

I still like linen. Peach colored linen. I think
of tanning my legs. I feel the word *prayer*
in my mind. Just the word. A smooth river stone.
I'm accomplishing the miles to San Francisco
for the thousandth time, add them to my *vita*.
I'm better off than Mona's mother with her hair
in curl papers thirty years, waiting for the occasion.
I have occasion. Press on. Oh soul of mud.
Half of what sacrifice ransoms us?

WHEN RAIN PULLS THE WIND OFF THE ARNO AT NIGHT

Thunder booms through the house like waves boom
at sea when the mast is a twig, booms
like the avalanche that took Vera at Annapurna,
riveting her blue jacket to a crevice of ice,
booms like my father's voice warning
me not to bathe when it thunders,
lightning waits to strike girls
with pearly toes and sunburned shoulders, and
will split the room, lift the porcelain tub
and my white hide to the sky;
a flash divides
the night in my closed eyes, the sky
a bare dendritic slide of winter birch—
what long roots dangle. I hold my breath.
But isn't it good, the gigantic storm?
Waking to the flood of terror they felt
by fires in the caves? I find a match
but the candle displaces the dark
only half way up the wall. I ricochet home—
heat lightning in the South. I used to
lie on the ground letting rain
soak through me, feeling each bright
burst of forked silver.
Quick wind parts the bedroom shutters,



and strands and loops of rain
pool on desk and floor.
Rain flaying the grapes, rain filling the mouths
of the dead so they stop their endless chatter.
Was I dreaming of my mother rinsing
my tangle of hair with a bowl of rainwater?
How do I lie here seven thousand years
from home? How are the mares? Where are
the six dumb guinea hens? All ride
the earth lightly, our limbs
a brief inflorescence. What did that refrain
mean, "cleft for me," rising perpendicular
from the white board church in Georgia? Bolts
spear the ground, crack along my backbone.
The road in is a river. All fuses are blown.
Shutters could twirl over the fields,
bolts peel off my body, leave me foreign,
clean stripped, electric.