



Stephanie Crumpton*

THE SHE'S

The She's

Like Maya's songs flung up to heaven...
The stories and lifetimes of the She's rain down bittersweet
pearls
Opened wide, I receive the faith that drips from their lives
The inner pull of their gravity grounds me...
They don't want me to get lost while trying to find my own way
through life
Their life-force forms prisms in my soul
Cracklings of their lights streak through me like lightning...
These women are the thunder in my soul

The She's Are the Weft in the Fabric of My Life

Weaving in the new ways of women...
They work me over
Their walking ways are living water from the women's well...
Wisdom poured out to quench the thirst for knowing
The She's teach me how to leave soul prints for others...
A bread trail for mothers—daughters—friends
And stand alone sistahs...
Who cannot survive unaccompanied

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Editor's note: "The She's" was presented at the chapel service on November 20, 2003, sponsored by the Office of Black Women in Church and Society, honoring alumnae who have stoked the coals of their intellectual fires at ITC. Special homage was paid to seven Womanist scholars, present at the service: Drs. Jacquelyn Grant, Katie G. Cannon, Marsha Foster Boyd, Carolyn Akua L. McCrary, Amy Hartsfield, Marsha Snulligan Haney, and Margaret Aymer.

We—the She's in me—step out to do our thing...
 In our doing we displace the loneliness that falls alongside of
 standing alone...
 But...

What If I Miss a Step? What If I Step Wrong?

The She's hear my fears—raise eyebrows and shift hands to hips
 Suspending their motion in my soul...
 Their stillness reminds me

If I Don't Step Out

Katie's Canon will have misfired
 Jackie's words sent to God, wrapped in woman love, will return
 —stamped “null and void”
 Marsha will grow weary of standing alone in the gap between us
 and the academy
 Carolyn's query into the mujeres will go unanswered
 Amy will begin to doubt as we backtrack over places we've
 already traveled this far by faith
 Sistah Haney's voice of mission will be robbed of sound
 And Margaret's words—“talking” 'bout black ways of flipping
 the biblical script...
 Will quickly hit the world and bounce back
 Slapping both her and God in the face...

No Step—No Sound—No Fire—No Light

Sudden death just because I'm too afraid
 To live from the inside out
 Rather than seal the She's in graves of motion-less-ness...
 I leap—bursting forth in sacred sound
 I put my own spin on age old steps of the She's who came before

me...

They are because I am

I am Because They—Have—Been—DILIGENT.

I am front and center because they refuse the margins

When they've spoken truth to the lameness of sexism...

Who am I not to take up my mat and walk?

When they've borne lashes because their brilliance was blinding...

Given more—yet suffered no less

Just so that I could breathe free air...

Who am I not to bear the cross that fits the square (not the small) of my back?

So—I Carry on—Living the She-Cross—

I blaze out new star tracks for the next sistahs

Those who dare to travel miles as if they are free

But who also need soul prints to find their very own way

...the first of the...

...the second of the...

...the third of the...

...the fourth of the...

...the fifth of the...

...the sixth of the...

...the seventh of the...

...the eighth of the...

...the ninth of the...