**A Mother In A Refugee Camp**  
  
No Madonna and Child could touch  
Her tenderness for a son  
She soon would have to forget. . . .  
The air was heavy with odors of diarrhea,  
Of unwashed children with washed-out ribs  
And dried-up bottoms waddling in labored steps  
Behind blown-empty bellies. Other mothers there  
Had long ceased to care, but not this one:  
She held a ghost-smile between her teeth,  
And in her eyes the memory  
Of a mother’s pride. . . . She had bathed him  
And rubbed him down with bare palms.  
She took from their bundle of possessions

A broken comb and combed  
The rust-colored hair left on his skull  
And then—humming in her eyes—began carefully to part it.  
In their former life this was perhaps  
A little daily act of no consequence  
Before his breakfast and school; now she did it  
Like putting flowers on a tiny grave.  
  
  
—Chinua Achebe