

# *Directed by Desire*

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF

## *June Jordan*

EDITED BY

JAN HELLER LEVI

AND SARA MILES



Copper Canyon Press

They sleep who know a regulated place  
 or pulse or tide or changing sky  
 according to some universal  
 stage direction obvious  
 like shorewashed shells

we share an afternoon of mourning  
 in between no next predictable  
 except for wild reversal hearse rehearsal  
 bleach the blacklong lunging  
 ritual of fright insanity and more  
 deplorable abortion  
 more and  
 more

*If You Saw a Negro Lady*

If you saw a Negro lady  
 sitting on a Tuesday  
 near the whirl-sludge doors of  
 Horn & Hardart on the main drag  
 of downtown Brooklyn

solitary and conspicuous as plain  
 and neat as walls impossible to  
 fresco and you watched her self-  
 conscious features shape about  
 a Horn & Hardart teaspoon  
 with a pucker from a cartoon

she would not understand  
 with spine as straight and solid  
 as her years of bending over floors  
 allowed

skin cleared of interest by a ruthless  
soap      nails square and yellowclean  
from metal files

sitting in a forty-year-old flush  
of solitude and prickling  
from the new white cotton blouse  
concealing nothing she had ever noticed  
even when she bathed and never  
hummed a bathtub tune nor knew one

If you saw her square  
above the dirty  
mopped-on antiseptic floors  
before the rag-wiped table tops

little finger      broad and stiff  
in heavy emulation of a cockney

mannerism  
would you turn her treat  
into surprise  
observing

happy birthday

### *For Somebody to Start Singing*

Song in Memory of Newark, New Jersey

He's a man on the roof  
on the run with a gun  
he's a man

Boys and little girls  
they were bad and they were good  
now they're dead