Elizabeth Romero
Finding Truth in the Details

BY CATHERINE GAINES

Like any good poet, Elizabeth Romero gets her kicks
wrestling words. "Poetry is a way of explaining the world to
myself," she said in a recent interview. "Even if I don't know the answer, I feel better
because I framed the question in words."

Romero says her inspiration is born
of introspection and collecting her
thoughts on paper. "It comes from
inside...if it has something to say,
then it comes out. It's pure emotion
that the poet tailors to the art form.
No light stuff, no ambiguous emotions.
The questions that are within me are the
ways that culture meets my needs.
There is a drive within me to under-
stand what is going on -- I see so many
broken people."

Born in 1945 in Chelsea, MA,
Romero was influenced at an early age
by the works of Dickinson, Shelley and
Keats. The Little Treasury of Modern
Verse was her favorite book as a child.

Even then she says that she wrote
compulsively, keeping journals and
writing poetry.

Romero feels a special kinship with
women who are on the streets. Con-
ducting poetry workshops and helping
others give voice to their experience is a
dream she has long nurtured.

"If you can write your experience
down, you can distance yourself from it
so it doesn't hurt. I especially want to
reach young girls because they are at
such a pivotal time in their lives."

Writing helped me catch hold of myself.
If I had not found an outlet I would not
be here today. It is a way of connecting
myself to the world, of grounding
myself."

While Romero is not working at her
day job at the Columbian Lutheran
Center, a facility for senior citizens, she
is busy volunteering at Real Change.
This local artist is a witness to life's
reality. And in its starkness she finds its
meaning.

"The best way to the truth," she says,
"is in the tiniest details."

When Mothers Are Mentioned

I think of you of course
though I knew you so little.

I think of the time I knocked you down.
You were drunk and I was angry.
It wasn't hard, you went sprawling
and looked up at me with wine-wet eyes.

I looked at you and the rag rug,
the scarred bureau, the radiator
the coffee table and the cat.
I said I'd better get out of here
before I kill you.

And I ran out the door; down the stairs
and into the street.

Having nowhere to go
I came back and sat on the stairs
in the hall. I could hear
you on the phone
talking to the police. I have this daughter
you said and paused
and said again I have this daughter—

I could just start walking
come to a country store
say I will sweep for a meal.

I could live on my fat:
the butter I spread too thick,
the eggs I ate too many of,
the meat that was not mine to take.

I Shall Die

I shall die with a beer in one hand
and fading photographs in the other.
I shall die with the memory of someone’s eyes.
Was there ever such a person?
I shall die screaming and snarling
like an old alley cat.
Mean, ugly
and disrespectful
to the last
so help me God.

Queen of Nothing

I am
the queen of nothing
I read silences
I read between the lines
I live in spaces
that have been overlooked, cracks
not yet filled in.
Nothing must be done
even though it is not encouraged.
It is good to be
the queen of nothing.