

# Strand

What looked like muted colors of rock  
stacked in river bottoms  
is alive  
with old movement—  
stubbled slow-motion paddles  
from the stony shoulders of sea turtles  
overlapping three-deep in shallows.

Far back, we'd thought to cross them, quick-jumping  
through the small currents  
of our wanderings down the shore.

Now we are astonished  
before them—  
the antique finish of splendid shells,  
that moment we halted—caught  
in their slow flex inside the ripple  
of rising gulf tides.

The beached landmarks of words  
turn strange  
on our tongues, ritual bearings gone awry.

What we cannot enter  
looms in us like stones.  
We've read of their map sense,  
compass cues scanned by some instinct  
from magnetic stripes  
on the ocean floor.

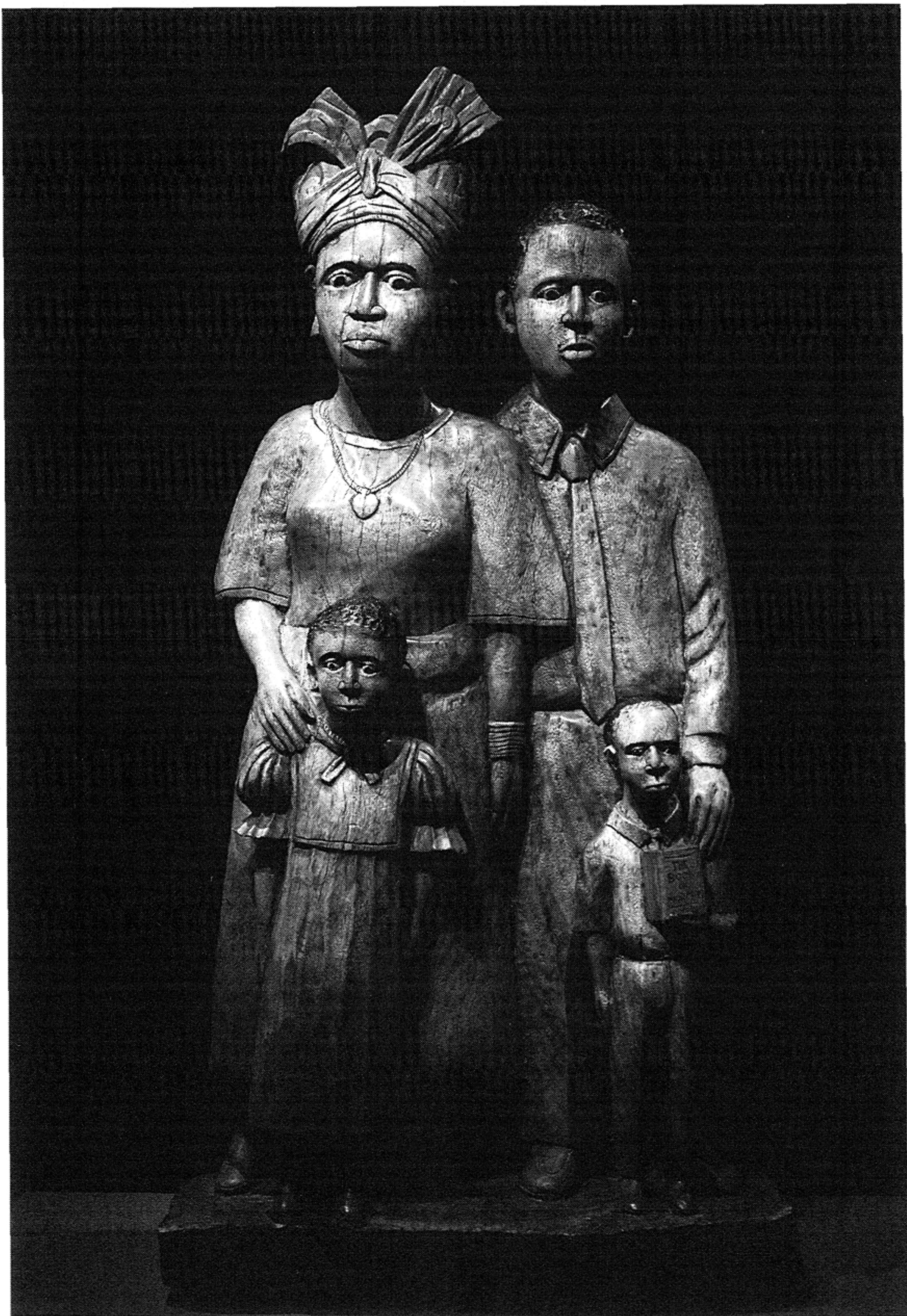
When the heavy lids part,  
we look into deep slotted eyes  
toward the grit  
of slow enduring.

The sea swells around them  
and engulfs our feet, soft shells  
of our skins suddenly vulnerable.

We make our tribal way  
around the ancient island,  
wondering at the long years of navigation  
before this return,  
the feeding meadows of legend  
where ships are caught and swallowed  
in tangled kelp—the gulping deep blue  
and salt life of the Sargasso Sea,  
which has no shore for any man  
to stand upon.

—Dixie Partridge

“Strand” received honorable mention in the 1995 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.



Lawrence Enigiator, *The Family*. Okheum wood, 48" x 24" x 16", Nigeria, 1993. Sculpted in the traditional style of Benin, this piece won a purchase award at the Third International Art Competition sponsored by the Museum of Church History and Art. Note the Book of Mormon carried by the little boy. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.