Earth Kitt Goes to Lunch
(Toronto, 1998)
—a ‘found’ poem

She storms into town looking like
James Brown in drag and does
the celebrity lunch announcing
from her restaurant chair,
“I carry food with me, just in case!”

Puffing her Marlborough Ultralight
she arcs back like an angry cat,
hair growing larger, “I have no colour,
I have no race, I am mulatto.
I was given away. I remember,”
she inhales and puffs again,

“I’d follow the birds and snakes, the deer
and eat whatever they ate—
wild grapes and scallions, hickory nuts,
dandelions and the soft inner leaf
of the cattail; urging sour juice
from a purple flowering weed.

When I moved to the city, I ran away
and used my ingenuity: snagging
loose change under subway grates with sticks
primed with tossed, wet gum. I slept
on rooftops, in doorways. I know hunger.”
Fed by public adoration, she
never refuses an autograph,
"That's my bread and butter! Diamonds
and furs are wonderful but give me land.
I know how to survive from dirt."