

CHLOE MARTINEZ

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## PALACE GATE

*Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur, Rajasthan*

[Beside the innermost gate of the fort, carved hand-prints memorialize women immolated on the funeral pyre of one of the maharajas.]

The hand-prints of the sixteen *satis* are carved in the wall,  
colored with red powder (because they were wives), and gold

(for the fire). No, that's not true, red for auspiciousness and  
gold for royalty. Red and gold for the colors brides wear. Red the

meat flung off the parapets in the golden dusk to feed the  
huge circling kites, to prevent misfortune. Red a ring I stole

from a gift shop in high school. I still wear the ring, and  
on my other hand, one band in plain gold, another with three

red rubies. Gold the field of daffodils where my mother  
and sister and I were chased out by barking dogs,

red their collars. We thought it would be all right to pick them.  
Red the Toyota hatchback that broke after so many years. Gold

the sedan that somebody gave us, that smelled always like  
grandparents. Red my blood on the train platform, gold the dirt

on my knees, on my bleeding palms. Red the telephone, but  
the shopkeeper had no phonebook. I wept on the counter; a gold

Ganesha looked on from his corner shrine. Red the sandstone palace,  
even under whitewash. I never stole anything else.