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Gail Geltner is a Toronto artist, photographer, and teacher. Her illustrations have appeared in publications throughout North America. A book, What You See, containing two decades of her work was published by Second Story Press in 1992. Her recently completed photographic document entitled The Other Family Album: A Chronicle 1970–1995 was exhibited in New York City in 1996.

AIDA FARRAG GRAFF

Where Have the Words Gone

Hidden in the recesses of her mind
 Was the memory of someone saying
 That no matter how sick the body
 A mother tongue always resurfaced
 To help you through the final exit.
 But into what language was she born
 Whose infancy was rocked
 To lullabies from different lands?

She spoke so many tongues
 That none was hers now
 As she lay in her bed.
 She couldn't tell the nurse
 What kind of dragon
 Was coring her guts.
 She had lost her many tongues.
 They had melted deep into the furrows of her brain
 With the onslaught of the ice-age.

At times she felt
 They were playing hide and seek
 She and her many tongues.
 But that was years ago
 In a green unfractured land,
 Where children played on concrete courts
 Under the watchful eyes of shrouded nuns.
 You couldn't really play hide and seek there
 Under their ever watchful eyes.
 You could only play in groups,
 And never, never, in twos or fours.

So where have the words gone
 Where have the children gone.

Aida Farrag Graff is a Commissioner with the Ontario Human Rights Commission as well as a Research Associate at Victoria College, the University of Toronto.