

Spring 1997

Nine Points of Reference

Karin Schalm

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Schalm, Karin (1997) "Nine Points of Reference," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 47 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss47/4>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

KARIN SCHALM

TWENTY-NINE POINTS OF REFERENCE

Betty Jo begins with hand circles.
Her middle finger is a compass needle that points
towards Tokyo.
The pointing's easier if she imagines herself
in a juniper hedgerow, making her way
towards saffron tulips. It's something felt, she says,
like the robust tumor growing
in a notch on her knee.

It's rough for anyone to play hopscotch
with a tin can full of milk,
but politics aside, Betty Jo's only getting older,
and I'm reminded of golden grass
every time I see her.

Today she's an ostrich standing on her left leg with a silk
bandana
wrapped about her face.
She balances Tommy's expensive Nordic microscope
on her forearms and a glass of chocolate-covered sprinkles
with her upright knee. I want the glass
to be holding something different, and Tommy claims
Betty Jo should sleep with him in the tomato fields because
she borrowed his prize possession without asking.
Tit for tat: the Hoover Dam is just another concrete wall.

I know what the glass cannot contain.
We're temporarily out of salt pork and mottled
potatoes. (I feel feverish over the loss.)

The circles only get bigger, so Betty Jo puts the microscope
on her head with sprinkles on top. Her hip bones
punctuate the center of each motion.