

Cyril Dabydeen

Handprints on the Wall
—*for Simi*

She plays the violin, thinking
back of her first memory, she says,
sounds coming all the way

Being in a crib in China,
eighteen months old then,
and everywhere babies were

Crying with hand-prints on
the wall, everyone slapping
hard, the cribs being tied

Together: two or three; and
the colour was green, Simi
remembers; and it was really

A large hall, and the image
of a hotel next after she'd
been adopted: three years old

She was then; and how she kept
walking through a big, wide
space. Oh, spaces everywhere

And she keeps playing the violin,
the strains coming louder:
what I will hear once again

In China, or somewhere else
I will imagine, close-up; or,
one voice only, no other.

A Dogged Life

“I’ve come that close to it,”
 he says, holding up two fingers
and offering a space in-between—
 like an emblem from long ago.

“What method shall we use?”
 he asks, considering a duel
or pact...preferring a gun—
 I hear him say,

Being forlorn from days on end—
 what we keep talking about;
and the books he might have read,
 like Alvarez’s *Savage God*.

“Why the hurry?” I ask; and it’s
 being where we’re at—
with trees, the river winding,
 red-winged blackbirds

Becoming noisier than before—
 all in more than one
life-time, with cormorants
 and the blue heron

Looking at the water, steadfastly;
 and fish will appear and
disappear, as seagulls keep
 making dizzying turns

And ducks gliding by smoothly
 in water with their young
in tow, the wood-ducks diligently
 moving alongside.

What I will consider longest—
 as the wind surfs, the river
keeping us glued to it—
 the more I think about

Where all things will end up—
 in days long past, or now
what’s to come, at whose command?
 Time’s behest, I say to him,

What I will make much about—
 wanting him to claim
another day, life indeed—
 as we're here to stay.