

BARREN

i stained the wood with my hands
now our house is red. like silence.
my mother carries water in buckets,
thick lead buckets on a spine rocker.
the sun rises and falls from bucket
to bucket. over my mother's head.
my grandmother washes my dress
in the waters my mother brings. day
by day. in a bone carved trough.
the waters are black. like warm earth.
they turn my dress into green. night
by night. i wear it to bed of nettles.
morn by morn i wake up to a bed
of thistle. my dress faded to white.
my great aunts brush my hair with
ivory combs, and braid it tighter
each time. their cinnamon fingers
singing nursery rhymes and turning
my hair to catgut. for aphrodite.
and danu. i walk barefoot through
the stoneseed field to give back my dress
for washing. and pray for harvest.
yet every month, draught or snow,
i dance for the pied piper of moon
in a circle of blooming poppies.
in the puddles my mother spilled
from her buckets. and grandmother
splashed washing my shrinking skin.
and my feet are red. my knees are red.
my hands are red. with hot blood.
and i stain the wood going home.
thus, our house is now red. like silence.
in a barren field.