blades were scouted out

by imploded goats, all ribs,

as intent as the escarpment that

rises to dissect a dune.

Rahel

tries to stand,

the children's shirt rags

need scrubbing

with sand

to abrade

salt, dirt, grease,

the stiffening sense

of what the desert night

may bear away