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Coffee in America

Lynette Zwerneman

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My son, James attends the Joseph Korbel School
For International Studies in Denver,
Founded by the father of Madeleine Albright,
First female Secretary of State,
At DU Korbel mentored Condoleezza Rice,
Second female Secretary of State.

Visiting the DU neighborhood, I follow
the pungent, near-burnt smoke cloud
billowing from Kaladi Brothers Coffee House.
I chose a dark roast, while the barista prepares a sack
Of ice to preserve the just-butchered lamb rack,
Accompanying me to be gifted in Louisiana.

Legend has it coffee was discovered centuries ago,
By a goatherd named Kaladi, who observed
Red goats, dancing after nibbling shrub beans,
Coffee was first roasted in Arabia; product of the Muslim world,
There are many people enjoying coffee and conversation
At Kaladi's, the atmosphere warm; the walls wooded.

I imagine Albright and Rice out for coffee
At Kaladi's, the counter people carefully crafting,
Madeleine's triple espresso; Condoleezza's caramel mochaccino,
Their conversation intense; unconscious of onlookers,
What do women talk about at coffee? The weather?
The wars ... where to get a good buy on a Coach bag?

Back at the trunk, the lamb rack repacked,
I recall the wether's valiant struggle to escape,
The slaughterhouse, out of the back of the truck,
This is the first lamb we raised to butcher ourselves,

Perhaps, if I had fed him coffee beans,
He might have died dancing.

Down the road, I pull over to chart my route,
Last trip south through Oklahoma City,
Memorial of a thousand, flower-clutching teddy bears,
Maybe this time, to Roswell, and then I'll veer east,
I might need some more ice by Waco,
If I don't hang a left at Fort Hood.