## Placing the Accents

Truong Tran

Apogee Press Berkeley · California 1999

## recipe 1

bottle of beer the question begins glass of ice the family stories

if words were bricks bricks were words would you break a window would you build a house

## recipe 6

fork is used when eating with a plate

chopsticks when eating with a bowl

between one and the other

it's not about choosing

## the mistress

with wages earned on the assembly line he stopped drinking cognac it's worth drinking only in the company of soldiers buys burgundy by the gallon cigarettes by the carton facing the wall in his living room in a chair he sits telling stories in the evenings smoke the silhouette of a woman dancing from tobacco tucked between fingers lips if i could just smoke while sleeping if only she could of stories told the gun he held to a general's head the general who cried hung my promotion i was supposed to be colonel the american officer who ate at his table he described the meat how tender it was simmering in a clay pot i told him names are for people a dog is a dog while on leave as if one could just leave he had his nephews stand guard with plastic rifles tin foil helmets they could have been officers if only they would listen of the stories the one he liked best was about a woman not just any woman my bride to be full of anger and spit and love she cleaved her finger the engagement ring intact in a fit of jealousy she returned it in a box with a note that read i return this ring for you have been taken she discovered my secret my mistress the war