Gum

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Sunday mornings
and clean grit gathered
in the bottom of
my mother's purse.
Protestant, evangelical
purse-dirt somehow
worked into the gum-cache
through paper and foil wrap.
And this at a critical time
when hell was
where Brezhnev connived
the final holocaust,
conducting Satan's
all-day workshop
on the destruction of
capitalist optimism
about life,
his red megaton pitchforks
aimed at perky
blue dollar signs
on the dry-erase board.
And I, heir apparent
To the kind of Western
Pomp that had driven
Khrushchev to his shoelaces,
having dredged
an alluvial stick
from the delta
of my mother's purse,
chewed out of complete
and utter boredom
with my own imminent
annihilation
and subsequent eternal
damnation
till my jaw ached
and Ananias
told me what kind
of man Jesus was:
a man who suffered
even the naughtiest
children come unto him.
The particular, clean essence of spearmint reminds me of passive-aggressive participation in world religion—iconic doodling on the back of tithing envelopes; the time I choked on communion grape juice and had to exit the entrance, Judas of some ambiguous deceit that involved egg on one’s face or in this case, Christ’s blood on one’s shirt but no wine. I gasped past half-dozing ushers to the bathroom, and then beyond my mother’s reach, out a side door, inevitably down into the world.

In the family of Christ I figured I was a third, maybe fourth cousin. But I’ve always held his blood thicker than water, and though I haven’t taken communion since, spearmint gum reminds me of all things that have come and gone, unknown and known to me, of how brief and unpredictable life can be, and how in the absence of profundity frivolity proffonds itself in the deep vein of our memory, in our mother’s purses or in our pockets like lent for a diamond.

Marcia England, Vanessa Hudson, and Kyonghwan Park
Citizenship in the Midst of Transnationalization
disclosure interviews Kathryn Mitchell
[19 April 2002]

Kathryne Mitchell is Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Washington. Her extensive publications include work on Asian migration to the United States and Canada, debates regarding globalization and transnationalism, and the politics of the public sphere. She has conducted research on these issues as they relate to Asian diasporic populations in cities on the west coasts of the US and Canada as well as Great Britain. Her current research examines the effects of transnational migration on conceptions of public education, with a particular focus on how children are educated to become citizens of a nation-state. Her book, Transnationalism and the Politics of Space, is forthcoming.

Mitchell has been centrally involved in building interdisciplinary area studies programs at the University of Washington, and is the Principal Investigator for a number of grants to assist in this work, including a Title VI Grant from the U.S. Department of Education (2000-2003). She has served on the Editorial Boards of several leading journals and is Book Review Editor for Society and Space.

In Spring 2002 Mitchell visited the University of Kentucky as part of the Committee on Social Theory’s Spring Seminar and Lecture Series. During her visit, Mitchell delivered a talk entitled “Comparative Geographies of Citizenship Education,” which outlined her research agenda regarding the production of citizenship in the education systems of England, Canada, France, and the United States. In her interview with disclosure, Mitchell discusses how citizens are constructed in an increasingly transnationalized world.