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## Poems

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# Poems

## **Abstract**

Four photographs

Tutorial

# Judith Rodriguez

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## FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

Snaps of the forties, hopefully taken by mothers  
mostly, waited for, pored over past hope. Here's  
the three of them, out by the back stairs with the pedigreed cockers.  
Young rips. Well, maybe not him, plenty there though, all day  
covering paper with music. Kept him out of mischief.  
Fine boys ... or this: a half-dozen sepia gum-trees,  
the door-open Chev, and picnic-rugs, Dad standing straight,  
sockless nine-year-old flirting a brooch, and the stolid  
small brother, mother-neat, in the hand-knitted jumpers of wartime.  
(Taught drill after lunch, and never to ride on running-boards.)

These other forties,  
dismay pinches.  
Who are these failures  
fronting up to stares?  
Which end of a camera  
are the half-frank young  
getting their fun now?  
What's he scared of? What's she hiding?

It's all there, like reading  
the pained style  
of the nib-taught dawn-of-time  
Just War,  
gone down in a slither  
of automatic gears,  
obsolescence and ball-points.  
— They're still in there, wary, fighting.

## TUTORIAL

Let's be frank: duplicity's fun.  
Small outlay and moderate exertion.  
It's addictive, mind you, with hidden  
expense when you expand operations.  
At the end of a short course in duplicity  
you try the whopper — they all do —  
suddenly you're driving four-in-hand  
with three at least gone over the cliff.  
Well, I ask you, what did you want,  
integrity or experience? Skill's  
one thing and success is another.  
Learn from failures! that old chestnut —  
keep succeeding or you won't be around  
to be skilful. Alternatively  
you won't have anything left  
to be skilful about. Hang on  
to your seat, hang on to your investment,  
and with any hands left over  
hang on. (Let go of the rest  
when anything you grab answers.  
Remember most of you are losers.  
Winners can throw away the course-notes.)