

Portia

How do you spell that?
Not like the car.
Wasn't there a radio program?
Portia Faces Life.
Or was it Shakespeare?
"The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven."

That's my mantra.
I have a constrained rage.
I am a woman,
lesbian woman.
I approach the world
with my fists up.

So I need the quality of mercy
mostly for myself
whom I eye critically.

I need a mother,
kinder than the one who named me,
sitting in the theater
with my father
when I was in her wings.

Heard Portia's speech to Shylock,
who would take his pound of flesh
instead of money owed,
who was a Jew
with his fists up.

My name is Portia,
the cross-dressed attorney.
My father, being a lawyer,
wanted a daughter
with a name to live up to.
A simple name, really.