

Maureen Morris, Mother of Five, Eats a Pansy  
From the Garden of a Fancy Restaurant  
in Aspen · *Sandra McPherson*

I don't know what she'd been saying about her life—  
at lunch we all shared,  
pasts, minor points of minor histories, but oh  
if we hadn't been chosen to live them . . .  
My detail told about a child  
reeling, first time drunk, swimming  
to her parents' ankles, reaching out  
like a mystic gripping roots  
to make it down  
a steep trail to the river.

Maureen pictured us deserving better—  
Carol, Ava, Lolly, the mothers—  
deserving to choose what we give birth to.  
And why, even, does it have to be human?  
Why not that nodding purple avens in Hallam's march,  
eyelid flower turning to feathers?  
Why not a green bog orchid  
more after our own kind?

And so we are waiting: it is not too late  
to give birth to a flower,  
never an irreconcilable seed.  
Maureen heads between full tables  
to a free purple face wholly open,  
adopts it with a snap and eats,  
passes it around our table,  
does this in noon light, one bite  
for each child we conceived in the dark.